

# **Loving Books**

## **Book as Thing, Technology, and Art**

Professor Jessica Pressman

ENG 563

Fall 2021

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

What does it mean to say, “I love books”? What does loving books look like in an age of e-readers and digital culture? Why are fake bookshelves used as Zoom backgrounds, and how did real bookshelves come to signify knowledge and privilege? This course approaches the book—our central medium for literature and literary studies—as a thing, technology, and art form: one with a long history of development. We study the history of the book, its evolution as a technology and cultural symbol; we read literature about books, with books as main characters and with bookish design; we view stop-motion animations about books coming to life; and we consider cultural criticism and media theory about books in our contemporary age. We do all of this in order to understand the various ways in which books continue to serve and signify. You will never look at a book—or book-covered socks, fake-book cellphone cases, Jane Austen leggings, or any other bookish stuff—the same way again!

### **Learning Outcomes**

In this class, you will

- Learn that the book is a technology and medium, with a history of development and use
- Acquire a media studies framework for recognizing how media formats (including the codex) inform the creation and reception of literature
- Hone your skills as a critical thinker, listener, and writer by focusing on the development of a thesis statement and the ability to prove it through textual explication

### **Administrative Information**

Email: jpressman@sdsu.edu *Do not expect a response within 24 hours	Course Website: <a href="https://jessicapressman.com/fall2021-eng563/">https://jessicapressman.com/fall2021-eng563/</a>
Office: AL 261 Office hours: M 11-12, on Zoom—sign up on Google doc (on our website on Admin/Info page). Additional times and dates by appointment; email me for an appointment.  Zoom meeting room: 943 624 7815	Course Meeting:  Tuesday & Thursday 3:30-4:45  Room: Storm Hall 104

English Subject Librarian: Markel Tumlin Special Collections Librarian: Anna Culbertson	mtumlin@rohan.sdsu.edu <a href="mailto:aculbertson@sdsu.edu">aculbertson@sdsu.edu</a>  <i>*Note that Special Collections is open by appointment this semester, so if you choose that option, be sure to <b>plan ahead</b>.</i> **
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***NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change... and probably will change!***

### **Our COVID situation:**

***Masks are required in the classroom at all times. NO exceptions.***

***\*\*Students who do not adhere to the Covid19 Student Policies or the directives of their faculty will be directed to leave the classroom and will be referred to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities\*\****

- Effective Fall 2021, students who register for face-to-face classes are expected to attend as indicated in the course schedule. Faculty teaching face-to-face courses will not be required to create a new, alternative on-line class as an accommodation for any student.
- Students with medical conditions that would present a COVID-related risk in a face-to-face instructional setting should contact the Student Ability Success Center (<https://sdsu.edu/sasc>) to begin the process of getting support.
- Do not come to campus if you do not feel well. Remain home and monitor your symptoms and seek medical attention as needed.

### **READING**

***\*all books available at SDSU bookstore unless otherwise noted\****

Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book* (MIT Press, 2018)

Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Message* (1967)

Leanne Shapton, *Important Artifacts and Personal Property from the Collection of*

*Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris, Including Books, Street Fashion, and Jewelry* (2009)

William Joyce, *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* (2012)

**Suggested, but not required:**

Michelle Levy and Tim Mole, *The Broadview Introduction to Book History* (2017)

Jessica Pressman, *Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age* (2020)

## ASSIGNMENTS

Participation 20%

Weekly Blog 25%

Bookish Discovery 15% each, 30% total

Final essay 25% (8-10 pages)

### Participation 20%

This is *your* class, and your participation is vital to its success. You must attend *all* class meetings in order to receive full credit for participation. Come to class prepared to discuss the text in depth; this means having read the *entire* text *before* class. I expect you to speak and listen.

- **Your participation grade includes engaging in dialogue in class.** This means speaking and listening actively, attentively, and respectfully. (If you have fear of speaking in public, this seminar is a good place to learn to address that fear. Please come see me early in the term to discuss strategies for dealing with this fear).
- **Your participation grade includes a meeting with the professor.**
- **Your participation grade includes a 5-minute presentation on one of the texts.** This presentation should serve to start the class's conversation for the day. You will point us to a question from the day's reading and to the specific passage in the text that sparked that inquiry for you. Your job is to get the discussion rolling.

### Weekly Blog 25%

You will write (500 words) blog responses to the reading (any text and any idea/section from that text) *and* each provide a comment on a peer's blog each week (due before the next week's class meeting, so before Thursday). The goal of the blog posts is to extend the conversation and coverage of the course by allowing you to 1) express, share, and comment upon interests, questions, and concerns related to the readings and also to 2) enable the professor to address and incorporate these topics in that week's meeting. It is also a place to draft ideas and text for use in your essays.

--**Blog posts are due on Monday at 6pm weekly; late posts will not receive credit.**

--You will be given an *overall* grade for blog posts, based on completion and content, not a grade for each post. Rubric for grading is available on our website and below.

Your Blog Grade is based on 2-parts: 1) a completion grade, and 2) a content grade

<b>The completion component of the blog grade</b> requires you to have the following number of posts:	<b>The content component of the blog grade</b> is based on the following grading rubric
A= 11-13 posts B= 8-10 posts C= 6-7 posts D= 4-5 posts F= 3 or less	A= Post contains a focused thesis or question and close reading of a passage, B= Post contains a close reading of content but no focused question or thesis

	C= Post contains no analysis of text (no close reading), just summary and undirected ideas D=Post contains little substantive thinking as content <hr/>
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### **Bookish Discovery 15% each, 30% each**

These 2 short creative-critical assignments prompt you to engage in “discovery” and explain your findings. There are 2 parts to this assignment:

**1) make or find** a bookish object not on our syllabus (a book surrogate, a shelfie, an online image or archive, a bookwork artpiece, an object in Special Collections\*\*, a meme, or other creative media, etc.) or a work of scholarship (scholarly article, book, etc.) that supports and expands our classroom learning. Post this item (or a link to it) into your blog and describe the object.

*\*Note that Special Collections is open by appointment this semester, so if you choose that option, be sure to **plan ahead**.\*\**

**2) explain** how this find matters and extends our learning about books, book history, and loving book in a digital age in a short (2 page, single-spaced) essay with a thesis that articulates the importance of your discovery. Analyze and *close read* the object or scholarly text to explain its relevance and relation to the class

*\*\*YOU CAN REVISE a discovery for a better grade. Revision is due before next discovery is due\*\**

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### **Final Essay (10 pages): 25%**

You will write a final essay that explores a topic from the course through a thesis-based argument and explication (close reading). Your essay can take many shapes and formats (digital and/or experimental); your essay can focus on **a research topic OR** it can take the form of a bookish collection, as in the following offering:

- **Assemble a collection** around a bookish object (analog making, digital art/collage, or any other form of creative media) and write a thesis-based essay describing how the object relates to/represents the collection and extends our learning about books, book history and loving books.

**Whatever form and format you take, your essay must contain the following:**

- 1) a thesis statement
- 2) close-reading explication of the text or object
- 3) engagement with at *least two* critical sources, one of which should be from our syllabus.

- You can use your bookish assignments to form the basis—and even the format—of your final essay, but the requirements listed above must be met.
- You will briefly present your final project during the last week of class.

**\*\*Graduate students** will write 15-20 pages and use at least 3 secondary, critical sources.

**\*\*MFA students** may create a work of poetry or fiction inspired by or related to our reading/learning and then write a 10-page analytical explanation of your creative piece.

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**\*\*NOTE: All assignments are docked 1/3 of a grade for each day they are late (for example, an A becomes an A- if turned in one day late)\*\***

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## **READING SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1: Introduction to the course & each other**

August 24: Introduction to the course

August 26: Introduction to each other

-watch “Monk video”

### **Week 2: The Book Alive and as Art**

August 31: watch “The Joy of Books” and XX

September 2: view examples of Bookwork art

### **Week 3: Bookish Dreams, in print and digital stories**

September 7: *No class, Rosh Hashanah*

September 9: Jorge Luis Borges, “The Library of Babel”

### **Week 4: Bookish Dreams, in print and digital stories**

September 14: Mark Marino, “Marginalia in the Library of Babel” (online)

September 15: *No class, Yom Kippur*

### **Week 5: Archives & Special Collections**

September 21: Guest lecture from Anna Culbertson (Head of Special Collections)

September 23: Guest lecture from Anna Culbertson (Head of Special Collections)

### **Week 6: Book History**

September 28: Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book*

September 30: Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book*

-Watch “In the Beginning was The Word” video

### **Week 7: Book History**

October 5: Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book*

October 7: Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book*. --view <https://t-h-e-b-o-o-k.com/definitions/>

**--First Bookish Assignment due, Sunday 10/10 @ midnight, posted to our blog--**

**Week 8: The Book as Revolutionary Media**

October 12: Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage*

October 14: Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage*

**Week 9: The Book as Revolutionary Media**

October 19: Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage*

October 21: Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage*

**Week 10: Bookish Literature**

October 26: Leanne Shapton, *Important Artifacts and Personal Property from the Collection of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris, Including Books, Street Fashion, and Jewelry*

October 28: Leanne Shapton, *Important Artifacts*

**Week 11: Bookish Literature**

November 2: Leanne Shapton, *Important Artifacts*

November 4: Leanne Shapton, *Important Artifacts*

**Week 12: Bookish Children's Literature**

November 9: William Joyce, *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore*

November 11: *No class, Veteran's Day*

**--Second Bookish Assignment due, Sunday 11/14 @ midnight, posted to our blog --**

**Week 13: Bookishness & Thesis**

November 16: excerpt from Jessica Pressman, *Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age*, "Introduction"

November 17: *No class meeting-- asynchronous thesis workshop online*

**Week 14: Thanksgiving Week- No Class**

November 23: *No class—Thanksgiving*

November 26: *No class—Thanksgiving*

**Week 15: Wise Words & Workshop**

November 30: Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library" (1931) & Final thesis workshop for final essay

December 2: Share final essay topics

**Week 16: Conclusions**

December 7: Share final essay topics

December 9: Concluding Discussion

**-- Final Essay Due, Wednesday 12/15 at midnight—posted to the blog**

## **OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

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### **Communication**

Students are provided with an SDSU Gmail account, and this [SDSU email address](#) will be used for all communications. University Senate policy notes that students are responsible for checking their official university email once per day during the academic term. For more information, please see [Student Official Email Address Use Policy here](#).

### **Medical-related absences**

University policy instructs students to contact their professor/instructor/coach in the event they need to miss class due to an illness, injury, or emergency. Please inform me as soon as possible if you are missing class due to an illness or a Covid-related situation.

### **Finding Help on Campus**

Need help finding an advisor, tutor, counselor, or require emergency economic assistance? The [SDSU Student Success Help Desk](#) is here for you. Student assistants are available via Zoom Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM to help you find the office or service that can best assist with your particular questions or concerns.

### **Other important resources:**

- CAL Student Success Center: <https://cal.sdsu.edu/student-resources/student-success>
- College of Education Student Success Center: <https://education.sdsu.edu/oss>
- Center for Student Success in Engineering: <https://csse.sdsu.edu/>
- CoS Student Success Center: <https://cossuccess.sdsu.edu/>
- FSB Student Success Center: <https://business.sdsu.edu/undergrad/advising>
- HHS Advisors: <https://chhs.sdsu.edu/student-resources/advising/>
- IVC Student Success and Retention: [https://ivcampus.sdsu.edu/student\\_affairs/retention](https://ivcampus.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/retention)
- PSFA Advisors: [https://psfa.sdsu.edu/resources/student\\_advisors](https://psfa.sdsu.edu/resources/student_advisors)

### **Accommodations**

SDSU via the [Student Ability Success Center](#) (SASC) provides accommodations for students with documented disabilities or medical conditions covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In keeping with current public health guidance, I cannot provide arrangements to students without an ADA-qualified disability or medical condition.

If you are a student with a disability and are in need of accommodations for this class, please contact the Student Ability Success Center at [sascinfo@sdsu.edu](mailto:sascinfo@sdsu.edu) (or go to [sdsu.edu/sasc](https://sdsu.edu/sasc)) as soon as possible. Please know accommodations are not retroactive, and I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from the Student Ability Success Center. SASC registration and accommodation approvals may take up to 10-14 business days, so please plan accordingly.

**SDSU as “safe space”**

The CSU has affirmed its commitment to ‘protecting access, affordability, intellectual freedom, inclusivity, and diversity for all students . . . including supporting DACA students.’ Discrimination, harassment, or retaliation against students, faculty, and staff on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality, immigration status and other categories of identity is prohibited. If you have concerns about your status at the university, please visit <http://studentaffairs.sdsu.edu/EOP/> for information or contact the Dean of Students or the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs in your College.”

**Academic Honesty**

I take teaching seriously, and I expect you to take seriously your work as a student. That means that academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonest includes, but is not limited to: (a) using assignments that you wrote for another class, (b) representing work done by someone else as your own (i.e., plagiarism), and (c) copying someone else’s work on an assignment, basic cheating. Plagiarism and Cheating of any kind will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course) and may be referred to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities for further action. If you have questions at all, you should consult me immediately.