

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 2016G (001)
Papyrus to Pixels: A History of Things We Read
Winter 2026**Instructor:** Mark McDayter**Antirequisites:** English 2091F/G if taken in Winter 2022, English 2731F/G.**Course Description**

This course explores the broad sweep of book history from early manuscript culture to the eBook. Much of this course will be “hands-on,” working with the material artifacts or facsimiles of book culture. Field trips and guest lectures will enhance our understanding of the book’s long and complex history.

Objectives

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to demonstrate:

- a developing understanding of the history of the book within the Western tradition
- an introductory understanding of the analytical tools and approaches of the book historian and bibliographer
- a developing understanding of the technologies historically associated with the production of the book, and their impact upon the history of publication and reading
- a developing historical understanding of the technological, social, cultural, and commercial networks that have influenced publication and dissemination of books
- an introductory understanding and deployment of the language of bibliographical analysis, including but not limited to those associated with analytical bibliography and book history
- a developing understanding of the use of print and the book as a tool of social, cultural, political, and economic power, with particular reference to its impact upon the colonial enterprise
- a developing facility with a variety of approaches, theories and techniques which can be applied to the study of the book

Research Skills

- an improved proficiency with the essential tools of literary scholarship (library catalogues, citation and content databases) and the more specialized tools associated with this field (microfilm, EEBO, ECCO, etc.)
- an introduction to several highly specialized research tools and their uses (such as variorum editions, published bibliographies, concordances, microfilm, etc.)
- an advanced appreciation of the use of citation in one’s own work and within the critical tradition
- a basic ability to recognize and describe the development of a scholarly tradition surrounding individual periods, authors, issues or even texts
- an advanced ability to critique and review secondary sources within the context of their scholarly tradition

Analytic Skills

- the developing ability to analyze a work's textual history and evolution within the historical contexts of the book trade
- the developing ability to analyze a material text and locate within it the signs of its production and their impact upon the text
- a developing ability to apply a variety of scholarly or theoretical approaches to the bibliographical analysis of texts
- a developing ability to frame a complex research question which builds on and responds to an ongoing critical discourse
- a basic ability to recognize and account for underlying theories, concepts, assumptions and arguments (both in one's own analysis and in that of other critics), with a particular focus upon ideological positions and their position with reference to the extension of Eurocentric cultural, economic, and political power across the globe
- the basic ability to self-evaluate, so as to recognize and develop one's best insights or questions
- the developing ability to respond constructively to criticism of one's work
- advanced planning, organizational and note-taking skills

Communication:

- a clear, concise and compelling prose style, free of technical errors
- a developing ability to structure a complex and engaging argument
- a developing ability to present one's own analysis within the context of a specific theoretical approach
- a developing ability to present one's own analysis while confidently engaging with existing scholarship
- a developing capacity to engage in class discussions and respond meaningfully to lecture material and peer discussion while using textual evidence as support
- a mastery of the format and citation method of academic writing

Course Materials

Introduction + Reader In Book History Package Paperback (Required) - \$95.15

Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

- Book Description – 15%
- Annotated Bibliography – 15%
- Final Essay – 30%
- Final Exam – 30%
- Participation – 10%

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>. Late penalties for assignments are 1% per business day, to a maximum of 10 days.

Participation grades will be assigned on the basis of attendance at and/or contributions to class discussion.

Statements

Academic Consideration

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a **substantial but temporary** impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of Registration.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant.

Requests without supporting documentation are **limited to one per term per course**.

Instructors may designate one assignment or assessment as exempt from this allowance. In this course, requests for academic consideration pertaining to final exam **must** be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are **not** eligible for additional consideration.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term **always** require formal supporting documentation.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

AI may be used as a research tool, but should not be the sole source for research, and should be used with care. AI may *not* be used to generate the text submitted for evaluation. Please note that the student is responsible for any issues or errors that may arise from their use of AI.

Academic Integrity Tutorial

All students are required to enroll in and complete the Centre for Teaching and Learning's Academic Integrity Tutorial. To access the tutorial, please use the link provided in the Resource tab in the course OWL Brightspace site. Once the tutorial has been completed, you will receive a downloadable certificate. You must upload the certificate and submit it through the course Assignments tab in order to complete this assignment. The tutorial must be completed by Friday in the second week of term. This tutorial is mandatory in order for you to complete and pass the course. If you have completed the tutorial already for another course, you may upload the same certificate for this course; you do not need to repeat the tutorial.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Readings are arranged by week, and fall into two categories: "Contextual Readings," which provide background information on the subject, and are mostly from *The Broadview Introduction to Book History*, and "Primary Readings," which are generally excerpted from scholarly work on various subjects related to History of the Book. These last are mostly to be found in *The Broadview Reader in Book History*. Some materials will be found in the "Resources" section of the class OWL site, electronically through the library, or available freely online: links are provided below to all of these. Note that not all weeks include "Contextual Readings."

All participants in the course are expected to read everything below, but it is most important that you read the "Contextual Readings," where these are indicated, before the commencement of class. Assignment due dates will also be found below.

Week 1 – 5-7 January, 2026

Introduction: What Is Book History?

Contextual Readings:

- “Introduction” *Introduction to Book History* xiii-xx
- “Reading Books,” *Introduction to Book History* 3-9.
- “Models for Book History,” *Introduction to Book History* 74-77

Primary Readings:

Robert Darnton, “What is the History of Books?” (*Broadview Reader* 231-50)

Week 2 – 12-14 January, 2026

The Evolution of the Book, from Manuscript to Screen

Contextual Readings:

“Making Printed Books,” *Introduction to Book History* 17-26.

Keith Houston, “The Mysterious Ancient Origins of the Book,” BBC Culture, 22 August, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20160822-the-mysterious-ancient-origins-of-the-book>

Primary Readings:

“Michael Twyman, “What Is Printing?” (*Broadview Reader* 37-44)

Week 3 – 19-21 January, 2026

The Continued Life of Manuscript Culture

Contextual Readings:

“Manuscript and Print,” *Introduction to Book History* 112-123.

Primary Readings:

Harold Love, *English Clandestine Satire, 1660-1714* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004) 12-32; 259-302

Margaret Ezell, “The Social Author: Manuscript Culture, Writers, and Readers” (*Broadview Reader* 375-394)

Week 4 – 26-28 January, 2026

Materialities; The Material Conditions of the Book

Contextual Readings: TBA

Primary Readings:

Lucien Le Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, “The Book: Its Visual Appearance” (*Broadview Reader* 15-36)

Randall McLeod, “Information on Information.” *Text: Transactions of the Society for Textual Scholarship* 5 (1991): 241-281. ([OWL](#))

Week 5 – 2-4 February, 2026

The Social Impact of Books

Contextual Readings:

“Print and the Book,” *Introduction to Book History* 66-70.

“The Impact of Print,” *Introduction to Book History* 70-74.

“Controlling Print / Controlling Reading” *Introduction to Book History* 81-89.

Primary Readings:

Elizabeth Eisenstein, “The Unacknowledged Revolution,” *Broadview Reader* 215-30.

James Raven, “Markets and Martyrs: Early Modern Commerce,” *Broadview Reader* 289-312.

Assignment: Book Description Due (Before midnight , 4 February)

Week 6 – 9-11 February, 2026

The Digital Turn: E-texts and code

Contextual Readings:

“New Media, New Materiality” *Introduction to Book History* 135-141

“(Hyper)Textuality” *Introduction to Book History* 141-145

“Digital Printing and Screen Reading” *Introduction to Book History* 145-152

“Reading, Knowledge, and the Digital Turn,” *Introduction to Book History* 153-156

Primary Readings:

Jerome J. McGann, “The Rationale of Hypertext” (*Broadview Reader* 459-74)

Andrew Piper, “Turning the Page (Roaming, Zooming, Streaming)” (*Broadview Reader* 511-24)

READING WEEK 16-20 February, 2026

Week 7 – 23-25 February, 2026

Authors, Intention, and the Social Text

Contextual Readings:

- “Who’s Been Tampering with My Text?” *Introduction to Book History* 31-37.
- “Copy-Text” *Introduction to Book History* 38-41.
- “Authorial Intentions” *Introduction to Book History* 45-54.

Primary Readings:

W. W. Greg, “The Rationale of Copy-Text” (*Broadview Reader* 125-138)
Jerome J. McGann, “Shall These Bones Live?” (*Broadview Reader* 113-124)
and McKenzie

Week 8 – 2-4 March, 2026

Analytical Bibliography and Decoding the Material Artifact

Contextual Readings: TBA

Primary Readings:

Ann Gibbons, “Goats, Bookworms, a Monk’s Kiss: Biologists Reveal a Hidden History of Ancient Gospels,” *Science* July 25, 2017. <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/07/goats-bookworms-monk-s-kiss-biologists-reveal-hidden-history-ancient-gospels>

Matthew Kirschenbaum, “Text Messaging: The Transmission of ‘Agrippa,’” *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press, 2007) 213-248. ([OWL](#))

Week 9 – 9-11 March, 2026

Booksellers and Publishers

Contextual Readings: TBA

Primary Readings:

Pierre Bourdieu “The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World.” (*Broadview Reader* 335-352)

Assignment: Annotated Bibliography Due (Before midnight, 11 March)

Week 10 – 16-18 March, 2026

The Canadian Publishing Industry

Contextual Readings:

Gerson, Carole, and Jacques Michon, eds, *History of the Book in Canada*. Vol 3. 1918-1980. (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: U of Toronto P, 2007) Excerpts. ([OWL](#))

Primary Readings:

Roy Miki, “Asiancy: Making Space for Asian Canadian Writing,” *Broken Entries: Race Subjectivity Writing Essays* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 1998) 101-124. ([OWL](#))

Week 11 – 23-25 March, 2026

Culture, Ideology, and the Book

Contextual Readings:

D. F. McKenzie, “The Sociology of a Text: Oral Culture, Literacy, and Print in Early New Zealand,” *from Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* 77-130 ([OWL](#))

Primary Readings:

Beth A. McCoy, “Race and the (Para)Textual Condition” (*Broadview Reader* 199-211)
Brenda R. Silver, “Textual Criticism as Feminist Practice: Or, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf Part II” (*Broadview Reader* 181-98)

Week 12 – March 30-April 1, 2026

Contextual Readings:

“Digital Printing and Screen Reading” *Introduction to Book History* 145-152

“Reading, Knowledge, and the Digital Turn,” *Introduction to Book History* 153-156

Primary Readings:

Katherine Hayles, “How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine” (*Broadview Reader* 491-510)

Assignment: Final Essay Due (Before midnight, 1 April)

Week 13 – April 6-8, 2026

Course and Exam Review