

Ann Blair
Fall 2017
MW(F) 10
Sever 202

History 1318
History of the book and of reading
(counts for Gen Ed credit in Culture and Belief)
Syllabus

The advent of digital communications has prompted questions about how change in the technology of communication affects authors, readership, intellectual property and the business of publishing. By studying the long history of written forms, this course provides students with historical context for grappling with these questions. We will consider major developments from the papyrus scroll to the web, with a special emphasis on the impact of printing in early modern Europe, 15th-18th centuries. Major themes include the economic and technical conditions governing book production and trade; the changing economic and legal conditions of authorship; and the social and intellectual contexts of reading and their impacts.

Gen Ed rationale:

The ways in which texts are produced, diffused, read, and saved are shaped by cultural as well as technical factors. In turn, technologies of communication affect how cultures and communities form, transform, and perpetuate themselves. In this course, students will learn about the major transformations in book history from scroll to web, with a focus on the Western tradition and some comparative attention to the Middle East and East Asia. Students will learn several methods of analyzing primary sources by considering the conventions, costs, and constraints that governed how a text was made available to others, i.e. "published," whether or not printing was involved. Through its thematic organization this course will regularly refer to our current experience of the impact of new digital media.

course homepage: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30537>

Instructors

Prof. Ann Blair
Dept of History, CGIS South #437 (1730 Cambridge St)
email: amblair@fas; phone 5-0752
office hours: Mon 2-4pm

Please sign up for a slot in office hours (course homepage) whenever possible to avoid congestion. (I also hold office hours on Tuesday mornings 10:30-noon for DUS business in Robinson 100, so if Mon 2-4 doesn't work for you, feel free to sign up for those office hours instead. Find the link for those office hours on my dept webpage and please note the different location!)

TF: Alicia de Maio
email: demaio@g.harvard.edu
office hours: Wed 2-4pm, Robinson L-05. Sign up from the course homepage.

Requirements:

- regular attendance and participation in section (15%)
- early midterm (Sept 20) (20%)
- “adopt-a-book”: seven short assignments leading up to the final paper (totaling 20%)
- final paper of ca. 10 pages due Tues Dec 5 (20%)
- final exam (25%)

Course policies:

Honor Code: Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity – that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one’s own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs.

Collaboration policy: Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. We will distribute a list of the chosen paper topics to make this easier. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard history citation practices and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work; see "Writing with Sources: A Guide for Harvard Students" (available on-line if you've lost your copy). If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc.), you must also acknowledge this assistance. Please note that plagiarism is a serious offense; this course will enforce College policy on academic honesty. (In the interest of proper attribution, note that this paragraph is derived from one of Harvard’s suggested collaboration policies.)

Disability policy: Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term, **Fri Sept 8**. Failure to do so may result in the Course Head's inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although Faculty are invited to contact AEO to discuss appropriate implementation.

Discussion sections: This course places a high priority on the discussion of assigned primary sources in section; sections are therefore an integral part of the course and do not duplicate the lectures. Sections and other required course meetings (e.g. in Houghton Library) occur in the Friday 10-11 slot which corresponds to the lecture times. **Students in the course must be enrolled in that section and attendance at section is mandatory.** Students may not be excused from section without a valid reason, viz. a medical or family emergency (notify your TF by e-mail as soon as you can). Students may not "make up" for their absence, should they miss section on a regular basis. Any student with more than three unexcused absences from section will be failed from the course.

Deadlines: Students requiring special accommodations for written work should present documentation of such at the beginning of the semester to the instructor. Barring medical or family emergencies, requests for paper extensions will not be entertained within 48 hours of the stated deadline. Late papers will be graded down by one third of a letter grade a day, viz. an A paper that is one day late becomes an A- paper, etc. Failure to fulfill any of the major course requirements (midterm, final paper, final exam) will result in a failing grade for the course.

Available at the COOP (prices are from Amazon.com): all books are also on reserve in Lamont and most are available online in various forms.

Most assigned/required: David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, *Introduction to Book History* (Routledge, 2012); ISBN 978-0415688062; \$41 new on amazon but also available in e-form on Hollis but with no download option

Optional: Montaigne, *Complete Essays*, tr. Michael Screech (Penguin, 1993); ISBN 978-0140446043; \$16.86 [different editions available on HOLLIS]

Optional: Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Poets: a selection* (Oxford World's Classics, 2009); ISBN 978-0199226740; \$18.29 [different edition available on google books]

Optional: George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (Oxford World's Classics, 2009); ISBN 978-0199538294; \$15.99 [1891 edition available on HOLLIS and downloadable]

Syllabus

Unit 1 : a short history of technology

Week I (Aug 30): why study the history of books?

W: lecture A: introduction—technologies (language, writing, printing, digital) and themes (publication, distribution and regulations, authorship, reading, survival)

F exceptionally a lecture: lecture B: book culture in antiquity

Reading: *Intro to Book History*, introduction (pp. 1-6) and ch. 2 down to “Technological shifts” (pp. 29-35). Short excerpt from Plato, Phaedrus, 274-end [this is a section number standard in all editions of Plato] also available here:

<http://oldsite.english.ucsb.edu/faculty/ayliu/unlocked/plato/plato-myth-of-theuth.pdf>

Week II (Sept 4): books before printing

M: Labor Day--no class

W: lecture C: book culture in medieval Europe

F: HOUGHTON SESSION--meet at Houghton Library at 10am; please try to stay until 11:30am.

Reading: *Intro to Book History*, finish ch. 2 (pp. 35-44).

Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen, “Introduction: Manuscripts and Cultural History,” in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches*, pp. 1-15 [pdf].

Eugene Rice and Anthony Grafton, *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe*, pp. 1-10 (“the invention of printing”) [pdf]

Week III (Sept 11): printing

M: lecture D: book culture in China and Islam

W: lecture E: the origins of printing in Europe

Th: see your instructor in designated office hours to choose the book you'll "adopt" for the upcoming exercises and final paper [some Hollis demo in the process]

F 10am: first section --discuss Eisenstein and critiques

Reading to be discussed in section:

Intro to Book History, pp. 18-9 on Eisenstein + ch. 3 entire (includes 19th ct) (pp. 45-66).

Anthony Grafton, "The Importance of Being Printed" (Review of Eisenstein's 1980 *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*) in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11 (1980): 265-286.

Adrian Johns, "How to Acknowledge a Revolution," (in dialogue with Eisenstein) *American Historical Review* 107:1 (Feb. 2002): 106-125.

Week IV (Sept 18): the modern period

M: lecture G (deliberately out of alphabetical order): mechanization of printing

W: early MIDTERM in class

Wednesday or Thursday evening: Possible field trip to Bow and Arrow Press (TBD)

Assignment for Friday: take the Hollis self-test on your own

F 10am: section Omeka training session with reference to Hollis and e-resources

Unit 2: themes

Week V (Sept 25): publication

M: lecture H: the cycles of the book; what is publication?

W: lecture F: impacts of print publication

F 10am: Houghton session [student selections]

Reading:

Intro to Book History, ch. 5 entire (pp. 86-100)

Johan Gerritsen, "Printing at Froben's: an Eye Witness Account," *Studies in Bibliography* (Virginia) 44 (1991): 144-63.

Week VI (Oct 2): book trade and authorship

M: lecture I: genres and the book trade

DUE MONDAY 5PM: EXERCISE 1--material bibliography (2-4 photos of your book + your captions—ca 250 words) to post on omeka

W: lecture J: social and economic status of the author, part I [Montaigne]

F: section

Reading to be discussed in section:

Montaigne, *Essays* I, 25 (of pedantry); II, 10 (of books); II, 33 (story of Spurina); III, 3 (three kinds of association); III, 13 (only until mention of China, 4-5 pp into the essay) [for purchase + in multiple library copies]

George Hoffmann, "The Montaigne Monopoly: Revising the *Essais* under the French privilege System," *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* (1993): 308-19.

Intro to Book History, ch. 4, down to "authors, copyright and payment" (pp. 67-75).

Week VII (Oct 9): economics and intellectual property

M: Columbus Day--no class

DUE MONDAY 5PM: EXERCISE 2—statement of paper topic due --identify primary source, 1-2

themes, 3-4 secondary sources (to submit to discussion board on course website)

W: lecture K: social and economic status of the author, part II [Samuel Johnson]

F: section

Reading to be discussed in section:

Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*. Life of Savage [for purchase + pdf from google books on website]

Richard Holmes, introduction from Harper-Perennial edition of *Savage* (2005) [pdf]
Intro to Book History, finish ch. 4 (pp. 75-85).

Week VIII (Oct 16): reading

M: lecture L: sources for the history of literacy and of reading; practice printing history
DUE MONDAY 5PM: EXERCISE 3—report on the authorship of your source (images of author and/or title page, to post on omeka with captions—ca 250 words)

W: lecture M: learned reading

F: section

Reading to be discussed in section:

Keith Thomas, “The meaning of literacy in early modern England,” in *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, ed. Gerd Baumann (1986) [pdf]

William Sherman, "What Renaissance readers wrote in their books," in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England* (2002) [pdf]

Intro to Book History, ch. 6, down to “The rise of the popular” (pp. 101-12).

Week IX (Oct 23): expanding readership; censorship

M: lecture N: popular reading, cheap print

DUE MONDAY 5PM: EXERCISE 4--close reading of a passage of your choice (to post to discussion board)

W: lecture O: censorship

F: section

Reading to be discussed in section:

look at a chapbook on EEBO or ECCO or Evans [from a list of suggestions]

Jonathan Rose, “How Historians Study Reader Response” in *Literature in the Marketplace* [pdf]

Intro to Book History, finish ch. 6 (pp. 112-18).

The Book: A Global History, ch. 13 (censorship, pp. 169-82) [pdf]

Week X (Oct 30): periodicals and re-authoring

M: lecture P: newspapers

DUE MONDAY 5PM: EXERCISE 5-- report on reception of your source (intended or actual readers—images of annotations, binding, shelfmark...) + printing history (to post on omeka)

W: lecture Q: reprinting, re-editing

F 10am: section (possible workshop on pamphlet binding with Kate Rich, TBA)

Reading to be discussed in section:

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 26-46. [pdf]

Benjamin Franklin, excerpts from Poor Richard and other writings

Jim Green and Peter Stallybrass, *Benjamin Franklin, Writer and Printer* (2006), ch. 6 ("Inventing Poor Richard") (pp. 101-15) [pdf]

Week XI (Nov 6): libraries and their role in the Victorian novel

M: lecture R: brief history of libraries

DUE MONDAY 5PM: EXERCISE 6—provide images of 3-5 comparands for your selected source with brief descriptions and explanations of why you selected them (to post on omeka)

W: lecture S: the system of the Victorian novel

F: section

Reading to be discussed in section:

George Gissing, *New Grub Street* [for purchase and first ed of 1891 available on course website], Ch. 1-7.

Simon Eliot, "Circulating Libraries in the Victorian Age and After." In *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, edited by Peter Hoare, E. S. Leedham-Green, Teresa Webber and Giles Mandelbrote. 125-46. [pdf]

Week XII (Nov 13): alternatives to supersession

M: Lecture T: Guest lecture by Alicia de Maio: American book culture in the 19th century
DUE MONDAY 5PM: EXERCISE 7: 2-page reflection on how your source has survived so far and on the challenges facing its further survival (to post on discussion board)

W: lecture U: impacts of digital developments I (production and authoring)

F: section

Reading to be discussed in section (may be expanded to include recent online discussions)

Paul Duguid, "Material Matters: Aspects of the Past and Futurology of the Book" (1996), on-line at http://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~duguid/SLOFI/Material_Matters.htm

Geoffrey Nunberg "Farewell to the Information age" available on-line:
<http://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~nunberg/farewell.pdf>

Intro to Book History, ch. 7 (pp. 119-35).

Week XIII (Nov 20): poster session

M: Omeka presentations on final papers [Robinson Hall basement seminar room]

W: Thanksgiving travel --no class

no section this week

Week XIV (Nov 27): ending

M: lecture V: impacts of digital developments II (reading and consuming)

W: last lecture

F: last section

FINAL PAPERS DUE Wednesday Dec 6, noon

Review session Wednesday Dec 6, 5pm

FINAL EXAM Dec 13, time TBA