

COURSE SYLLABUS FORMAT
Southeast Missouri State University

Department of History

Course No. UI456

Title of Course: History of the Book

Revision

New X

I. Catalog Description and Credit Hours of Course:

- A. Seminar and hands-on workshop exploring the influence of printing on the formation of world cultures up to the digital age. (3 hours)

B. *More extensive course description for the University Studies Handbook:*

This interdisciplinary class will use the approaches of history, studio art, and art history to explore the influence that Gutenberg and his invention of printing with movable type had on the intellectual, political, and social formation of world cultures. We will also question whether a similar revolution is taking place in the digital age. In a seminar format, we will focus on major developments in the technologies of representation—image-making, writing, printing—against their relevant social and historical backgrounds. In addition to seminars, weekly practical workshops will explore the physical technologies of the written and printed word through hands-on paper- and parchment-making, calligraphy and illumination, woodcutting, engraving, etching, lithography, letterpress printing, bookbinding, and digital publishing. The course will culminate in a final book-making project that uses one or more of these technologies to explore the boundaries between the oral and written, manuscript and print, self and “other”. 3 credit hours

C. **Interdisciplinary Nature of the Course**

This course integrates the *University Studies Perspectives of Human Institutions* (with respect to the Development of a Major Civilization) and the *Perspective of Individual Expression* (with respect to Written Expression and Artistic Expression) by leading students to employ the approaches of history, studio art, and art history to explore the influence that the technology of writing—and its changes—had on the formation of various world cultures. In order to focus on the *Perspective of Human Institutions* in the area of the Development of a Major Civilization, we will study the development of European technologies of writing, from the Greek scroll to the monastic scriptorium to the printing press, and the social and political contexts that influenced those changes. We will also seek out the wider influences of world cultures on these technologies throughout time, such as the relation of Egyptian and Phoenician scripts, Chinese paper, and Korean printing to our modern print culture. We will also question whether a similar revolution is taking place in the current digital age. To address the *Perspective of Individual Expression*, with respect to the areas of Written and Artistic expression, students will examine how developments in technologies of writing have themselves shaped human written and artistic expressions around the globe — for example, in some cultures, such as the monastic culture of the European middle ages, the technology of calligraphic writing,

which itself can be considered an important form of artistic expression, was as significant (and spiritual) as the written text it communicated. By integrating these two perspectives of *Human Institutions* and *Individual Expression* students will be encouraged to form an awareness of the interdependency between technological change, artistic expression, and world history. The integration of these Perspectives is also designed to foster an understanding of the development of current world cultures, and written culture specifically, as not being teleologically determined by European civilization only, but as an expression of the myriad historical, cultural and societal exchanges that mirror our complex world today.

II. Prerequisite (s): NONE

III. Purposes or Objectives of the Course:

- A. To introduce students to the development of the technology of writing known as the “book” in its various forms throughout world history, from the beginnings of human written and artistic expression in the Neolithic era; to the simultaneous development of various technologies in world cultures in the Antique and Medieval eras; to more mechanized processes in the Renaissance, Early Modern, and Modern eras; and finally to the modern digital forms that present technologies of writing use to communicate both written and artistic expressions. (University Studies Objectives 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)
- B. To develop students’ understanding of the interdependency of cultural expression and technology by seeking out how the influences of one upon the other, and vice-versa, affect both. (2, 4, 5, 6, 7)
- C. To teach the historical method as a means of critical thinking and as a way for understanding and contextualizing artistic change, including the evaluation of cultural expressions not only for their aesthetic value, but seeing them, through the application of historical perspective, as the products of specific social and political contexts, as well. (2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9)
- D. To foster an understanding of past cultures and technologies through experiential learning (i.e., making a quill pen, learning calligraphy; making a book), with the philosophy that kinetic and experiential learning is essential to building a more complete understanding of the processes involved, thereby encouraging critical thinking and the deeper understanding of unfamiliar cultures. (2, 4, 5, 7)
- E. To assist the development of oral, written, and artistic communication through class discussion, oral and visual presentations, and written as well as artistic projects. (1, 3)

IV. Student Learning Outcomes (Minimum of 3)

- A. Demonstrate familiarity with the development of the technology of writing known as the “book” in its various forms throughout history;
- B. Exhibit a complex, well-informed understanding of the interdependency of cultural expression and technology;
- C. Competently use the historical method to examine and contextualize artistic change;

- D. Draw from the range of experiential learning techniques encountered in class to exhibit an appreciation of the potential of experiential learning;
- E. Demonstrate the competence in oral and written communication through class discussions, oral presentations, and written projects.

V. Expectations of Students:

- A. Regular class attendance
- B. Participation in class discussions and activities during class hours.
- C. Reading all materials assigned.
- D. Timely completion of all written and oral assignments, including a research paper and oral presentation of that paper, and a final artistic project and the oral presentation of that project.
- E. Demonstration of mastery of course content in two short critical analysis papers.
- F. Demonstration of computer skills in word processing, location of information, and the use of visual presentation software.

VI. Course Content or Outline (Indicate number of class hours per unit or section):

Course Theme Question:

How does the technology of how we write influence *what* we write and what we *think*?

- I. The Beginnings of Writing and its Making
 - A. Does the Book have a Past? 1 hour
 - B. The Ancient World 2 hours
 - C. The Codex 2 hours
 - D. *Workshops: Elementary Bookbinding and Papermaking* 3 hours
- II. Medieval Expressions: Europe and the Islamic World
 - A. Medieval Books: the Bible, Books of Hours, & the Koran 3 hours
 - B. *Workshop: Calligraphy* 2 hours
- III. Renaissance and Reformations: the Coming of Print
 - A. Gutenberg and the Korean Printing Press 3 hours
 - B. *Workshop: Printing and Typesetting* 3 hours
- IV. The Industrialization of the Book
 - A. Steam Power and the Printing Press 1 hours
 - B. Book Publishing and the Book Trade 2 hours
 - C. Newspapers and the Popular Press 2 hours
- V. The Art of the Book
 - A. *Workshop: Woodcuts* 3 hours
 - B. Book Collecting 2 hours
 - C. *Workshop: Engraving, Etching, and Mezzotint* 3 hours
 - D. William Morris and the Fine Press Movement 3 hours

E. Workshop: Advanced Binding	2 hours
F. Book Illustration	1 hours
G. Artists' Books	2 hours
VI. The "Book Business"	
A. Digital Publishing	1 hours
B. Editing and Children's Books	2 hours
C. Preservation of the Printed Record	1 hours
D. Does the Book have a Future?	1 hours
TOTAL:	45 hours

VII. Textbook(s) and/or Other Required Materials or Equipment:

David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (eds.), *The Book History Reader*, second edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2006)

Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (eds.), *A Companion to the History of the Book* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009)

Michael Olmert, *The Smithsonian Book of Books* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 1992)

Esther K. Smith, *How to Make Books: Fold, Cut & Stitch Your Way to a One-of-a-Kind Book* (New York: Potter Craft, 2007)

Maurice Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are* (New York: Harper Collins, 1963)

Lane Smith, *It's a Book* (New York: Roaring Book Press, 2010)

The Machine that Made Us. DVD. Written by Stephen Fry; produced and directed by Patrick McGrady (2008; London: Filmmakers Library, 2008).

Secret of Kells. DVD. Directed by Tomm Moore (2008; Kilkenny: Cartoon Saloon, New Video Group, 2010).

VIII. Basis for Student Evaluation:

<i>Expectations</i>	<i>Percentage of Overall Grade</i>	<i>Student Learning Outcomes Assessed</i>
Participation (class discussions, workshops, and by completing all in-class assignments)	30%	A, D & E
Two short, critical analysis papers	10%	A, B, C & D
Research Paper	15%	A, B, C & D
Presentation of Research Paper	5%	

		E
Final, Cumulative Book-Making Project	30%	A, B, D & E
Presentation of Final Book-Making Project	10%	D & E

Two, Short Critical Analysis Papers – Assessing SLOs A; B; C; and D

During the semester, students will write two 1-2 page essays comparing and analyzing the ways the “development” of the technology of writing is presented in the class readings, the two films viewed in class, and in the children’s literature examined in class.

Research Paper – Assessing SLOs A; B; C; and D

Drawing on the readings, class discussions, and their own, independent research, students will write a 5-10 page research paper that answers the course theme question “*How does the technology of how we write influence what we write and what we think?*”, through the prism of any topic of their choice that is related to the history of the book.

Presentation of Research Paper – Assessing SLO E

Students will also present the findings of their research into the History of the Book in a ten-minute oral presentation to the class, accompanied by a PowerPoint slideshow. The class as a whole will be required to respond to each student’s presentation with a question and discussion period.

Final, Cumulative, Book-Making Project – Assessing SLOs A; B; D; and E

For the final project in the class, students will make a creative project that also approaches the course theme question — “*How does the technology of how we write influence what we write and what we think?*” --through the medium of an “artist book”, which can take any form and topic area of focus that they choose, and can be related, or not, to the topic of the formal research paper. However, the creative project must pull together issues raised in discussions, readings, and workshops and must in some way specifically address the course theme question.

Presentation of the Final, Cumulative, Book-Making Project – Assessing SLOs D and E

At the end of the course, as a class, students will orally present their individual projects and their responses to the course theme question to a wider university or civic audience (e.g. a Kent Library Athenaeum event.) Students’ oral presentations must be accompanied by their finished book-making project and a visual presentation (in PowerPoint) that illustrates the process of making the final project, as well as how it directly engages with the course theme question.

IX. Justification for Inclusion in the University Studies Program:

A. Objective I Demonstrate the ability to locate and gather information.

Emphasis: Significant

Content: For historians, art historians, and artists, the location of information, and the skills required to gather that information, once located, are of the utmost significance. Demonstrations of how to locate primary and secondary sources, including ancient poetry related to the book trade, medieval writing examples, and Enlightenment descriptions of the printing process, as well as the products of

current scholarly research and descriptions of particular techniques used in artistic and written expression, will be presented to the class.

Teaching Strategies: Students will learn to locate and gather information through demonstration of the resources available to them, and that demonstration will be reinforced by requiring the students to go through the process themselves. Through repetition and through group discussion of the issues and challenges they encounter students' skills of information location and gathering will be strengthened.

Student Assignments: While the most significant assignments related to Objective I will be the research paper and the final, book-making project, students will be expected throughout the semester to use their ongoing research to enrich and enliven class discussions, prepare a bibliography for the research paper, and work in groups to locate and analyze materials in the Rare Book Room and the Special Collections. Several class discussions will require students to locate and gather information related to the class theme before class begins.

Student Evaluation: Assessment of student skills in the location and gathering of information is a very significant part of the research paper evaluation. Students will be required to locate and use a variety of primary and secondary sources in their research, including historical accounts of changing technologies of writing; artistic expressions of those technologies; and visual and oral evidence of the changes in those technologies in the past two decades.

B. Objective 2 Demonstrate capabilities for critical thinking, reasoning and analyzing.

Emphasis: Significant

Content: All elements of the course are designed to incorporate the development of capabilities for critical thinking, reasoning and analyzing. The nature of the theme chosen for this course, a comparative view of the history of a particular human technology, will enable the critical analysis and comparison of the approaches of a variety of cultures to a common desire to communicate. One example of this encompasses an analysis of early systems of writing, and focused class discussions as to why these systems took different shapes and trajectories in Europe, Asia, North America and Africa. Moreover, by examining the debate among scholars about the relative value of "oral" culture vs. "written" culture, students will develop an appreciation for the complexities surrounding significant issues.

Teaching Strategies: Discussions focused around the challenges to communication faced by human communities will be used to stimulate critical thinking about a wide range of problems. In a group setting, for example, students will compare the ancient cuneiform tablet and medieval Book of Hours housed in the Kent Library Rare Book Room and evaluate the different strategies that the unknown creator of each object employed to communicate, as well as positing their own theories as to *what* that unknown creator was trying to say. One important strategy will be to compare several scholarly works dealing with each type of object, in order to demonstrate that there are always interpretative alternatives — simply because one scholar posits a theory in a compelling way does not mean that the theory will go unchallenged.

Student Assignments: Students will be expected to display critical thinking skills as they progress in their research and discussion. An important focus, both of the research paper and the final book-making project, lies in moving beyond information gathering to independent conclusions. Throughout the semester students will be given discussion assignments related to information analysis and critical thinking.

Student Evaluation: The ability to demonstrate critical and analytical skills will be a factor in the evaluation of the research paper, critical analysis papers, the final book-making project, and the cogency of the arguments used in class discussions. These will be evaluated on the depth of analysis exhibited and the logic of the arguments used.

C. Objective 3

Demonstrate Effective Communication Skills

Emphasis: Significant

Content: The content, activities, and required assignments of the course will provide the material students will use to develop their communication skills.

Teaching Strategies: To assist student verbal communication skills, various problem-oriented questions will be posed for discussion and interaction. Various writing exercises will help develop student written communication skills.

Student Assignments: Students will be expected to communicate to the class in discussions and in the presentation of their research, both formally and informally. Written communication will be expected in the research project, in the critical analysis papers, and formal oral presentations of the both the research project and final book-making project will be required.

Student Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the clarity and precision of their expression as well as their ability to communicate an integrated understanding of the material. The critical analysis papers and the research project will emphasize written communication as well as content. Oral presentation of the research paper and final book-making project will provide an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of student communication skills. Verbal communication in class discussions will also be a factor in the final grade.

D. Objective 4 Demonstrate an understanding of human experiences and the ability to relate them to the present.

Emphasis Significant

Content: The content of the course, based as it is on the origins, development, and modern adaptations of various technologies of writing throughout human history, perfectly fits the third University Studies objective, and will develop in the student an ability to understand the broad range of human experiences and the ability to relate them to the present. The present, “digital age”, as well as past forms of human communication will be under constant focus. Topics for consideration were carefully selected so they would relate to this objective and promote a clearer understanding of the problems facing the future of communication and “the Book” today. For example, by examining the impact that Gutenberg’s press had on European society, politics, and religion, and comparing that to the perceived impact that technologies of mass communication have had on today’s “information age”, students will be led to a greater understanding of the different experiences involved in each “revolution”, and make critical judgments as to whether we, as a human society, can expect even greater change in the future.

Teaching Strategies: Experiential learning exercises, such as learning to use a quill pen and write in calligraphic script, will help relate students to the physical experience of communicating in the past. Moreover, several audio-visual aids, including video, music, and film will be employed to help meet this objective. Using material from readings, videos and student research, discussions will aid students in understanding changing human experiences and how they shape societal patterns today.

Student Assignments: Various readings will be assigned throughout the semester relating to the objective, as well as the screening of videos that will help give students a greater understanding of the mechanical processes involved in the history of the book and of human communication. These readings and videos will form the basis for class discussions exploring not only the historical event or experience but its relationship to society today. Discussing the events of the past, as well as engaging in the actual physical experiences of the past, such as making paper, or writing out a long passage in slow, painstaking calligraphy, will allow students to bring a greater understanding to bear upon class discussions about not only the way writing and book-making have changed in the past, but what those changes have meant, and why it matters to our society today.

Student Evaluation: Class discussion, critical analysis papers, and the two major class projects mentioned above, will provide students the opportunity to reflect on the ways in which the past informs contemporary society in this “Information Age”, particularly as it relates to changing communication strategies and societal cohesion.

E. Objective 5 Demonstrate an understanding of various cultures and their interrelationships.

Emphasis Significant

Content: The History of the Book, throughout human history, is a story that weaves together influences, innovations, and traditions from various cultures from around the world and throughout the past. Course materials will be carefully chosen so that students will be led through the myriad influences on the history of the technology of writing without an overly biased emphasis on Western culture. While keeping an eye on developments in writing and bookmaking in Western Europe, the course will also detail the influence that Chinese had on the development of paper and pictographic script; the development of moveable type by Korean printers *before* Gutenberg; and the political influences on the creation of a written script for the Cherokee language, just to name a few examples. By fostering the idea that other cultures have to be examined from a neutral position, and not in a teleological narrative that pits “primitive” vs. “developed” cultures in a story whose end is the apotheosis of Steve Jobs and American digital technology, the course will enhance the University Studies objectives.

Teaching Strategies: Through physical activities, readings, examination of historical artifacts in the Rare Book Room of Kent Library, musical selections, documentary films, field site visits to local printers and printing shops, lectures, and discussion, the cultural diversity inherent in the history of the book will be explored.

Student Assignments: The readings, course materials, and research projects will reinforce student understanding of the interrelationship between Western and Eastern influences on the history of communication and writing, as well as the influence of cultures of the past upon the way that we communicate today.

Student Evaluation: Class discussion, critical analysis papers, and both the written and oral presentations of student research projects will provide students the opportunity to reflect on the ways in which technologies of writing and book-making have changed, and the various cultures that have instigated and influenced that change.

F. Objective 6 Demonstrate the ability to integrate the breadth and diversity of knowledge and experience.

Emphasis Significant

Content: Given the broad interdisciplinary nature of the history of the book in general, and of the nature of this course in particular, material covering a wide range of knowledge will be presented. Through the semester, students will be encouraged to analyze the development of the technologies of writing and book-making by examining these changes through the approaches of history, art history, and studio art. By exploring the diverse range of “written” communication, and the interplay between artistic expression and political, economic, religious, and social pressures, students will be able to see how the development of technologies of writing involved every aspect of human culture, as well as resulted from particular cultural contexts.

Teaching Strategies: In class presentations and discussions it will be essential to expand topics to their larger dimensions. For example, students will be challenged to ponder the larger implications of the development of religious and societal needs and desires of an expanding medieval Christendom, and the resulting development of impressive, ostentatious, and expensive Bibles meant to not only to

convert the pagan “heathen” peoples of the post-Roman era, but, through the religious reforms promulgated through these manuscripts, to expand and extend the political clout and imperial claims of Charlemagne. Students will be led to contemplate these implications actively, through questions posed by an instructor employing the Socratic Method, not passively, through lectures only. In all class presentations there will be attempts to place the material under discussion into a broader framework by using various audio-visual materials, popular literature, and scholarly works.

Student Assignments: The breadth and diversity of knowledge and experience will be reinforced through the assigned readings and activities. Readings will range from scholarly works to poetry, music, fiction, as well as online internet forums and new, electronic forms of cultural production, such as hyper-texts (a former “new” technology of the past two decades) and blogs. Activities such as making linoleum block prints, calligraphic decorations, and hand-bound books will open students (especially those without a studio art background) to ways of experiencing technologies of the past outside of more formal academic readings.

Student Evaluation: In both the research project and critical analysis papers, students will be evaluated on the extent to which they demonstrate knowledge of the breadth of experience of past human cultures as they attempted to communicate particular social, religious and political values through their written systems. This approach would integrate aspects of both perspectives on human institutions and individual expression. In a question or project dealing with the advent of the digital reader or e-book, for example, students could be expected to discuss how the new technology employs in the visual arts in both similar and dissimilar ways to more traditional technologies that offer expression and knowledge in paper form. Both of these technologies could then be compared to a past society that exclusively used clay tablets in similar (or dissimilar) communication strategies.

G. Objective 7 Demonstrate the ability to make informed, intelligent value decisions.

Emphasis Some

Content: Value dilemmas will be a focus of some elements of the course. The prevailing tendency in a “history” of a particular technology is often to give a historical “progression” spin to the narrative of historical change. This course will not do that. Instead, the content of the course will focus on the particular social, political, and religious context(s) of each form of writing technology discussed, as a way toward encouraging students to see and value particular cultures and their technologies in and for themselves—not automatically dismissing them as part of a “backward” or “benighted” past.

Teaching Strategies: Throughout the semester, discussions devoted to examining the choices made by particular peoples to express themselves in particular ways, and in particular historical and cultural contexts, will have a direct goal of exploring the valuing process of both the student and those people under consideration.

Student Assignments: Readings, videos and class discussions will help students explore the dilemma all human cultures have faced in attempting to communicate their own values and belief systems to others—as well as helping students to understand how their own values and belief systems influence their own understanding of past cultures.

Student Evaluation: Class discussion and critical analysis papers will provide students the opportunity to reflect on the value decisions of others, as well as their own responses to the various topics and innovations presented.

H. Objective 8 Demonstrate the ability to make informed, sensitive aesthetic responses.

Emphasis Significant

Content: Making informed and sensitive aesthetic responses is a significant component of this course. By exploring the richness and diversity of the history of human attempts at written communication and

the history of the book, students will have the opportunity to better understand the human condition. The objective will be demonstrated in the readings, visual documentaries, hands-on examination of artistic productions of the history of writing found in the Kent Library Rare Book Room, in class discussions and other course material.

Teaching Strategies: Class discussions and field trips will be devoted to exploring the ways in which artistic expression is integral to the history of the book. Changing cultural aesthetics toward “good” or “beautiful” ways in which to communicate will be highlighted in discussions of the Fine Press Movement, and the particular aesthetic goals of the nineteenth-century artist, writer, and printer William Morris, for example. Having the opportunity to travel to the Firecracker Press in St. Louis will afford students the chance to discuss with the press’s graphic designers and typographers the various pressures (economic, social, political, etc.) that are brought to bear on their aesthetic choices and responses. Exploring this dimension should help students make more informed aesthetic responses to the history of written expression, as it arose from particular political, economic, and social contexts, and to the artistic forms that that expression often employed.

Student Assignments: The examination of artifacts, readings, images, acoustic recordings, and videos will be assigned to give students the opportunity to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the arts as a tool for communication, and as products of particular historical contexts, thereby increasing their ability to make more informed aesthetic responses to such material in the future.

Student Evaluation: Class discussion and the production of the final book-making project, as well as its oral presentation, will be key in evaluating students’ ability to make informed, sensitive aesthetic responses. Critical analysis papers will provide students the opportunity to the ways in which various forms of communication can be perceived as art, as well as giving students a chance to evaluate their own reactions various attempts at communication, as well as historical aesthetic responses to the subject, movement, or artifact under consideration.

H. Objective 9 Demonstrate the ability to function responsibly in one's natural, social, and political environment.

Emphasis Some

Content: Though the ability to function responsibly in one's natural, social, and political environment is not particularly emphasized in this course, exploring the development of different strategies of communication through the written word throughout various cultures in human history—and the effects that past natural, social, and political environments have had on that development—will enable students to gain an appreciation of the goals of this objective. By exploring the range of influences upon the effectiveness of the human desire and ability to communicate across time and distance, this course will demonstrate that actions of individuals, such as Johannes Gutenberg (or Bill Gates for that matter), have consequences, and that every individual, regardless of status, participates in the creation of social, political, and ideological/aesthetic systems. Moreover, by breaking away even from an “individualist” view of history to examine the roles that numerous unknown players (such as medieval monks who felt that signing their names to a manuscript would have been too much an act of pride: a deadly sin) have had in changing technology to suit their own needs and social desires, students will come to appreciate that even those who are now anonymous had the power to make a difference in their respective societies.

Finally, the impact of changes in the natural environment upon human ability to communicate through written modes, whether that be the increase in cotton-farming in the Missouri/Mississippi delta region that gave rise to a cheaper source of paper and, therefore, the proliferation and greater distribution of printed matter, or the impact of the flooding of the Nile upon the growth of the *Cyperus papyrus* plant, which, in turn, afforded a cheap and reliable source of material for the development of Egyptian hieroglyphics, will be addressed—encouraging students to examine their own responsibilities to, and possible impact upon, their natural environment.

Teaching Strategies: In class discussions, based on readings, video documentaries, their own research, and class presentations, students will explore such important issues as how individuals and societies in the past influenced different technologies of the written word, and the impact of their natural environments upon those technologies.

Student Assignments: Discussions related to readings and video assignments will ask students to evaluate how people in the past functioned in their natural, social and political environments with regard to how changing technologies of the book both changed—and were changed by—those natural, social and political environments (a key approach in historical thought, and as such, strongly encouraged in the research paper). Class discussions will reflect on how individual actions take place within a larger societal context, and that individual actions have larger societal consequences.

Student Evaluation: Students will be expected to display an understanding of natural, social, and political issues of the past, as they intersected with the history of the book, and to be able to relate those issues to similar problems they face today as members of a world being swept by a new age of communication. In addition to class discussion, this objective will be evaluated in the research paper, critical analysis papers, and to some extent in the final book-making project.

X. Background:

Teaching this course requires an extensive background and knowledge of the history of the book; a knowledge of changing approaches in the past of human attempts to communicate via the written word and artistic means; and a familiarity with changes within digital/electronic communication technologies within the past two decades up to the present day.

XI. Class Size

The optimum size for this course is 15 in order to allow for more meaningful discussion.