University of Waterloo  
Department of English Language and Literature

English 319: History and Theory of Media I: Writing and Print Cultures  
Fall 2006

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Office Hours: Mondays, 11:00-11:30, Wednesdays, 4:20-4:45

Course Description:
This is a course about media before the twentieth century and, in particular, on the media of writing and print. We will examine the history of writing (briefly) and of the printed material (in more detail). One of our principal aims will be to become more critical and aware of writing and print as media, to accept that they are not neutral carriers of textual messages, but shape what the texts they embody mean. To this end, we will focus on how the modern printed book acquired its form, and how its various conventions shape the way we read and understand. We will, however, also consider other kinds of printed matter.

Aims and outcomes:
The aims of this course are:

- To encourage students to think about writing and print as distinctive media, the characteristics of which shape the way we experience literary and non-literary texts.
- To show students the particular ways in which different forms of writing and print affect the way in we read.
- To acquaint students with the history of writing and print in Europe and America
- To introduce students to the main features of the disciplines known as the history of the book and the history of print culture.

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Analyse the distinctive features of written and printed objects and place them in an historical context.
- Understand the historical evolution of written and printed forms
- Understand how their experience of any text is shaped by its material form
- Do basic research in the history of the book

Organization of classes:
Mondays and Wednesdays: I've arranged the readings so that the bulk of it will be done between Wednesday classes and Monday classes. Monday classes will therefore generally be devoted to discussion of the reading and the main points raised in it. For Wednesday classes I will generally assign everyone a short task, which will have to be completed before the class and will be the subject of the Wednesday class itself. We are a relatively small group, so discussion will be strongly encouraged.
Rare Book Room sessions: There is no point talking at length about the need to think of books as distinctive material objects if we don’t actually encounter any. We’ll therefore hold several of the classes in the Rare Book Room of the Porter Library, where we will examine a number of interesting books dating from the mid-16th century to the present.

On-line materials: Much of the material it would be ideal to see is extremely rare, but available in a number of excellent on-line exhibitions and collections. You will therefore often be asked to examine materials on-line in order to prepare for classes. Hyperlinks to the relevant websites are given below.

This course has a UW-ACE site which I will use to send messages, communicate marks, and post tasks and on-line summary forms. I’ll also use the site to show you certain visual content. Please look at the site regularly.

Readings:
We have one course text, Henri-Jean Martin’s History and Power of Writing, which we’ll supplement with occasional shorter pieces, available on-line or in the library on reserve. Martin’s book is a chronological account of writing and printing in the Western world, from Cro-Magnon man and woman to the present. It’s an extraordinarily erudite, thorough and shrewd book. Don’t be put off by the wealth of historical detail, much of which you don’t need to remember. It’s the main issues raised that are important, and the key questions he raises about the nature of writing and print. He is particularly good in relating these media to their material “bases” (parchment, paper, ink, etc.) and in showing how writing and print intersect with the great intellectual and cultural movements of the day.

Assessment:
Mid-term: 20%
Reading summaries: 10%
Tasks: 10%
Group project: 25%
Book project: 35%

You will be asked to post on-line summaries of the reading by 12 midnight on the Sunday before every Monday class (and Tuesday midnight for the class following the mid-term). You will also be asked to perform certain on-line tasks or exercises before several of the Wednesday classes, for which you will be marked. There will be four group presentations in November. Each group should prepare a presentation on the topic in question that lasts no more than 40 minutes. The presentations should be informative, but they should also encourage discussion. They will be marked on quality of oral delivery, organisation, interest and sophistication of content and the degree to which they elicit discussion. 60% of the mark given to each student for this presentation will be the group mark; the remaining 40% will be mark given to each member of the group by his or her peers, reflecting their contribution to the group.

Your final project will be a study, 10-15 pages long, of a single book in the Waterloo collection. You will be asked to analyse the book’s formal and material features and to
discuss their history and their relevance for the way the book was and is used and understood.

**TOPICS SESSION-BY-SESSION**

**September 11-13**
Monday: Introduction/discussion of syllabus

Wednesday: Writing: its origins and nature

**September 18-20**
Monday: Writing: the alphabet
    **Reading:** Martin pp. 1-73

Wednesday: Writing: forms and formats

**September 25-27**
Monday: Writing in context
    **Reading:** Martin, pp. 74-181

Wednesday: Manuscript Culture

**October 2-4**
Monday: The invention of print: mechanical questions
    **Reading:** Martin, pp. 182-232

Wednesday: Rare Book Room, The invention of print: printed objects
    **On-line:** “The Gutenberg Bible at the Ransom Center” and Chapter 1 of “Dawn of Printing: Incunabula” (hyperlinks below).

**October 9-11**
Monday: Thanksgiving

Wednesday: Rare Book Room, The form of the book I: layout, title pages, organization
    **Reading:** Martin, pp. 233-320

**October 16-18**
Monday: The form of the book II: Images and Illustrations
    **Reading:** Martin 320-327; Alberto Manguel “Picture Reading”, in *A History of Reading*, pp. 95-107.
    **On-line:** “Biblia pauperum”

Wednesday: The form of the book III, Rare Book Room
October 23-25
Monday: Typography and ideology
   Reading: Talbot Baines reed, “old and New Fashions in Typography”, in Heller and Meggs, Texts on Type
   On-line: Chapter 2 of “Dawn of Printing: Incunabula”

Wednesday: Libraries

October 30-November 1
Monday: Mid-term exam

Wednesday: Print and society I: religion. First group Presentation
   Reading: Martin, 331-97

November 6-8
Monday: Print and society II: Nationalism. Second Group Presentation.
   Reading: Anderson, p.. 37-46, 67-82

Wednesday: Print and Society III: Language. Third Group Presentation.
   Reading: Fevre and Martin, pp. 319-32

November 13-15
Monday: Print and Society IV: The Formation of Literature. Fourth group Presentation

Wednesday: The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries overview
   Reading: Martin, pp. 397-463

November 20-22
Monday: Serials, magazines, newspapers, Rare Book Room
   Reading: Review Martin 295-301

Wednesday: The Book in Canada
   Reading: TBA

November 27-9
Monday: New types of type: industrialism and the avant-garde
   Reading: Jan Tschichold, “The Principles of the New Typography”, in Heller and Meggs, Texts on Type

Wednesday: Private Presses and Fine printing, Rare Book Room

December 4 Monday: Review
RESOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

On-line collections and exhibitions:

In Aedibius Aldi: The Legacy of Aldus Manutius and His Press (Brigham Young University): http://library.byu.edu/~aldine/

Biblia pauperum: http://www.amasis.com/biblia/

British Library Turning the Pages Site (an excellent site with digitised versions of 15 rare books, which you can page through and magnify as you wish): http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/ttpbooks.html

Caxton’s Canterbury Tales: http://www.bl.uk/treasures/caxton/homepage.html

Color Printing in the Nineteenth Century (University of Delaware): http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/color/


Early English Books Online (UWaterloo Library Collection)

The Gutenberg Bible at the Ransom Center: http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/permanent/gutenberg/

For endless examples of fonts: http://www.myfonts.com

Graphic Design: Typography (University of Florida): http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/spec/rarebook/art3283c/index.htm

Anderson, Benedict, Imagined Communities (London: Verso, 1983)
-----, Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances and Audiences from Codex to the Computer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995)
Heller, Steven and Philip B. Meggs, Texts on Type: Critical Readings on Typography (New York: Allworth Press, 2001)


**General histories**


**Aspects of print culture**


**Books about particular printers**

**Caxton:**
Blake, Norman, *Caxton and His World* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1969)

**Estienne:**

**Gutenberg:**

**Jenson:**

**Aldus Manutius:**

**Typography/Typography**
-----, *A Tally of Types* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973)

**On the practice of reading and on readers**
Caavallo, Gugliemo and Roger Chartier, *A History of Reading in the West* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999)


Saenger, Paul, *Space between Words: The Origin of Silent Reading* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997)

Saenger, Paul, `Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society', *Viator: Medieval and