

History 635: Problems in European History: History of the Book, 1400-1800

George Mason University, Spring 2010
Monday evenings 7:20-10:00 p.m. in Robinson Hall B 204

Instructor: Dr. Mack P. Holt

Office: Robinson Hall B 375-A

Office hours: Tuesdays 4:00-6:00 p.m. by appointment only

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Goals of the course:

1. To introduce students to the most recent research on the history of the book from its late medieval manuscript forms to the advent of the printing press through the hand-press period, ca. 1400-1800.
2. To help students understand that historical reconstructions of the past—which is what we call History—are not necessarily the same thing as what happened in the past. History, which has to be constructed and put in a narrative form, is thus an interpretation of the past.
3. To help students also understand that historical truth is neither absolute nor arbitrary. That is, although there is no single fixed historical truth, all historical interpretations are not equally valid.

Schedule of assignments:

(Please note that PhD students will sometimes be expected to read a little more than the MA students. The PhD reading is recommended for MA students, though not required unless you are leading the discussion for a particular week—see below. All journal articles are available on line via JSTOR, Project Muse, etc.)

Week 1 (Jan. 25): Introduction

MA and PhD Reading: Leslie Howsam, *Old Books and New Histories* (Toronto, 2006); Robert Darnton, “What is the History of Books?” *Daedalus* 111 (Summer 1982): 65-83 (JSTOR)

Week 2 (Feb. 1): Book Production I

(Meet in Fenwick Library Special Collections and Archives, 2nd floor)

MA Reading: W. Chappell and W. Bringhurst, *A Short History of the Printed Word* (Hartley and Marks, 1999), pp. 1-190 (ch. 1-7)

PhD Reading: Same as MA plus L. Febvre and H.-J. Martin, *The Coming of the Book* (Verso, 1976), pp. 1-108 (ch. 1-3)

Week 3 (Feb. 8): Book Production II

MA Reading: Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oak Knoll Press, 2000), pp. 1-185

PhD Reading: Same as MA plus L. Febvre and H.-J. Martin, *The Coming of the Book* (Verso, 1976), pp. 109-215 (ch. 4-6)

Week 4 (Feb. 15): The Advent of Print I

MA Reading: Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2nd ed. 2005), abridged version of the original two-volume edition

PhD reading: Same as MA plus L. Febvre and H.-J. Martin, *The Coming of the Book* (Verso, 1976), pp. 216-332 (ch. 7-8)

Week 5 (Feb. 22): The Advent of Print II

MA Reading: Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book* (Univ. of Chicago, 1999), ch. 1-3, 6-7, and 9

PhD Reading: Same as MA plus AHR Forum: "How Revolutionary Was the Print Revolution?" *The American Historical Review* 107 (February 2002): 84-127, articles by Elizabeth Eisenstein, "An Unacknowledged Revolution Revisited," Adrian Johns, "How to Acknowledge a Revolution," and a reply by Eisenstein (JSTOR)

Week 6 (Mar. 1): History of Reading I

MA and PhD Reading: G. Cavallo and R. Chartier, eds., *A History of Reading in the West* (Univ. of Massachusetts, 2003)

Spring Break (Mar. 8): This date will be a make-up date if there's a snow cancellation.

Week 7 (Mar. 15): History of Reading II

MA Reading: Anthony Grafton, *Commerce with the Classics* (Univ. of Michigan, 1997)

PhD reading: Same as MA plus R. Chartier, "Publishing Strategies and What the People Read, 1530-1660," in Chartier's *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France* (Princeton, 1987), 145-182

Week 8 (Mar. 22): History of Reading III

MA and PhD Reading: Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms* (Johns Hopkins, 1992); A. Grafton and L. Jardine, "Studied for Action: How Gabriel Harvey Read his Livy," *Past & Present* 129 (1990): 30-78 (JSTOR); and Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books* (Stanford, 1994)

Week 9 (Mar. 29): Case Study: The Bible I

MA Reading: C. De Hamel, *The Book: A History of the Bible* (Phaedon, 2005)

PhD Reading: Same as MA plus Paul Saenger, "The Impact of the Early Printed Page on the Reading of the Bible," in K. van Kampen and P. Saenger, eds., *The Bible as a Book: The First Printed Editions* (Oak Knoll, 1999), 31-52

Week 10 (Apr. 5): Case Study: The Bible II

MA Reading: Lori Anne Ferrell, *The Bible and the People* (Yale, 2009)
PhD reading: Same as MA plus “William H. Sherman, “The Book Thus Put in Every Vulgar Hand: Marking the Bible,” in Sherman’s *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Univ. of Pennsylvania, 2009), 71-86

Week 11 (Apr. 12): History of the Book On-Line

MA and PhD Reading: Carefully explore the following web sites.

Library of Congress Rare Books and Special Collections

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/rarebook/digitalcoll.html>

British Library, London

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/index.html>

Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing (SHARP)

<http://www.sharpweb.org/>

Rare Book School, University of Virginia

<http://www.rarebookschool.org>

International Bibliography of the History of the Printed Book and Libraries

<http://www.kb.nl/bho>

American Antiquarian Society

<http://www.americanantiquarian.org/hob.htm>

Internet Archive

<http://www.archive.org>

Early English Books On-Line (EEBO)

Access via GMU Library Electronic Databases

Eighteenth Century Collections On-Line (ECCO)

Access via GMU Library Electronic Databases

Early American Imprints Collection, Series I (EAIC, I)

Access via GMU Library Electronic Databases

Week 12 (Apr. 19): Books and the Public Sphere

MA Reading: Arlette Farge, *Subversive Words: Public Opinion in Eighteenth-Century France* (Penn State, 1994)

PhD reading: Same as MA plus S. Botein, J. Censer, and H. Rivo, “The Periodical Press in Eighteenth-Century English and French Society: A Cross-Cultural Approach,” *Comparatives Studies in Society and History* 23 (1981): 464-490 (JSTOR)

Week 13 (Apr. 26): Books and Enlightenment

MA Reading: Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Bestsellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (Norton, 1995)

PhD Reading: Same as MA plus R. Darnton, “An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” *The American Historical Review* 105 (February 2000): 1-35 (JSTOR)

Week 14 (May 3): Books and Revolution

MA Reading: Roger Chartier, *Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (Duke, 1991)

PhD Reading: Same as MA plus R. Chartier, "Texts, Symbols, and Frenchness," *Journal of Modern History* 57 (1985): 682-695; Robert Darnton, "The Symbolic Element in History," *Journal of Modern History* 58 (1986): 218-234; and Dominick LaCapra, "Chartier, Darnton, and the Great Symbol Massacre," *Journal of Modern History* 60 (1988): 95-112 (all in JSTOR)

Monday, May 10: Take-home final exam due from MA students and final paper from PhD students

Other course requirements:

All students will be required to visit the Rare Book Room at the Library of Congress at some point during the semester. I will arrange a group visit for the class outside of class time (the Rare Book Room is only open 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. M-F), and if you cannot make this trip, you will need to visit the rare Book Room on your own at some point during the semester. The date and time for this trip will be provided as soon as it is set up.

Students will also be required to visit the Special Collections and Archives of the GMU Library, which will take place during class time on Monday, February 1. If you miss the class when this visit takes place, you will need to visit the GMU Special Collections and Archives on your own at some point during the semester.

Oral participation is important in a graduate seminar, and every member of the class is expected to participate. At the same time, volubility is no substitute for thoughtfulness. Each class will begin with one or two students making short oral presentations summarizing the reading and pointing to the leading questions for discussion (see instructions below for class discussion leaders). In theory, you will be able to choose which weeks—each of you will have to make a short oral presentation over the course of the semester—so be prepared to make these choices at the beginning of the semester.

Written work (MA Students):

With the exception of the first class meeting, you will write a short review of the required reading each week, due in class on the date the reading is to be discussed. Your review (2-3 pp. typed and double-spaced) should focus on the following questions: What is the author's principal argument in the book/article? What kinds of sources does the author use to support this argument? And are you persuaded by the argument and the sources, and why or why not? (You will be given special instructions in class for the reading on

April 12, as your reading that week will consist of an examination of a number of web sites). In addition there will be a take-home final exam at the end of the course, to be distributed on May 3 and due on May 10.

Written work (PhD Students):

Doctoral students will not write the short reviews every week like the MA students. Instead, they will write a research paper of ca. 25 pp. due at the end of the semester on some aspect of the history of the book in the period 1400 to 1800. All topics must be approved by the instructor. Papers can take the format of a traditional research paper based on primary sources; a historiographical paper that focuses on some conversation, debate, or controversy in the secondary literature; or some hybrid of the two. Topics must be approved by February 1, bibliographies turned in by February 15, and first drafts must be submitted by April 12. The final draft of the paper will be due on May 10. Doctoral students will be asked to meet with the instructor individually outside regular class time at various points in the semester.

Grading will be based on the following formula:

MA Students: Book reviews	40%
Oral participation	40%
Final exam	20%
PhD Students: Research paper	60%
Oral participation	40%

Instructions for Class Discussion Leaders:

Discussion leaders must read all of the reading (including the PhD reading) for the week you are leading the discussion. You will be in charge of starting the class discussion by summarizing the major arguments of the reading for that week, contextualizing any debates or controversies raised by the reading, and having questions prepared to generate the initial discussion. You should plan on being “in charge” of at least the first 30 minutes of the class. If two students are leading the discussion on a particular week, you must get together beforehand and decide how to divide up the duties of leading the class, and the two students should plan to be “in charge” for at least the first 60 minutes of the class. Given the amount of PhD reading for weeks 2-4, PhD students will be expected to choose one of those weeks to be discussion leader.