Course Description

This seminar will explore the evolution of print technology and culture since Gutenberg’s first experiments with movable type. Combining historical, theoretical, and technical analyses, we will work towards an understanding of how print media have formed and transformed essential features of the culture of capitalism. Though the emphasis will be on the book form, we will also study typewriters, newspapers, identity documents, and other printed matter.

Visits and Visitors

To be arranged. Possible visits to the New York Public Library, the Pierpont Morgan Library, the Museum of Modern Art...

Assignments

Assignments for this course will be of two types: those that aid your academic professionalization and those that allow you to pursue your own research interests:

• Present one set of readings. In addition to describing how authors formulate arguments and deploy evidence, presentations should include an explanation of the authors’ intellectual and institutional trajectories. The purpose of this assignment is to help us familiarize ourselves with the culture of academia and the special problems posed by interdisciplinary scholarship.

• Two short (500-750 word) book reviews in the style of a professional journal of your choice. Reading and writing book reviews is an essential part of what we do; we need to know both how to write them as well as how to write with them in mind.

• Ph.D. students only: One lecture (3500 words + images) on any topic relevant to the course. How do we translate our knowledge into a form that both educates and entertains a room full of irritable teenagers? It’s harder than it may seem.

• A research paper (20-25 pages) on a topic to be arranged with me. Details to follow.

Active participation in seminars is, of course, essential.
Tentative schedule of readings – selections to be determined

Week 1 – Introduction(s)

Week 2 – The Print Revolution
Elizabeth Eisenstein, *Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*
Paul Needham, review of Eisenstein in *Fine Print* VI (January 1980)
Robert Darnton, “What is the History of Books?”

Week 3 – Materiality of the Text
Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*

Week 4 – Typography & Meaning
Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*

Week 5 – Author Functions
Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright*
Barthes, “Death of the Author”
Foucault, “What is an Author?”

Week 6 – The Public Sphere
Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere*
Michael Warner, TBD

Week 7 – The (Very) Private Sphere
Thomas Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation.*
Roger Chartier, TBD

Week 8 – Newspapers & Nations
Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*

Week 9 – Novels & Individuals
Baudelaire, *Madame Bovary*
Catherine Gallagher, “The Rise of Fictionality”
Nancy Armstrong, “The Fiction of Bourgeois Morality and the Paradox of Individualism,” both in Franco Moretti, ed., *The Novel*

Week 10 – Your Papers, Please
Selections from Jane Caplan & John Torpey, eds. *Documenting Individual Identity*
**Week 11 — Typewriters**
Darren Wershier-Henry, *The Iron Whim: A Fragmented History of Typewriting*
Friedrich Kittler, “Typewriter,” from *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*
Ruben Gallo, “Typewriters,” from *Mexican Modernity: The Avant Garde and the Technological Revolution*

**Weeks 12-13 — Futures of the Book**
Jason Epstein, *The Business of Books*
Jean-Noel Jeanneney, *Google and the Myth of Universal Knowledge: A View from Europe*
Jacques Derrida, *Paper Machine*
Plus articles TBD

**Week 14 — Conclusion(s)**