

LITERATURE'S MEDIA: BOOK HISTORY & MEDIA STUDIES

ECL 725. Fall 2024

Professor Jessica Pressman

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Literature is often discussed as having form and content, and literary criticism as examining the relationship between them. But, literature also depends upon format—media, materiality, body. This course focuses on the media that enable literature, offering an introduction to Book History and Media Studies for English scholars. The goal of this course is to give students a different way—a medium-specific way—of approaching literature and practicing literary studies.

Towards this goal, this class reads primarily critical and theoretical writings from the fields of Book History and Media Studies.

Book History: The book is the medium par excellence for literature and literary studies, a technology perfected over a thousand years. Yet, the book is often not itself the subject of study and discussion in literature classrooms. This course puts the book front and center, reorganizing literary studies around the medium and its impact. We examine the history of the printed book in the West (since the invention of the printing press in the 15th Century), understanding of the evolution of this medium to be inseparable from the development of Western literary culture, literary aesthetics, and reading practices. (For example, we consider the impact of the invention of title pages and wood-pulp paper as well as the invention of the author figure and copyright on literary studies).

Media Studies: A media studies approach opens new paths and perspectives for studying literature beyond content by locating text in historical, material contexts. A focus on media supports an understanding how changes in forms and formats, including digital technologies and new media, impact literature and literary study for contemporary culture.

Course readings include key texts in media studies—by Marshall McLuhan, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, Johanna Drucker, N. Katherine Hayles, and more—as well as canonical readings from studies in the History of the Book. Selected works of creative literature, “technotexts” (to use N. Katherine Hayles’s term for literary texts that reflexively invoke their media format) support our study and appreciation.

Literature's Media is imagined and offered as a sibling learning experience to Poetic Modes (ECL 726). Professors of both classes invite students to take the two courses concurrently and explore the intersections between them.

Learning Outcomes

- **Identify and articulate** how medial formats and contexts (including orality, print, and digital) shape the production and reception of literature.
- **Understand** how media studies and history is part of Literature's history and study
- **Recognize** the book as a technology that has evolved over centuries
- **Encounter** central scholarly arguments in the field of Book History and Media Studies
- **Practice** media-specific analysis as a means of literary analysis
- **Reflect** on how changes in medial contexts impact the literary
- **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

Class Meetings: Tuesdays, 3:30-6:10 pm Hepner Hall, room 128	Course Website: https://fall2024-ecl725.jessicapressman.com/
Professor's Office: AL 261 Office hours: Th 12:30-1:30 AND Additional times and dates by appointment; email me for an additional appointment (in-person or on Zoom) out of the regular office hours timeslot. Zoom meeting room: 943 624 7815 https://SDSU.zoom.us/my/jpressman	Email: jpressman@sdsu.edu <i>*Do not expect a response within 24 hours</i>
English Subject Librarian: Markel Tumlin Special Collections Librarian: Anna Culbertson	mtumlin@rohan.sdsu.edu aculbertson@sdsu.edu

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change... and probably will change!

REQUIRED READING

Borsuk, Amaranth. *The Book* (MIT Press, 2018)
Danielewski, Mark Z. *The Familiar, vol. 1* (2015)
Jackson, Shelley. *Patchwork Girl* (digital hypertext) (1995)
Levy, Michelle and Tim Mole. *The Broadview Introduction to Book History* (2017)
McLuhan, Marshall and Quentin Fiore. *The Medium is the Massage* (1967)

SUGGESTED READING

Finkelstein, David and Alastair McCleerey. eds. *The Book History Reader* (Routledge, 2002)
Piper, Adrian. *Book was There: Reading in Electronic Times* (University of Chicago Press, 2012)
Pressman, Jessica. *Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age* (Columbia University Press, 2020)

ASSIGNMENTS:

Participation 20%

Weekly Blog 25%

Midterm Short Essay 25%

Final Project (Proposal 5% and Project 25%)

Extra credit: up to 1%

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 leading class discussion with a presentation:**
 - **You will give a 3-5-minute presentation to start discussion.** 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. You will get the discussion rolling. You should be able to direct the class to a passage for close reading and/or a series of questions to stimulate discussion.

Grading Rubric for Classroom Participation

A= attend class regularly, prepared to participate, and participate actively (generously and generatively) in class discussion

B= attend class regularly, prepared to participate

C=attend class regularly

Weekly Blog 25%

You will write (approx. 350-500 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. 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**; late posts will not receive credit; **comments on a peer's blog are due before class meeting (Tuesday 3:30pm)**

--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.

Grading Rubric for Blog

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

The completion component of the blog grade requires you to have the following number of posts:	The content component of the blog grade 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

Midterm Short Essay 25%

This short essays (approx. 1500 words= 3-4 pages) is an opportunity to focus on one aspect or passage from a single text from our syllabus, to provide an in-depth analysis and to practice close reading/ explication. This essay also intended as a scaffolding assignment, meaning it is there to support you in developing the thinking and writing skills to produce the final essay, to provide a *benchmark* for your writing (and grade). You can revise one of your blog posts or write new content that demonstrates your ability to 1) develop a [thesis](#), and 2) use a text to support, through textual [explication/analysis/close reading](#), your argument. The short essay is an exercise in diving into the formal operations of a text to see HOW it operates and develop an argument about WHY that matters. You will

- 1) select a single short text or passage of a text
- 2) pursue a focused argument about that passage: what you see in it and why that matters (WHAT, HOW, SO WHAT)

****Can be revised for a better grade-- See Reading Schedule for deadline****

Final Project (Proposal 5% and Project 25%)

Final Project Proposal—abstract (thesis statement, description of the project, short bibliography) 5%

This assignment helps ensure that you are on the right track for your final essay and enables me to give you feedback that can assist in your development. You will write a 300 word abstract of your final project explaining your argument, purpose, and proposed media format. The abstract should contain a thesis statement, brief explanation of your purpose, a description of the project (including proposed media format and rationale for that design), and the scholarly context (short bibliography) into which you intervene.

Can be revised for a better grade-- See Reading Schedule for deadline

Final Essay or Conference Presentation (15-20 pages/12 minutes): 25%

The goal of this final project is to present the culmination of your learning by way of sharing your takeaway passion-point from the class: what most interested and inspired you? what would you like to continue to study in the future? how would you contribute to the conversation outside of class or pursue next steps in researching this topic?

You can deliver your final project as a talk or an essay (including a creative or digital project), but *whatever format your essay/presentation takes, it MUST contain the following:*

- 1) a thesis statement
- 2) close-reading explication of the text
- 3) engagement with (not just citation of) at least 3-4 scholarly sources

Conference Talk: You will present a 10-12 minute analytic talk that presents an argument and research exploration on a topic/text of your choosing from our semester. Your presentation should be prepared (preferably written, with accompanying slides) and practiced.

Essay: You will write a final essay (15-20 pages) that explores a topic or text from the course through a thesis-based argument and explication (close reading). You can write a creative-critical essay that takes the form of a work of a webart, video, hypertext, etc.

-You can use your blogs to form the basis of your final essay, but the requirements listed above must be met.

-Even if you are writing an essay, you will briefly present your final project during the last week of class.

Extra Credit (up to 1%)

These blogs can be written at any point during the semester and are intended to inspire you to read beyond the texts assigned in class and to attend relevant events on campus. You will select a reading from “Additional Reading,” something *not* on our syllabus &/or attend an event listed on “Extra Credit” and write a blog post about why it is important to your understanding of our class learning. Your post should contain a thesis and textual explication/close reading to receive credit.

****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)****

READING SCHEDULE

NOTE: This reading schedule is subject to change... and probably will change!

Week 1: Introduction to the class and each other

August 27: Syllabus and Purpose

Part I. The Medium is the Message

Week 2: Literature AS Media Studies

September 3: -N. Katherine Hayles and Jessica Pressman, "Making, Critique: A Media Framework," introduction from *Comparative Textual Media* (2013)
-Jessica Pressman, excerpts from *Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age* (2020): Introduction and Chapter 1.

Week 3: The Medium is the Message & Massage

September 10: -Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage* (Bantam, 1967)
-Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (MIT Press, 2000): "Introduction: The Double Logic of Remediation" (3-15)

Part II. Book History

Week 4: The Book

September 17: Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book* (MIT Press, 2018)

Week 5: Book History

September 24: -Michelle Levy and Tim Mole, *The Broadview Introduction to Book History*: "Ch. 1: Materiality," "Ch. 2: Textuality," "Ch. 3: Printing and Reading," (1-98)
-Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" (1982)
-Emily Dickinson, "One Sister gave I in the House," "Morning might come by accident"
-Martha Nell Smith, "Omissions Are Not Accidents: Erasures & Cancellations in Emily Dickinson's Manuscripts" (2008)
<http://archive.emilydickinson.org/mutilation/mintro.html>
(read Emily Dickinson's poems included as links in the essay) View the Dickinson archive online: <http://www.emilydickinson.org>

Week 6: Book History—Exemplary Scholarship

October 1: -Michelle Levy and Tim Mole, *The Broadview Introduction to Book History*: "Ch. 4: Intermediality" and "Ch. 5: Remediating" (99-161)
-Roger Chartier, "Labourers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader" (1992)

-D.F. McKenzie, "Sociology of a Text: Orality, Literacy and Print in Early New Zealand" (1983)

Week 7: Book History—Exemplary Scholarship

October 8: Jonathan Senchyne, *The Intimacy of Paper in Early and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2020): Ch. 2: "The Gender of Rage Paper in Anne Bradstreet and Lydia Sigourney"

-Anne Bradstreet, "The Author to her Book" (1650)

-Lydia Huntley-Sigourney "To a Shred of Linen" (1838)

Additional Reading: Jonathan Senchyne, *The Intimacy of Paper in Early and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*: Ch. 4: "The Whiteness of the Page. Racial Legibility and Authenticity"

-Ben Franklin, "Paper, a Poem" (1788)

https://www.gutenberg.org/files/48138/48138-h/48138-h.htm#Page_523

Part III. Post-Print, Digital Literary Studies

Week 8: Literature Beyond the Book-- Digital Literature & Media-Specific Analysis

October 15: **Specific Collections visit (first hour) ** meet Love Library****

-Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl* (1995, digital hypertext)

-Watch archival video of Shelley Jackson reading/traversing , *Patchwork Girl*
<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/traversals>

-N. Katherine Hayles, "Flickering Connectivities in Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* : The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis" (2020)

*****Midterm Short Essay due Sunday 10/20 @ midnight (posted to blog)*****

Week 9: Workshop on Making Electronic Literature

October 22: Guest visitor: Professor Mark Marino (USC)

- Mark Marino, *Marginalia in the Library of Babel* (digital hypertext, online) (2007)

Week 10: Archives and Media Archaeology

October 29: Guest visitor: Anna Culbertson (Special Collections Librarian)

-Henry Petroski, *The Book on the Bookshelf* (1999): Chapter 3: "Chests, Cloisters, and Carrels" and Chapter 4: "Chained to the Desk"

Week 11: Literary Studies in the Digital Age/ Digital Humanities

November 5: (election day—go vote!!)

-excerpt from Anne Burdick, Johanna Drucker, Peter Lunenfeld, Todd Presner, Jeffery Schnapp, *Digital Humanities* (MIT Press, 2012): preface and chapter 1

-Franco Moretti, excerpts from *Distant Reading* (Verso Books, 2013)

*****Revision of Midterm Short Essay due Sunday 11/10 @ midnight (posted to blog)*****

Week 12: Post-digital Bookish Aesthetics

November 12: Mark Z. Danielewski, *The Familiar, vol. 1: One Rainy Day in May* (Pantheon, 2015)

Part IV: Making and Sharing

Week 13: Digital Humanities Literary Studies—Tools Workshop

November 19: Explore *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, including Pressman and Lisa Swanstrom's "The Literary And/As Digital Humanities" (2013) and Alex Saum's "Teaching Electronic Literature as Digital Humanities: A Proposal" (2017)

-Explore Selected DH literary projects (TBD):

-University of Chicago DH Project list:

<https://researchguides.uic.edu/c.php?g=252433&p=1683608>

-Whitman Archives: <https://whitmanarchive.org/>

-Map of Early Modern London: <https://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/agas.htm>

5-6:10 Tools Workshop in DHC

****Wednesday, November 20: 12-1:30—Tools Workshop****

Week 14: Thanksgiving

November 26: *No class meeting--Asynchronous thesis peer review on Google docs*

*****Proposal and Annotated Bibliography due Sunday 12/1 @ midnight (posted to blog)*****

Week 15: Workshopping of final projects/presentations

December 3: Meet in DH Center

Week 16: Presentations and Conclusions

December 10: Presentation of final projects and Concluding Discussion in DH Center

Final Essay due, Sunday, December 15, at midnight, posted to the blog*

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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
- PSFA 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 (or go to 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 (especially in the age of AI & Chat GBT)

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.