GLIS 612: History of Books and Printing  
McGill University, School of Information Studies  
Fall Term, Monday, 11 September – 4 December 2017  
2:30-5:30 pm, EDUC 434

Image from *The Harper Establishment, or How the Story Books are Made*, 1855.

INSTRUCTOR

Geoffrey Robert Little  
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Office hours by appointment

OVERVIEW

This course surveys the history of printing with moveable type and book production from the mid-fifteenth century to the present. It will consider the book as physical object and its role as an historical agent, as well as aspects of book production, distribution, and reception. Topics covered will include, but are not limited to, manuscript production; printing processes and technologies in the hand and machine press eras; book illustration and design; communities of readers; newspapers; libraries; digital publishing; and the future of the book. We will attempt to learn more about broad themes by looking at specific case studies and the occasional fieldtrip. The course consists of seminars led by the instructor, student presentations, field trip(s), readings, and graded assignments.

The standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus may be modified at any time by the instructor. Notice of such changes will be announced in class and/or through e-mail. Reasonable notice will be given in the case of changes to the readings.
LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the history of the book as a physical object and the development of printing with moveable type;
- Develop an historical sense of the evolution of the tools, materials, and techniques of book production and printing technology over the past six centuries;
- Gain knowledge of the role of printing in the spread of ideas, language, information, knowledge, and culture across cultures and civilizations.
- Develop a critical grounding in theoretical and historical perspectives that draw on research in Information Studies and other fields of knowledge in order to inform professional practices.

EXPECTATIONS

This is a graduate course with a significant amount of required reading. We will cover a large swathe of intellectual and technological ground and we will move rapidly across and through more than five hundred years of human history. It is essential that you be as prepared as possible for every class by doing the assigned readings.

Book History prides itself on its interdisciplinarity and we will be looking at articles, book chapters, and studies produced by historians, literary scholars, librarians, classicists, and philosophers. You need not be familiar with or have a background in these disciplines, but you should be open to the various methods that each brings to the study of books, printing, texts, and reading.

Please be respectful of your peers and the instructor, meaning that during class you are to refrain from using your cell phone and engaging in other distracting activities.

CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR & OFFICE HOURS

E-mail (geoffrey.little@mcgill.ca) is the best way to reach the instructor. Messages will be answered within twenty-four (24) hours, except on weekends.

The instructor does not have set office hours, but is happy to make individual appointments to see students before or after class, or at other points that are mutually convenient.

COURSE EVALUATION

1. Group Seminar Presentation        30%
2. Typeface Project                  20%
3. Individual Seminar Presentation   40%
4. Participation                     10%
ASSIGNMENTS

1. Short Group Seminar (30%)

Starting in Week 6 groups of two or three students will present a twenty-minute seminar on a prescribed topic. The seminar is designed to help us explore topics that we will be unable to cover otherwise due to time pressures. This is also a way to teach and learn from your peers. A topic sign-up sheet will be circulated during the first and second weeks of class. Both/all group members will receive the same grade.

Groups are required to submit by e-mail a descriptive summary of their seminar (6 pages max.) to the instructor by 12 noon on the day of their presentation. The summary should not be your presentation script. It should include citations to secondary sources you use or quote. Any A/V materials you wish to use in your presentation (e.g., PowerPoint) should also be sent to the instructor by e-mail by 12 noon on the day of your presentation.

Each group is to end its seminar with 2 questions and to lead a short discussion following.

2. Typeface Project (20%)

Each student will select a typeface and write a short paper (max. 8 pages) outlining its history and development, design, characteristics, instances of use, and strengths and weaknesses. You are free to select a typeface from the list that follows, but you may also propose another. Helvetica is not an option.

Baskerville    Bell    Bembo    Bodoni    Cartier    Caslon    Centaur    Century    Comic    Sans    Courier    Didot    Futura    Galliard    Garamond    Gill    Georgia    Goudy    Jenson    Palatino    Perpetua    Tahoma    Troy    Verdana    Wingdings    Yale

You should start your research by consulting Robert Bringhurst’s excellent book The Elements of Typographic Style (Vancouver, 1992, rev. ed., 2015). Bringhurst will give you a comprehensive further reading list. This title is on reserve in HSSL: Z246 B74 2015.

This assignment is due in class on October 16.

3. Individual Seminar (40%)

Starting in Week 9 and going to the end of term, each student will construct and deliver an individual seminar around a single item from Rare Books and Special Collections in the McGill Library. Questions to consider when approaching the item include: Is it a book? A manuscript? Is it on paper? On vellum? Does it have an author? If yes, who was she/he? Does it have a stated printer or publisher? What do we
know about him/her? What do you know about the circumstances regarding the writing, publication, or
distribution of the work? Is there knowledge of any previous owners (i.e., provenance)? What impact did the
work have, if any, on its readers? Is it illustrated? Is there anything interesting about the typography
and design? Is there evidence of wear or use?

Your seminar should craft a narrative rather than give a series of facts or observations and should
connect the item you have selected with the larger issues we cover in class or that you yourself are able
to identify in your research.

Your seminar will consist of a twenty-minute in-class presentation (20%) and a short essay (max. 8
pages, not including bibliography, due in class the Monday following your presentation) (20%).
Your essay can mirror your presentation, but it should expand on the ideas you expressed and explore
some of the questions you raised. Your essay should also incorporate appropriate secondary sources that
have helped your work or informed your investigations. Please make sure in your essay to give
appropriate bibliographic details for your item, including its call number.

4. Participation (10%)

Your participation mark will be determined by the quality of your contributions to the course. This
means being present for classes, reading all of the week's primary assigned materials, doing further
reading (based on references from the assigned readings, suggestions from the instructor, or your own
initiative), allowing yourself enough time to think about the readings, and coming to class with things to
say. Participation depends just as much on listening, so you should listen carefully to everyone's
contributions, consider the effects of your own comments, and respect all members of the class.¹

SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

In accordance with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the
right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Please use a standard 12-point serif typeface and double-space all submitted work. Include a title, your
name, and student number on the first page. A separate title page is not required. Please include page
numbers on subsequent pages.

Cite your sources using the Chicago Manual of Style notes and bibliography system. This means
bibliographic information given in footnotes along with a bibliography of all sources. Be
consistent and accurate in your citations. Consult the 16th edition of the Chicago Manual of Style,
available online through McGill: http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/200998332. An assignment that does
not follow the Chicago Manual of Style will automatically receive a full grade penalization, i.e., a paper

¹ Based on Professor Alan Galey’s syllabus for INF 2159H: Historical and Analytical Bibliography, University of Toronto.
that merits an A- will score a B+. **Per the School of Graduate Studies, any grade below a B- is a failing grade.**

**LATE SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

Late work will not be accepted except in instances of illness or distress. Medical forms and other documentation will be required. A late assignment will be penalized one grade point per day to a maximum of three days at which point it will automatically receive a failing grade.

**TEXTBOOK**

This course has no textbook, but Philip Gaskell’s *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (New Castle, DE and Winchester, UK: Oak Knoll Press and St. Paul’s Bibliographies, 1995) will be consulted in detail. Gaskell is available as a PDF through the McGill Library: http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/32821740. Two copies of Gaskell are available in the HSSL reserve room.

**COURSE READINGS**

Other than Gaskell, course readings will be available online through the McGill library or myCourses. The following key is used to identify where to find and access materials.

@ **Available online through the McGill Library**

# **Available online via myCourses**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

McGill University values academic integrity. Students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. (For more information see http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity.)

Additional policies governing academic issues that affect students can be found in the McGill Charter of Students’ Rights: https://home.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/rights/.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Please speak with the instructor about your particular situation. All such discussions are confidential. Support for students is also available through the Office for Students with Disabilities: https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/office-students-disabilities.
CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: September 11: Introduction / Book History as a Field of Study

WEEK 2: September 18: The Emergence of Print & the Early Hand Press Period

Christopher de Hamel, “The European Medieval Book Trade,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). @
Andrew Pettegree, “The Invention of Printing,” in *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 21-42. @

WEEK 3: September 25: Printing Technologies to 1850


WEEK 4: October 2: Authors and Authorship

All read:
Read 1 of:

WEEK 5: October 9: STUDY WEEK – NO CLASS
WEEK 6: October 16: Printing Technologies After 1850
**Start of Group Seminars**
**Typeface assignment due in class**


WEEK 7: October 23: The Illustrated Book

Richard Benson, *The Printed Picture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 6-73. # NB: Much of this text consists of illustrations so you may skim. Pay attention to woodcuts, engravings, etchings, and lithographs.

WEEK 8: October 30: Field trip to Musée de l’imprimerie du Québec
**999 ave Émile-Journault, Crémazie Metro | $6.00 admission (exact change, please)**

WEEK 9: November 6: Print in the New World: New Spain, New England, New France
**Start of Individual Seminar Presentations**

Read 2 of:
François Melançon, “Print and Manuscript in French Canada under the Ancien Regime,” in *Books between Europe and the Americas*, eds. Leslie Howsam and James Raven (London: Palgrave 2011): 83-103. @

WEEK 10: November 13: Print in the New World: Nineteenth-Century Canada

All read:

Read 1 of the following short texts in *HBiC* v. 2:
Cornelius Jaenen, “Aboriginal Communities,” 33-40; #
Merrill Distad, “Print and the Settlement of the West,” 62-71; #
Elizabeth Driver, “Cookbooks,” 408-411. #
WEEK 11: November 20: Newspapers and Public Libraries


WEEK 12: November 27: Artists’ Books / Livres d’Artistes


WEEK 13: December 4: Book Production in the Twentieth Century & the E-Book

**Closing Ceremonies at Thomson House**


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