

FW22 AP/HIST 4230 6.0A Technologies of Communication: A History of Reading from the Codex to the Kindle

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Expanded Course Description (expanded from course calendar description):

We are all readers, but we rarely stop to analyze the objects that we read. Books and digital readers are far more than simply vehicles for transmitting text. These technologies of communication shape our everyday experience, but also offer lenses into the past and the future. This course surveys key scholarship from the 'history of the book,' a field that has something to offer historians of any period.

Additional Requirements:

Priority is given to History and English Honours majors and minors who have successfully completed at least 84 credits. The course counts for the Public History certificate.

Required Course Text/Readings:

There are no mandatory books for this course; however a number of the readings are compiled in David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery's *The Book History Reader*. 2nd edition. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2006 (abbreviated as *BHR*). You may wish to purchase a used copy.

All other readings will be made available in digital copies on eClass.

Weighting of Course:

Participation and Weekly Forum Posts: 20%

Discussion Leader: 10%

Assignment I: Reading a Book as Artifact (3-5 pages): 10%

Assignment II: Digital Approaches to Manuscript Records (3-5 pages): 10%

Capstone Essay, including preparatory exercises: 50%

Organization of the Course:

This course prioritizes writing, with brief weekly reading responses, two short papers, and a number of assignments that work towards producing **and revising** a major research paper. The 15-page Capstone essay (including proposal, annotated bibliography, and a mandatory draft) can be on any topic of interest from any time period. Students must make use of a minimum of one substantial historical primary source and must relate their research to the history of the book, reading, media, and/or technologies of communication.

Course Learning Objectives:

- better understand the field of book history and the history of information, and connect questions raised by those scholars to other areas of academic inquiry and everyday life.
- describe and interpret a wide range of different primary sources (e.g. administrative documents, printed texts, manuscript material, visual evidence, digital materials); critically evaluate a historical argument (e.g. logic of argument, use of evidence).
- critically evaluate a historical argument; compare and critically evaluate conflicting historical arguments; develop a meaningful research question on an historical topic; and, write a clear and

effective essay on a historical question, making use of different primary and secondary sources, and following appropriate standards of presentation (footnotes, bibliography, etc.)

Additional Information/Notes:

The class meets in the Clara Thomas Archives, allowing extensive hands-on access to many rare books and original documents. We will examine everything from medieval manuscripts and World War memorabilia, to original CBC radio transcripts, ship's logbooks, Canadian literary papers, and graphic novels. (Please note: **food and drink are prohibited** in the Archives; if you cannot make it from 11:30 a.m.-2:15 p.m. without eating, this may not be the class for you!) Over the course of the year (Covid conditions permitting), we will go on a number of field trips during class time, including e.g. the Archives of Ontario, U of T's Fisher Library, and the Toronto Reference Library. Depending on the situation with the pandemic, hybrid attendance options and make-up assignments will be possible on a short-term basis for students who have exposures to Covid, etc.; however this class is designed for in-person participation.