

§Book History§

Professor Jessica Pressman
Eng 604B | Spring 2016
SDSU

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The book is a technology that has been perfected over a thousand years. It is the medium that enables Literature and literary studies. Yet, the book is often not itself the subject of study and discussion in English classrooms. This course puts the book front and center, reorganizing literary studies and British Literature, in particular, around the medium and its impact. This course focuses on the history of the printed book in the West (since the invention of the printing press in the 15th Century), understanding the evolution of this medium to be inseparable from the development of Western literary culture, literary aesthetics, and reading practices.

We will read central texts of Book History scholarship and a canonical but highly-experimental early British novel in order to explore what is gained by approaching the history of the book *as* literary studies. What might we learn by considering the evolution of codexical elements like title pages and wood-pulp paper? What impact did the invention the author figure and copyright have on literary studies? The goal of this course is to give students a different way-- a medium-specific way-- of approaching literary studies and to show how book history can support our understanding of the contemporary medial shift to digital screens and devices.

Learning Outcomes

- Identify the physical aspects of the book medium
- Recognize the book as a technology that has evolved over centuries
- Compare scholarly arguments and central publications in the field of Book History
- Understand the impact of copyright laws on the development of the field of Literature.
- Practice media-specific analysis on a book as a means of literary analysis

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Email:
jpressman@mail.sdsu.edu

Class Meetings:
Tuesday 4:00-6:10pm
Room: SH 316

Office hours: AL 261
Th 10-12:00 and by appointment

Course Website:
<http://www.spring2016-eng604b.jessicapressman.com>

Course Librarian:
Anna Culbertson (Special Collections)

Anna Culbertson
<aculbertson@mail.sdsu.edu>

Required Texts

- Finkelstein, David and Alaistar McCleerey, eds. *The Book History Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Howard, Nicole. *The Book: The Life Story of a Technology*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.
- Piper, Andrew. *Book Was There: Reading in Electronic Times*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- Sterne, Lawrence. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. Penguin, 2003.

Additional Texts

- Mak, Bonnie, *How the Page Matters* (University of Toronto Press, 2012)
- McGann, Jerome, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton University Press, 1991)
- **See suggested bibliography for additional reading*

READING SCHEDULE

Part I: Context

- 1/26: Introduction
- 2/2: N. Katherine Hayles and Jessica Pressman, "Making, Critique: A Media Framework," introduction to *Comparative Textual Media: Transforming the Humanities in the Postprint Era* (University of Minnesota Press, 2013)
- Andrew Piper, *Book Was There: Reading in Electronic Times*
- 2/9- Nicole Howard, *The Book: The Life Story of a Technology*

Part II: Book History

*****all readings are in Book History Reader unless otherwise stated*****

-first blog post due

- 2/16- Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?"
D.F. McKenzie, "The Book as an Expressive Form"
- 2/23- Jerome McGann, "The Socialization of Texts"
Roger Chartier, "Labourers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader"
- 3/1- Adrian Johns, "The Book of Nature and the Nature of the Book"
Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production"
- 3/8- Roger Chartier, "The Practical Impact of Writing"
Elizabeth Eisenstein, "Defining the Initial Shift"

3/15- *Special Collections visit. Professor Pressman at "Book Charismas" Conference in Abu Dhabi*

3/22- D.F. McKenzie, “The Sociology of a Text”
Stanley Fish, “Interpreting the *Variorum*”
Janice Radway, “A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, literary taste, and middle-class desire”

3/29--*Spring Break. No class*

Part III: The History of Authorship and/in the Novel

4/5—Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?”

Mark Rose, “Literary Property Determined”

John Brewer, “Authors, Publishers and Literary Culture”

4/12- *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (volumes I-IV)

4/17 ****Proposal and Annotated Bibliography due @ midnight (posted to blog)****

4/19- *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (volumes V-VI)

Jay David Bolter, *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print* (Ch. 1: “The Late Age of Print” and Chapter 2: “Writing as Technology,” Chapter 3: “Hypertext and the Remediation of Print”): pps. 1-46.

4/26- *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (volumes VII-IX)

Presentation of final projects

5/3—Presentation of final projects and Concluding Discussion

5/13 ****Friday@ midnight: Final Essay due (posted to the blog)****

ASSIGNMENTS

Participation 20%

Presentation 5%

Weekly Blog Posts 25%

Proposal and Annotated Bibliography 10%

Final Essay Project 40%

Participation: 20%

This is *your* class, and your participation is vital to its success. You must attend *all* class meetings in order to receive full credit for participation. Come to class prepared to discuss the text in depth; this means having read the *entire* text *before* class. I expect you to speak and listen.

- **Your participation grade includes engaging in dialogue in class.** This means speaking and listening actively, attentively, and respectfully. (If you have fear of speaking in public, this seminar is a good place to learn to address that fear. Please come see me early in the term to discuss strategies for dealing with this fear).
- **Your participation grade includes an in-person meeting with the professor.**

Presentation: 5%

You will give a *5-minute presentation on one of the texts*. This presentation should serve to start the class's conversation for the day. You will point us to a question from the day's reading and to the specific passage in the text that sparked that inquiry for you. You will get the discussion rolling. You should be able to direct the class to a passage for close reading and/or a series of questions for discussion.

Weekly Blog Posts: 25%

You will write (**500 words**) **blog responses to the reading and each provide a comment on a peer's blog each week**, before the next week's class meeting. The goal of the blog posts is to extend the conversation and coverage of the course by allowing you to 1) express, share, and comment upon interests, questions, and concerns related to the readings and also to 2) enable the professor to address and incorporate these topics in that week's meeting. It is also a place to draft ideas and text for use in your essays.

--Blog posts are due *on Monday at 6pm* weekly; late posts will not receive credit.

--You will be graded on the completion and content of the blog posts, though grades will not be given on individual blogs. You will receive a holistic grade (for completion and content) at midterm.

8-9=A-A+, 6-7=B-B+, 4-5=C-C+, 3-4=D-D+, 0-2=F

Proposal/Annotated Bibliography (10%)

In preparation for your final essay project, you will write a short proposal (500-words) and an annotated bibliography of 10 centrally relevant sources for the essay. Information of proposal and bibliography are available on our website.

Final Project: 40%

In this 15-20 page analytical essay, you will explore in-depth one research question raised by our course. You will propose your own essay topic and determine the best way to present, formally and in a media-specific way, your argument and research. You will conduct and implement scholarly research, secondary sources (at least 3) not included on our syllabus, in your essay.

You must **meet with the professor** to discuss the structure and presentation of the argument; and you will **briefly present** your project during the final week of class.

You have two options for a final project. Either of these projects can incorporate digital technologies and digital humanities methods for your research and/or presentation.

- **Biography of a Book:** This project will consist of two parts:
1) a full bibliographic description of a book or manuscript in Special Collections (word count will vary), and 2) a scholarly analysis of its most interesting, significant, or mysterious feature of that object. You may choose to analyze any feature of the manuscript/book or its history, and you may either compare or contrast it to some feature of digital literacy. You are invited to use any form of digital technology or analog medium to prepare and present the essay.

- **Analytical Essay:**
You will write a traditional thesis-driven and research-supported scholarly essay. You should consider this assignment an opportunity to draft a scholarly journal article, and you will receive feedback to assist in the endeavor of submitting the revised essay to a peer-reviewed academic journal.
You will be graded on the originality of your argument and how well your analysis is presented and supported.

Extra Credit: Total of 1%

- Attend the campus lecture “The Future of the Humanities in a Digital Age” on January 26 and write a blog post that situates that event in the context of our class.
- Attend Electronic Literature Reading Event on February 17 and write a blog post that situates that event (the reading, the literature, the discussion) in the context of our class.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Academic Honesty

The University adheres to a strict [policy regarding cheating and plagiarism](#). These activities will not be tolerated in this class. Become familiar with the policy (<http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/conduct1.html>). Any cheating or plagiarism will result in failing this class and a disciplinary review by Student Affairs.

Examples of Plagiarism include but are not limited to:

Using sources verbatim or paraphrasing without giving proper attribution (this can include phrases, sentences, paragraphs and/or pages of work); Copying and pasting work from an online or offline source directly and calling it your own; Using information you find from an online or offline source without giving the author credit; Replacing words or phrases from another source and inserting your own words or phrases; Submitting a piece of work you did for one class to another class.

If you have questions on what is plagiarism, please consult the [policy](#) (<http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/conduct1.html>) and this [helpful guide from the Library](#):(http://infodome.sdsu.edu/infolit/exploratorium/Standard_5/plagiarism.pdf)

Note on Possible Faculty Strike

The California Faculty Association is in the midst of a difficult contract dispute with management. It is possible that the faculty union will call a strike or other work stoppage this term. I will inform the class as soon as possible of any disruption to our class meeting schedule.