

**History 388-005: Problems in European History**  
*“The History of the Book, 1400-1800”*

**George Mason University**  
**Fall 2014**

**MW 10:30-11:45 a.m., Art & Design Building Room 2003**

**Instructor:** Dr. Mack P. Holt

**Office:** Robinson B 226

**Office Hours:** MW 12:00-2:00 p.m. and by appointment

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**Goals of the course:**

1. To understand how the development of printing in the 1450s affected intellectual, political, social, and cultural life of the West, and what its consequences were.
2. To understand how the development of print transformed the codex, or book as we know it, into a material object as well as a vehicle for communication.
3. To understand that the history of the book requires an analysis of the authors who wrote the texts, the printers who turned the texts into material objects that were widely disseminated, and the readers and consumers who used these material objects—the books—in a variety of ways.
4. To realize that the past can never be fully recaptured, and to understand how history, which is always an interpretation of the past, is constructed.

**Required materials:**

Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*

Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*

Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*

Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books*

A variety of materials on line via J-STOR and Blackboard

**Schedule of assignments** (all reading to be completed before class by the beginning of the week indicated):

**Week 1: (Aug. 25, 27):** Introduction. Reading: Robert Darnton, “What Is the History of Books?” *Daedalus* 111 (Summer 1982): 65-83 (J-STOR).

**Week 2 (Sept. 3):** Books before the printing press. Reading: Eisenstein, xii-45; Pettegree, xii-20; Gaskell, 57-77. NO CLASS MONDAY, SEPT. 1.

**Week 3 (Sept. 8, 10):** Guttenberg and early printers. Reading: Eisenstein, 46-120; Pettegree, 21-62; Gaskell, 1-56.

**Week 4 (Sept. 15-17):** Renaissance humanism and printing. Reading: Eisenstein, 123-163; Pettegree, 65-90; Gaskell, 118-170. MEET IN FENWICK LIBRARY, 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES, ON MONDAY, SEPT. 15 ONLY.

**Week 5 (Sept. 22, 24):** Learned and popular reading. Reading: Anthony Grafton, "The Humanist as Reader," and Roger Chartier, "Reading Matter and Popular Reading," in G. Cavallo and R. Chartier, eds., *A History of Reading in the West* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 179-212 and 269-283 (both on Blackboard); Ginzburg, *Cheese and the Worms* (entire).

**Week 6 (Sept. 29, Oct. 1):** Comparing learned and popular reading. Reading: Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, "Studied for Action: How Gabriel Harvey Read his Livy," *Past & Present* 129 (November 1990), 30-78 (J-STOR). FIRST ESSAY DUE IN CLASS ON WEDNESDAY, OCT. 1.

**Week 7 (Oct. 6, 8):** Printing and the Reformation. Eisenstein, 164-208; Pettegree, 91-150.

**Week 8 (Oct. 14, 15):** NO CLASS ON MONDAY, OCT. 13. MONDAY CLASSES MEET TUESDAY THIS WEEK ONLY. MID-TERM EXAM ON WEDNESDAY, OCT. 15. Reading: None; prepare for the mid-term exam.

**FRIDAY, OCT. 17:** Special book lab to be held at the Library of Congress at 2:00 p.m. We should be finished by 3:30 p.m. Meet at the Gutenberg Bible on display in the Great Hall. Enter at the 1<sup>st</sup> Street, S.E. entrance and just walk up the steps to the Bible Gallery in the Great Hall. Please re-arrange your work schedule so you can attend. If you have another class at this time, or otherwise cannot attend, you will have to make the trip on your own and complete a written make-up assignment.

**Week 9 (Oct. 20-22):** Imposition and book formats. Reading: Gaskell, 78-117.

**Week 10 (Oct. 27, 29):** Bibles and vernacular translations. Reading: Pettegree, 151-248.

**Week 11 (Nov. 3, 5):** Books and markets. Reading: Pettegree: 249-269; Gaskell, 171-185; Adrian Johns, “The Book of Nature and the Nature of the Book” (on Blackboard); and Anthony Grafton, Elizabeth Eisenstein, and Adrian Johns, “AHR Forum: How Revolutionary was the Print Revolution?” *American Historical Review* 107 (February 2002), 84-128 (J-STOR).

**Week 12 (Nov. 10, 12):** Books and the Rise of Science. Reading: Eisenstein, 209-311; Pettegree, 273-318.

**Week 13 (Nov. 17, 19):** Building a Library. Reading: Pettegree, 319-352; Chartier, *The Order of Books* (entire).

**Week 14 (Nov. 24):** Books and the Enlightenment. Reading: Robert Darnton, “The High Enlightenment and the Low Life of Literature,” chap. 1 of *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1-40 (Blackboard). NO CLASS ON WEDNESDAY, NOV. 26. SEOND ESSAY DUE IN CLASS ON NOV. 24.

**Week 15 (Dec. 1, 3):** Books and Revolutions. Reading: Roger Chartier, “Do Books Make Revolutions?” chap.4 of *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 67-91 (Blackboard); and Robert Darnton, “Diffusion vs. Discourse” and “Communication Networks,” chaps. 6 and 7 of *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Revolutionary France* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), 169-197 (Blackboard).

**Final exam: Wednesday, December 10, 10:30-1:15 p.m.**

All reading should be completed by the beginning of the week indicated. There will be two in-class exams: a mid-term exam on Wednesday, October 15 and a final exam on Wednesday, December 10 (the final exam will **not** be cumulative). Please bring an examination book and a pen (blue or black ink) to both exams.

There will also be two essays written out of class (5-8 pp., typed and double-spaced). Specific assignments are discussed below. The first essay will be based entirely on the required reading, and the second essay will be based on one book of your choosing printed before 1800. These essays will be due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, October 1 and Monday, November 24. Late papers will be accepted, but they will be penalized, usually one full letter grade for each calendar day late. Any student who does not turn in both essays by class time on the last day of classes (December 3) will automatically earn a grade of F in the course.

Regular class attendance is expected of all students and the roll will be called at the beginning of each class. Students not answering the roll at the beginning of class will be marked absent.

Grading will be somewhat flexible in order to reward those who show significant improvement during the semester, but final grades will be based roughly on the following scale:

Two essays: 20% each

Two exams: 20% each

Class participation (including discussion and book labs): 20%

**Rules of the classroom:**

1. Please be on time (that is, in your seat and ready to answer the roll at 10:30 a.m.). Arriving late is rude and is distracting to the rest of the class.
2. University regulations prohibit eating and drinking in university classrooms, so please do not bring food or drink of any kind to class (I'll make an exception for bottled water with a secure cap).
3. Come to class prepared with reading assignments completed and up to date.

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**First Essay Assignment  
Due Wednesday, October 1**

In a short essay of 5-8 pp. (typed and double-spaced), answer the following questions, based on a careful reading of Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms*, Grafton and Jardine's "Studied for Action: How Gabriel Harvey Read his Livy," and the two essays by Grafton and Chartier in *Reading in the West*. In other words you are only allowed to use the reading for Weeks 5 and 6 for this essay. You are to consult and cite ***no other sources of any kind***.

1. Domenico Scandella, called Menocchio, and Gabriel Harvey were contemporaries who lived in the second half of the sixteenth century. They were very different—one was a peasant miller and the other a courtier and diplomat—and they read very different kinds of books. Thus, they moved in very different worlds. Nevertheless, what did their reading habits have in common? Hint: Think not so much about *what* they read, but *how* they read what they read, in other words, the process of reading.

2. In addition to *how* they read their books, what can you say about *why* these two readers read their books? Hint: Was Menocchio studying his books for action, and if so, what kinds of action? In other words, what was the purpose and function of their reading?

**You should use no sources for this essay other than the required reading listed above.** And you should document your ideas with **numerous** references to these sources, especially the Ginzburg book on Menocchio and the Grafton and Jardine article on Harvey. Formal footnotes (or endnotes) are not necessary, though you may use them if you like. If you do, they should be in University of Chicago style. At the very least, you should include **numerous** page numbers in parentheses to make it clear to which specific passage in these sources you are referring. [Examples: (Ginzburg, 18-19), (Grafton and Jardine, 51), etc.] Finally, you should avoid directly quoting from these sources as much as possible. Short phrases are fine if the point of the quotation is to discuss Menocchio's or Harvey's own words and language. Otherwise simply summarize their ideas in your own words and put in a reference to the page number to which you are referring. Thus, your essay should be made up of primarily your words, not long quotations from the sources.

Also, you should keep the following guidelines in mind as you write the essay: **(1) The essay should be your work and your work alone. (2) The essay should be written in correct and elegant English. There is no distinction between style and content; any such distinction is false and artificial. (3) Your essay will be due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, October 1. All late papers will be penalized, usually one full letter grade for each day late.**

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## **Second Essay Assignment Due Monday, November 24**

This essay (5-8 pp., typed and doubles-spaced with normal margins) is a short biography of a book of your choosing published in the hand-press period (before 1800) and located in George Mason University's Special Collections and Archives in Fenwick Library. A list of the available books (there are more than 100) will be distributed to you early in the semester. You will only be able to consult the specific copy of your book in the Special Collections and Archives in Fenwick Library, though you should be able to find a copy on-line through *Early English Books On-Line (EEBO)* for simply reading the text. ***All sources cited should be formally indicated in footnotes or endnotes using University of Chicago style (we'll go over this in class). And you must cite a source for every piece of information in your essay.***

**The biography of your book will address all the following questions?**

1. What is the bibliographical description of our book? Did you compile it yourself or did you find it in a catalog? What are the physical dimensions of your book (length, width, and thickness in centimeters)?
2. Who printed this book? And who was the stationer who sold the book, if different from the printer? How does the book identify these names, if at all (title pages, prefatory material, colophon)? And if the names are not identified, can you find them in the *English Short-Title Catalogue (ESTC)*? What other information can you find out about the printer/stationer? Can you find out which other books they printed or sold?
3. Who is the author of your book, and how does the book identify the author? If the author is anonymous, can you find out who it is from other sources, such as the *ESTC*? What biographical information about the author might help us better understand this book? How might the author's identity shape a reader's reception of this book? (Note: To answer these questions you will need to read the entirety of your book, which may be more convenient on *EEBO* than reading it in Fenwick Library.)
4. Are there any markings in your book made by readers (signatures, underlinings, marginalia, notes, etc.)? On which pages or folios (if pages are not numbered) do you find such marks? Do you have evidence of specific readers that you can identify? What is the relationship between the author and the reader? Is there evidence of your book having been actually read?
5. What is the provenance of your book? Who owned it before it came to GMU? Are there any physical signs of earlier ownership? And what is the afterlife of your book? That is, were there later editions? Does it exist in a modern print or digital edition?

You will thoroughly examine our library's copy of your book, but you will be doing further research on the author, stationer, printer, etc. via a number of reference sources both in our library as well as on-line. In addition to *EEBO* just mentioned, you will need to become very familiar with the *English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC)* available in hard copy and on-line, *A Transcript of the Company of Stationers of London* (1554-1640, 5 vols. and 1640-1708, 3 vols.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, *Dictionary of Printers and Booksellers in England*, etc. All of these resources will be discussed in class.

Also, you should keep the following guidelines in mind as you write the essay:

**The essay should be your work and your work alone. The essay should be written in correct and elegant English. There is no distinction between style and content; any such distinction is false and artificial. You should**  
**Your essay will be due at the beginning of class on Monday, November 24. All late papers will be penalized, usually one full letter grade for each day late.**

Note on using *Early English Books Online* (EEBO):

Once you find your book on EEBO, you will need to “mark” your record first, then go to the marked records list, click on the link to download as a PDF, then select whether you want to download the entire book or a selection of pages, and then—finally!—you’ll confirm the transaction and EEBO will generate a PDF for you to download onto your computer or flash-drive.