

English 419: The History of the Book

Instructor: Siân Echard

Office Hours: W 10:00 – 11:00, or by appointment (sian@mail.ubc.ca)

Course webpage: <http://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/sechard/419page.htm>

TA: Sarah-Nelle Jackson

You should get in the habit of checking the online version of the syllabus, as it be updated regularly to include useful links, as well as any changes to the reading or the assignment schedule.

Codex to Code: The History of the Book

“Never judge a book by its cover,” we are often told, and yet we do judge books, not only by their covers, but also by their typefaces, their illustrations, where they are filed in the bookstore or the library, and any number of other factors not apparently directly related to their content. This course will introduce students to book history, a discipline that unravels the complex relationships between particular books, the texts they contain, the cultures that produced them, and the readers who encounter them.

D.F. McKenzie famously described bibliography as the sociology of texts. Through a series of case studies centered on important texts and the books that transmit them, we will explore how materiality and meaning interact, in a range of historical and cultural contexts. Along the way, students will learn about the many forms texts have taken over the centuries, from oral recitations to ebooks, and everything in between.

A unique feature of this course is that we will meet regularly in Rare Books and Special Collections in the Barber Learning Centre. Here, students will have the opportunity for hands-on experience with a wide collection of rare materials dating from the Middle Ages to the present. Course assignments will include contributions to a class book blog (we will use the Wordpress platform available at <http://blogs.ubc.ca>). Each class member will adopt a favourite item from the RBSC collection, and will research and write about it, to introduce it to a wide audience. Because of the limited size of the RBSC seminar room, the class will periodically be split in half; on the day that your group is not meeting in the RBSC seminar room, you will be undertaking your own original research in the RBSC reading room. Students will leave this course with both theoretical knowledge and practical experience concerning the history, and future, of media-text interactions.

Course text: Michelle Levy and Tom Mole, eds., *The Broadview Reader in Book History*

Reading and Class Schedule

GROUP A: Last names from Avery – McNeilly

GROUP B: Last names from Odera - Yu

January

Introduction

Th 4 NO CLASS

There will be no class today, because I am away at a conference. However, you should look at the readings listed below, so that they can inform our discussion on Tuesday, January 9

- W.W. Greg, "What is Bibliography?" (pp. 3 – 13)
- D.F. McKenzie, "The Dialectics of Bibliography Now" (pp. 45 – 61)
- Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" (pp. 231 – 50)

T 9 What is book history?

Books in the World #1:

Bring some kind of text-object to class: it could be a favourite book from your past, something you're reading now, or something you just think it might be interesting to talk about. Come prepared to discuss.

Th 11 RBSC, group A: Introduction to Special Collections (9:30)
RBSC, group B: Introduction to Special Collections (10:10)

Before Print

T 16 Medieval Manuscripts: Scripts, Materials, Techniques

- Andrew Piper, "Turning the Page (Roaming, Zooming, Streaming) (pp. 512 – 24)

Th 18 In-class workshop: Manuscript copying

- G. Thomas Tanselle, "The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention" (pp. 139 – 55)
- Roger Chartier, "Communities of Readers" (pp. 251 – 66)

T 23 RBSC, group A

Th 25 RBSC, group B

Early Print

T 30 The Coming of Print: Transitions and Technologies

- Michael Twyman, "What is Printing?" (pp. 37 – 44)
- Paul C. Gutjahr and Megan L. Benton, "Reading the Invisible" (pp. 63 – 72)

February

Print and the Reformation

Th 1 Printing the Bible

- Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, "The Unacknowledged Revolution" (pp. 215 – 30)
- James Raven, "Markets and Martyrs: Early Modern Commerce" (pp. 289 – 312)

Books in the World #2:

What books have been banned? Where? Why? Have you read any of them?
Come prepared to discuss.

T 6 RBSC, group A

Th 8 RBSC, group B

Printing Early Modern Authors

T 13 Making a Canon: Print and the Early Modern Author

- David Scott Kastan, "From Playhouse to Printing House; or, Making a Good Impression" (pp. 353 – 73)
- Margaret J.M. Ezell, "The Social Author: Manuscript Culture, Writers, Readers" (pp. 375 – 94)

Th 15 In-class workshop: Making a Quarto

What's your type? assignment due this day: e-mail to sian@mail.ubc.ca, no later than 11:59 pm

T 20 – Th 22 READING WEEK

T 27 RBSC, group A

March

Th 1 RBSC, group B

Atlases, Encyclopedias, Dictionaries: The World in Print

T 6 Books for Reference: Fonts, Maps, Pictures

- Adrian Johns, "Introduction: The Book of Nature and the Nature of the Book" (pp. 267 – 88)
- Jonathan Rose, "The Welsh Miners' Libraries" (pp. 313 – 31)

Books in the World #3:

Do you ever use reference books? What kinds? In what formats? How are they different from other kinds of books or reading experiences? Come prepared to discuss.

Judging a book by its cover assignment due this day: e-mail to sian@mail.ubc.ca, no later than 11:59 pm

Th 8 RBSC, group A

T 13 RBSC, group B

Connoisseurs and Collectors

Th 15 Printing in the Nineteenth Century: Mass Production and Fine Press

- Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed" (pp. 335 – 52)
- Meredith McGill, "Circulating Media: Charles Dickens, Reprinting, and Dislocation of American Culture" (pp. 439 – 56)

T 20 RBSC, group A

Th 22 RBSC, group B

Children's Literature

T 27 Books for Children: Illustrated Books, Text Books, Collectibles

- Franco Moretti, "Style, Inc. Reflections on Seven Thousand Titles (British Novels, 1740 – 1850) (pp. 525 – 40)

Books in the World #4:

Go to a children's bookstore (like Kidsbooks), or to the children's section of a store like Chapters, or to the children's section of an online book retailer like Amazon. What is highlighted? How are the books organized, advertised, designed? Did you have a favourite childhood book? Is it still available today? Does it look the same? Come prepared to discuss.

Parchment, pixels, and print assignment due this day: e-mail to sian@mail.ubc.ca, no later than 11:59 pm

Th 29 RBSC, group A

April

T 3 RBSC, group B

Digitization and Hypertext

Th 5 Remediating Textual Media

- Jerome J. McGann, "The Rationale of Hypertext" (pp. 459 – 74)
- Anthony Grafton, "Codex in Crisis: The Book Dematerializes" (pp. 555 – 73)
- N. Katherine Hayles, "How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine" (pp. 491 – 510)

Books in the World #5

What is on your bookshelf right now? Do you have e-books as well as regular books? Has this course changed how you think about your books? Come prepared to discuss.

A Note on Due Dates

The Books in the World days are a kind of attendance/ participation mark; that is, you are expected to think about the question and come prepared to discuss it. If you are absent from class, you will not get credit for this activity unless you contact me by e-mail with an explanation, and a short question that you might have raised, had you been in class.

All other assignments are to be sent to me via e-mail, and are due no later than 11:59 pm on the due date above. Late work will lose 2% per day, unless there is a legitimate reason (such as illness or other hardship) for late submission.

Please don't be hesitant to let me know if you're having difficulties: problems are usually best dealt with as soon as they crop up.

Assignments and Weighting

Books in the world: January 9, February 1, March 6 and 27, and April 5 (5 @ 1% each) = 5%

What's your type? assignment: to be e-mailed to me (sian@mail.ubc.ca) by 11:59 pm on Thursday, February 15 = 15%

Judging a book by its cover assignment: to be e-mailed to me (sian@mail.ubc.ca) by 11:59 pm on Thursday, March 6 = 15%

Parchment, pixels, and print assignment: to be e-mailed to me (sian@mail.ubc.ca) by 11:59 pm on Tuesday, March 27 = 15%

Reading and Research Journal: to be turned in with the Book blog assignment = 15%

Book blog assignment: to be e-mailed to me (sian@mail.ubc.ca) by 11:59 pm on Friday, April 15 = 35%

Assignments rationale and expectations

The assignments in this course are intended to equip you with some of the basic tools of book history, as well as to provide hands-on experience of a range of books and text-objects. They are also intended to encourage you to notice, and to think about, the many forms that text takes in our world.

The assignments have been designed to be short, manageable, and to some extent cumulative. Often you will simply be asked to take note of some aspect of book culture, and come ready to talk about it.

There are also three short assignments that focus on different aspects of book design - on type, on cover design, and on the remediation of text in digital forms.

The major assignment is the Book Blog, in which you will be asked to research an item from the UBC Rare Books and Special Collections Library, and to introduce it to a general audience. We will develop the parameters and assessment metrics for this assignment collaboratively, as the term progresses.

I value curiosity, exploration, and engagement (and impeccable writing, of course!). My motto for these assignments, as well as for all the extra material I make available via the online version of the syllabus, comes from a 12th-century Anglo-Latin writer/ storyteller named Walter Map:

"I am your huntsman," he wrote. "I bring you game; it is for you to make dishes of it."

Books in the World

These are questions that ask you to notice and think about certain aspects of book culture, and to come to class be prepared to share your thoughts.

This is a participation mark, based on in-class discussion of the questions: I will circulate an attendance sheet on these days, and if you are present (or, if you must be absent, if you have e-mailed me in advance with a question or comment), you will earn a point.

What's Your Type? Assignment

This assignment asks you to notice and think about the effects of typography. It has three parts.

1. Find a book - any book at all - that tells you what type is being used (not all books will give you this information, but for those that do, it is often found in the

front or back matter; another way to find out about book fonts is to look at the options on an e-reader). OR, have a look at the font list in your word processor, and choose one of the fonts as the basis for your research. Either way, make a note of the type name, and then research it. What can you find out about this type? When was it created? Where does it tend to be used? Write a short paragraph summarizing what you found.

2. Choose a short piece of text - any text and all - and, using a word processor, set that piece of text in 4 different fonts. You might also play with styles (bold, italic); with size; with justification; and, if your software allows it, with leading (space between and around text). Include the results in your assignment (you might find that converting the resulting pages to PDF will be the best way of preserving your experiment).

3. Write a short (one or two paragraph) reflection on your research and experiment. Does type make a difference? If so, what kind? What can you say about your own reading habits in relation to this experiment?

The online Assignments page will have some links that might be of help to you.

Judging a Book by its Cover Assignment

Find a book that is of interest to you - look for something that has been printed more than once. Then find out what its covers have looked like - a good way to do so is to do an image search in a search engine using the title of the book. Things to look for might include different covers for Canadian, American, or British markets; different covers for different imagined audiences; changes in covers over time, for a book published some time ago; or marketing changes related to things like awards, reviews, and so on. If you can, grab images of the covers (an easy way is to use screen capture when you are doing online research; you can also, of course, take photographs in bookstores or libraries). Write a short account of what you have found (a description of the covers and any changes), and a short reflection about what you have found. As in the type assignment, I will be interested in your reflections on how your research might have changed or affected your reading practice (as well as in any other reflections you might have about the impact of cover design). If you can include images in your assignment, please do. If you would like to do so, but are not sure how to manage it, technically, do come to see me, and can help you out.

Parchment, Pixels, and Print Assignment

This assignment asks you to consider THREE different remediations of a text - manuscript or print - for digital consumption. Note that you are not necessarily looking at the SAME item in three different forms; you are probably going to be

exploring three different digital resources, in order to see how each uses digitization to present books. The books could be any kind of books, from medieval manuscripts, to early printed books, to more recent but out of copyright books, to current books sampled through commercial services like Amazon. You could include an audio book, or an e-book on your tablet or phone, or a specific book app. There are libraries and museums that offer digitized texts for free: these are often photographic digital facsimiles. There are non-profit organizations (like Project Gutenberg) that make e-books available: these are usually plain-text files. Pretty much any interaction between a book and a digital technology is fair game here.

The purpose of the assignment is to explore the ways that books (and other written or printed materials) are currently interacting with digital technologies. whether for scholarly purposes, entertainment, edification, or some combination of the two. The essays in section 5, Remediating, of the course reader, might be helpful to you as you think about your interactions with these tools.

Write a short paragraph about your experience finding and using each of these resources. Were they easy or difficult to use? How could you imagine them being used? Are these tools aimed at scholars, teachers, students, the general public, or some mix? Do you think the designers know who will use these resources, and do you think they have done a good job?

The online Assignments page has some links to get you started.

Research and Reading Journal

You will soon learn that an essential part of archival research is keeping track of what you do – including documenting frustrations, mistakes, dead ends, and so on. This assignment asks you to keep two kinds of notes.

First, you will see that there are 20 brief readings on our syllabus. The expectation is that everyone will do all the reading, but in addition, I would like to use the journals to make sure that in any given class, some people will have come with a question or observation prompted by the reading. So, for the “Reading” part of the journal, choose any 5 readings you like, and pick out one sentence from that reading that gets you thinking. Note the reading and the sentence, with the date, in your journal. Of course you are free to write more, if you like, and to use this exercise (picking out a key sentence) for more than 5 of the readings. The readings have all been chosen as examples of how it is that book historians go about their work, and so I hope you will find inspiration in them as you decide what your own approach will be.

Second, you will see that you are going to be spending a fair bit of time pursuing your own research in RBSC. The second, and more substantial, part of your

journal, will consist of the notes you make as you learn how to use RBSC, and as you narrow in on your topic for the book blog. Your notes can take many forms, from point-form jottings of avenues explored, to lists of search terms, to idea clouds, to notes on a particular object. You can record false starts, eureka moments, dull gruntwork, anything at all... in part the purpose of this log is to encourage you to just keep digging, while keeping good records - two primary requirements of good archival research. You may keep the log in any form that is convenient for you (including on purple lined paper...). You will hand the log in along with the book blog itself - see the directions below.

Book Blog

For this assignment, you are to choose an item (it need not be a book) from the collection of UBC Rare Books and Special Collections. You are to research its history - this research might include general research about the object (so, for example, if you were to choose the UBC copy of the 1611 first edition of the King James Bible, you would research the history of the King James Bible, and perhaps of bible printing more broadly), as well as, where possible and appropriate, research related to the specific object (does it belong to a particular cluster or collection of objects in the UBC Library? For example, perhaps the catalogue says your object belongs to the Arkeley Collection: what is the Arkeley Collection?)

You are then to introduce this object to a general audience. Your format is the online blog. UBC provides access to Wordpress blogs; if you already maintain a blog of your own, you are welcome to use that platform instead. Your presentation of the object should include both text and images.

To hand in the assignment, you should e-mail me the link to your blog. If your research log is in electronic form, then you may e-mail that to me as well. If your notes are in hard copy, then please assemble them, make sure that your name and my name and course number are on the title page, and submit them to me directly: I'll arrange to be in my office for most of the day the assignment is due (we'll go over all of this as the deadline approaches). If you miss me, you may submit to the English office, which is in the Buchanan Tower. There is a box on the front counter for essay submissions: your log will be collected at the end of the day, date-stamped, and put in my mailbox. Note that the department office closes at 4:30 pm.