



PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

HL3036: THE HISTORY OF THE BOOK

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HSS 03-59

Seminar: Tuesdays, 1430-1730, LHS-TR+32



In *The History of the Book* you will explore the impact of the book as an object and a technology, from medieval manuscripts to e-readers. You will examine examples of books from different periods, both to understand how book production changed over time and to explore broader questions about the nature of texts, their reception, and their associated communities and contexts. By learning how books were made and used, you will gain a clearer appreciation of how culture was shaped by the

development of books, and how it shaped the development of books in turn. The archival and research skills you learn during this course will serve you in future research projects.

This course explores the influence of the book as a force in history and literature from the medieval period to the present. It will include hands-on examination of books and manuscript fragments as well as discussion of books as objects, social forces, and vehicles for text.

Course Text:

We will refer to James Raven's readable survey *What is the History of the Book?* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2018) several times: if you find the subject matter interesting you might want to purchase a copy. Other readings will be available online or through NTULearn.

Assessment:

Essay (2,500-3,000 words) (17 April)	40%
Catalogue entry and short essay (10 March / 24 March)	30%
Digital editing project (31 March / 14 April)	20%
In-class presentations (7 April)	10%

The research paper can deal with any book historical topic, broadly defined. You might choose to work on a specific book or to compare two books (digital collections will give you 'access' to a wider range of materials than we have in the library at NTU). Alternatively, you might choose a broader topic that engages more with historical and sociological questions than with the physical object itself. If you have trouble picking a topic, try thinking of two things that you've found interesting from the course, or two (physical) books you particularly like. How do they relate to one another? How might that connection be expanded into a more general question, or narrowed to a specific area of focus?

The paper should be substantial, polished, and fully referenced, examining both primary and secondary sources and engaging critically with relevant scholarly debates. It should make a clear and well-argued claim. All paragraphs should be related to this topic and follow a coherent, persuasive structure. Points should be fully developed and supported with specific evidence. Your essay should demonstrate the significance of your chosen topic.

For the catalogue entry assignment you will work directly from a book or object in the NTU library. You will prepare a formal description of your chosen item, drawing attention to its significant features and including photographs where relevant. Your short essay will place your chosen object within its social and historical context, explaining its relevance to a general audience. The catalogue entries and essays will be combined to form a digital timeline of the history of the book as represented in NTU's collections. You will have opportunities to edit your catalogue entries before they are made public.

The class will work together to prepare a digital edition of a medieval manuscript, including a description, transcription, digital image, and contextualising information. You will collaborate to decide on the important physical and textual features of the manuscript and the best ways of representing them in digital form. You will be expected to produce correct and accurate code, but will also be assessed on your contributions to group discussions about editorial practice. No previous coding or editing experience is expected! You will have opportunities to revise your portions of the edition before they are made public.

You will present on your research papers, situating them within the broader academic field. As presenters you will gain experience in synthesising and presenting academic research. Non-presenting students develop their critical listening skills. The presentations will give you a chance to receive and incorporate feedback on your research projects before submission. Presentations should be seven minutes long and should be accompanied by a powerpoint or other visual aid.

Course Policies:

Attendance and Participation: The success of any seminar depends on the active participation of all its members. Barring illness or emergencies, you must attend every seminar. You must arrive on time, having done the required readings and any assigned work, and be ready to participate in the class discussion. Failure to do so will reduce your participation grade significantly. If you need to miss a class you must get in touch with me *before* that week's meeting.

Late Work and Extensions: if your essay is late, it will be marked down by one third of a letter grade for each day that it is overdue (i.e. a paper that would have received a B will receive a B-). No work will be accepted more than seven days late. Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, including documented illness or genuine emergency.

Seeking Help Outside Class: you are encouraged to use any form of legitimate aid to help you write papers and research topics that interest you. Obvious sources of legitimate assistance include me, the coaches at the LCC Communication Cube, and the subject librarians at the library.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: Don't do it! If I find that you have misrepresented someone else's work as your own you will fail the assignment and possibly the course. If you are unsure of how or when to cite a source, please ask me or refer to the university's academic integrity resources online.

Questions?

Feel free to come to me if you have any questions! Most importantly, if you feel that you're falling behind in the course for any reason, please talk to me. The sooner we discuss any obstacles to your success in this class, the more likely it is that we will be able to fix them.



COURSE SCHEDULE

1. What is Book History? (14 January)

James Raven, *What is the History of the Book?* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2018), 1-16.

Robert Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?', *Daedalus* 111(3): 65-83.

If interested, you might also read:

Thomas R. Adams and Nicholas Barker, 'A New Model for the Study of the Book', in Nicholas Barker, ed., *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society: The Clark Lectures, 1986-1987* (London: British Library, 2001), 5-43.

2. Format: Clay Tablets to the Kindle (21 January)

James Raven, *What is the History of the Book?* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2018), 16-31.

Peter Stallybrass, 'Books and Scrolls: Navigating the Bible', in Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer, eds, *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 42-79.

Paul Duguid, 'Material Matters: Aspects of the Past and the Futurology of the Book', in Geoffrey Nunberg, ed., *The Future of the Book* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996).

3. Process: Manuscript (28 January)

Extracts from Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

4. Process: Print (4 February)

Extracts from Philip Gaskell, 'Book Production: The Hand-Press Period, 1500-1800', in *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Winchester: St Paul's Bibliographies, 1995).

Watch video on course blog explaining how hand press printing works.

5. The Impact of Print (11 February)

Elizabeth Eisenstein, 'The Unacknowledged Revolution', in *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979): 3-42.

Adrian Johns, 'Introduction: The Book of Nature and the Nature of the Book', in *the Nature of the Book: Print Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 1-57.

6. Letterpress Workshop (18 February)

7. Book Economics (25 February)

James Raven, *What is the History of the Book?* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2018), 90-99.

Martha Woodmansee, 'The Genius and the Copyright: Economic and Legal Conditions of the Emergence of the 'Author'', *Eighteenth Century Studies* 17(4): 425-448.

RECESS WEEK



8. The History of Reading (10 March)

James Raven, *What is the History of the Book?* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2018), 115-135.

Jack Goody and Ian Watt, 'The Consequences of Literacy', in Jack Goody, ed., *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968): 27-68.

John Halverson, 'Goody and the Implosion of the Literacy Thesis', *Man* 27(2): 301-317.

9. Owning Books (17 March)

Extracts from Gabriel Naudé, 'Instructions Concerning Erecting of a Library'.

Hugh Amory, 'Virtual Readers: The Subscribers to Fielding's *Miscellanies* (1743)', *Studies in Bibliography* 48 (1995): 94-112.

10. Censorship and Circulation (24 March)

Extracts from John Milton, *Areopagitica* (1644).

Alberto Manguel, 'Forbidden Reading', in *A History of Reading* (London: Penguin, 1997).

Matthew Day, 'Deceit, Self-Interest, and Censorship: Problems at the Bookbinders in Early Modern England', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 112(1): 1-25.

11. The Electronic Age (31 March)

Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, 'Editing the Interface: Textual Studies and First Generation Electronic Objects', *Text* 14: 15-51.

Anthony Grafton, 'Future Reading: Digitization and its Discontents', *The New Yorker*, 5 November 1997.

12. Presentations (7 April)

13. Conclusions (14 April)