

# University of Toronto Faculty of Information

## BKS1001H: Introduction to Book History and Print Culture (Fall 2023)

MacLean Hunter Room, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library  
Mondays, 2:00AM-5:00PM  
Instructor: David Fernández | david.fernandez@utoronto.ca  
Office hours: By appointment, in person or online



[QUERCUS SITE](#)

## COURSE SYLLABUS

**Course description:** As the foundational course for the BHPC specialization, this course will introduce students to topics in book history: global perspectives idea of the book; the study of oral, written, and visual cultures of the book; book production from manuscript to contemporary books; the development of printing technologies; the economics of book production and distribution; libraries and the organization of knowledge and information; principles of bibliographical description; and the study of print cultures. Students will develop critical and practical skills relevant to book history by working with a selection of printed, manuscripts, and archival collections.

Students who have successfully completed the course will be able to:

- Study book history studies across academic disciplines and apply several theoretical frameworks to investigate the book as a movable and mutable object with a global history.
- Understand the historical and technological development of the book.
- Describe the material book using the conventions of descriptive bibliography.
- Competently explore and assess archival materials to identify potential research opportunities.
- Locate the commodified book at the centre of a socio-political economic system of production, distribution, and consumption from global perspectives.

**Course format and schedule:** The class will meet in-person for three hours each week. The format of the course will consist of short lectures, in-class activities, and facilitated group discussions. Students are expected to be prepared to participate in discussions and activities by completing readings and reviewing preliminary content for each class.

**Technology and Use of Generative AI in Assignments:** Students will need access to a personal computer for some sessions (please visit this [website](#) to learn about borrowing services that are available exclusively for Faculty of Information students). Students are encouraged to make use of technology, including generative artificial intelligence tools, to contribute to their understanding of course materials. However, students are ultimately accountable for the work

they submit, and any content produced by an artificial intelligence tool must be cited appropriately.

**Course website:** Course documents are available electronically through the course site on Quercus. Please check the site periodically for newly posted materials including class handouts, readings, assignments, or announcements.

**Making appointments with course instructor and course announcements:** The instructor will share weekly course information and handouts via Quercus. To that end, students are required to have a valid UofT email address registered on Quercus.

Please book appointments with course instructor for reference assistance, to discuss assignments, and for general support during the semester. I normally respond to emails during between 8:00AM-5:00PM

## ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment description	Date	Weight
Bibliographical description (2)	September 25—December 4	30%
Workshops (3)	October 16, November 13, November 20	30%
Essay assignment	November 27, December 15	25%
Class participation	Throughout	15%

**Bibliographical descriptions:** The goal of this assignment is to learn how to write concise and persuasive bibliographical descriptions that ascribe meanings to books by interpreting concepts or applying methods from book history, print culture, bibliography, and other disciplines concerned with the study of books as physical objects. Students will research, select, and briefly describe two books or prints to explore ideas presented in the weekly case studies, readings, or based on the students' own interests in the field. Students will have the opportunity to share their findings in class and also have the option to integrate this research into their final essay. In their descriptions, students may choose to focus on a single bibliographical feature or evidence; describe the role of one or more creators in the production, circulation, reception, preservation of their book or print; or highlight new ways to understand particular facts or notions evident in their object of study. Students are encouraged to share their descriptions during class discussions or relevant case studies. See assignment handout for additional details.

**Workshops:** Students will participate in three workshops focused on the physical examination and description of printed books and other printed material from the fifteenth century to the present. The workshops will cover printing and typographical evidence (October 16), identification of prints and book illustration techniques (November 13), and publishing, reading, and provenance evidence (November 20). Students will be provided with a list of terms, online

resources, and practice sessions in preparation for the workshops, each one designed to expose students to various bibliographical methods in a supportive learning environment.

**Essay assignment:** The goal of essay is to expose students to different ways of writing about books. The prose of book history is vast and diverse, it is influenced by multiple academic, commercial, social, cultural, or ideological factors, and determined in many ways by its target audience. Readers in this field have access to a wide range of publications, including articles published in academic journals; bibliographical descriptions issued in booksellers/auction or exhibition catalogues; essays published in magazines or newsletters; and entries submitted to online publications and databases. In preparation for the final essay, students will decide their own topics, objectives, methodology, and writing style, always keeping in mind a potential publication or audience for their essay. One way to approach this assignment is to think of it as the first draft of piece of writing for a specific audience and with a particular publication in mind.

The final essay should not only engage with book history ideas and methods and integrate research from the book selections/descriptions (whenever possible) but, more importantly, the essay should reflect the student's academic interests and professional goals in book history. Students are encouraged to conceive their research as valuable contributions to the fields of bibliography, book history, print culture, material culture, visual and media studies, and other disciplines concerned with the study of books and print cultures. The course instructor encourages students to book individual to discuss and provide feedback on this assignment. See assignment template for additional details. The proposal is due on November 27 and final essay is due by Friday, December 15, 2023

**Class participation:** Students are expected to prepare every week to engage in discussions about the readings and ask questions or comment on class content. In every class we will review case studies, complete activities, or participate in conversations about book history, print culture, bibliography, and other disciplines/methods relevant to the study of books. While learning together, these class discussions also aim to foster a dynamic and collegial learning environment. The key idea behind active learning as a learning approach is that instructor and students share the responsibilities of the overall learning process. Therefore, the participation mark will be based on contributions made by students to the overall learning experience of the course.

**Missed assignments/exercises:** Students may request special consideration for missed workshops or assignments due to reasons beyond their control. An alternative date for the exercise or assignment will be scheduled with an accommodation request via the iSchool Student Services or Accessibility Services or via Absence Declaration Tool.

**Academic integrity:** As a student in this course, you have certain rights and responsibilities, some of which are outlined in the following statement of academic integrity written by the University of Toronto's Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation. The Faculty of Information has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism as defined in section B.I.1.(d) of the University's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. You should acquaint yourself with the Code. Please review the material in Cite it Right and if you require further clarification, consult the site How Not to Plagiarize.

Cite it Right covers relevant parts of the U of T *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (1995).

**Grading:** Please consult the iSchool's:

- Grade Interpretation Guidelines: <https://ischool.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/grade-interpretation.pdf>
- The University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/grading.pdf> (note if nothing will be handed back before the final date to drop without penalty, that should be stated in the syllabus.)
- The Guidelines on the Use of INC, SDF, & WDR: <http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/facultyandstaff/Pages/INC-SDF-WDR.aspx>

These documents will form the basis for grading in the course.

**Writing Support:** As stated in the iSchool's Grade Interpretation Guidelines, "work that is not well written and grammatically correct will not generally be considered eligible for a grade in the A range, regardless of its quality in other respects." With this in mind, please make use of the writing support provided to graduate students by the SGS Graduate Centre for Academic Communication. The services are designed to target the needs of both native and non-native speakers and all programs are free. Please consult the current workshop schedule <http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/Current-Years-Courses.aspx> for more information.

**Accommodations:** Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please contact Student Services and/or the Accessibility Services Office <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as> as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

**Health & Wellness:** The School of Graduate Studies and the Office of Student Life offer a range of services tailored to the challenges presented by graduate-level university life. Please visit their website for more information:

<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/Graduate-Counselling-Services.aspx>

**Statement of Acknowledgement of Traditional Land:** I would like to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land. See also, the Faculty of Information's Commitment to the [Findings and Call for Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) (approved at the Feb. 4, 2016 Faculty Council).

**Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:** The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect and learn from one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

<b>Week 1 (September 11)</b> 2:00-3:00 3:15-4:00 4:15-5:00	<b><u>COURSE OVERVIEW</u></b> Introduction to the course, activities, and assignments Class discussion: What is a book? Activity: Bibliographical vocabulary
<b>Week 2 (September 18)</b> 2:00-3:30 3:45-5:00	<b><u>HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE BOOK</u></b> What is book history? The making of book history and print culture Case studies: Books with history
<b>Week 3 (September 25)</b> 2:00-3:30 3:45-5:00	<b><u>MANUSCRIPTS TRADITIONS</u></b> Codicology, paleography, and manuscript studies Case studies: Scribes and the cultures of writing
<b>Week 4 (October 2)</b> 2:00-3:30 4:00-5:00	<b><u>EARLY PRINTED BOOKS (PART I)</u></b> Incunabula and early printed books beyond Europe Case studies: Printers in movement
<b>Week 5 (October 16)</b> 2:00-3:30 3:30-5:00	<b><u>EARLY PRINTED BOOKS (PART II)</u></b> Physical examination and description (workshop I) Reading room session
<b>Week 6 (October 23)</b> 2:00-2:30 2:30-3:30 4:00-5:00	<b><u>PRINTED BOOKS AND PRINT CULTURES (PART I)</u></b> Review of evidence exercise Printed books from 1800 (technologies of printing) Case studies: Popular books and prints
<b>Week 7 (October 30)</b> 2:00-3:30 4:00-5:00	<b><u>PRINTED BOOKS AND PRINT CULTURES (PART II)</u></b> Printed books from 1800 Case studies: Queer books and print cultures
<b>Week 8 (November 13)</b> 2:00-3:30	<b><u>BOOKS AND PRINTS</u></b> Identifying prints (workshop II)

4:00-5:00	Case studies: Monsters and book illustration
<b>Week 9 (November 20)</b>	<b><u>BOOK HISTORY WORK</u></b>
2:00-3:30	Reading and provenance evidence (workshop III)
3:45-5:00	Reading room session
<b>Week 10 (November 27)</b>	<b><u>BOOK HISTORY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS</u></b>
2:00-3:00	Books as tools of resistance and dissidence
3:30-5:00	Case studies: Artists' books, small presses, and independent publishing
<b>Week 11 (December 4)</b>	<b><u>BOOKS, LIBRARIES, AND ARCHIVES</u></b>
2:00-3:30	Book history and the cultural record
4:00-5:00	Case studies: Censors at work
<b>Week 12 (December 11)</b>	<b><u>COURSE REVIEW</u></b>
2:00-3:30	Class discussion
4:00-5:00	Case studies: TBD

## READINGS AND REFERENCE SOURCES

### Week 1: Course overview

James Raven, 'Books', in *Information: A Historical Companion* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2021), 333-338.

Camp Books manifesto, 11 July 2018, <https://www.campbooks.biz/manifesto>

→ Bibliographical vocabulary (see handout). Sidney E. Berger. *The Dictionary of the Book: A Glossary for Book Collectors, Booksellers, Librarians, and others*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023.

### Week 2: Historiography of the book

Michelle Levy & Tom Wolfe, 'Introduction', 'Chapter 1', in *The Broadview Introduction to Book History* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2017), xiii-xx, 1-27 (see scan on Quercus)

Elaine Treharne and Claude Willan. "Part I", in *Text technologies: A history* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), 1-32.

Amaranth Borsuk, 'The book as object', 'The book as content', in *The Book* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2018), 1-109.

Johanna Drucker, 'Bibliography', in *Information: A Historical Companion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 326-332.

→ Books with history: Gerne terms (see handout). RBMS Controlled Vocabularies: Genre Terms: [https://rbms.info/vocabularies/genre/alphabetical\\_list.htm](https://rbms.info/vocabularies/genre/alphabetical_list.htm)

### Week 3: Manuscript traditions

‘The Ancient Book’, in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 63-90.

‘The European Medieval Book’, in *The Book: A Global History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 59-79.

Chana Algarvio, ‘Re-Examining ‘the Book’ through Ancient Egyptian Tomb Walls’, *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 60 (2023): 1-40.

Jessica Stair, ‘Invoking Body and Voice: Deixis and Multivalency in the Techioloyan Manuscripts’, *Word & Image* 36, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 299-320.

→ Visit these online resources in preparation for the class: *Digital edition of the Codex Mendoza*, [here](#). *Islamic Manuscripts Basics*, [here](#); and *Glossary Terms for Islamic Manuscripts*, [here](#); and *Spanish Paleography Tool*, [here](#); *French Renaissance Paleography*, [here](#). *Ethiopic manuscripts*, [here](#).

### Week 4: Early printed books (part I)

Sarah Werner. *Studying Early Printed Books 1450-1800: A Practical Guide*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2019, 1-65.

Sydney Shep, ‘Books in Global Perspectives,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Leslie Howsam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 53-70.

Hortensia Calvo, ‘The Politics of Print: The Historiography of the Book in Early Spanish America’, *Book History* 6 (2003).

→ Visit the following resources for class activity: *Gutenberg & After Europe’s First Printers, 1450-1470*, [here](#), and *Material Evidence in Incunabula*, [here](#). *Primeros Libros de las Américas*, [here](#).

### Week 5: Early printed books (part II)

Sarah Werner. ‘Part 3’, in *Studying Early Printed Books 1450-1800: A Practical Guide*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2019, 79-101.

→ Bibliographical and printing terms (see handout)

### Week 6: Printed Books and print cultures (part I)

Simone Murray, ‘Introduction’ and ‘Part I’, in *Introduction to Contemporary Print Culture: Books as Media* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 1-87.

Amaranth Borsuk, ‘The book as idea’, in *The Book* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2018), 111-196.

James Mosley, 'The Technologies of Print', in [\*The Book: A Global History\*](#) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 130-153.

Craig Robertson, 'Documents, Empire, and Capitalism in the Nineteenth Century', in [\*Information: A Historical Companion\*](#) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 152-173.

→ Bibliographical and printing terms (see handout)

## Week 7: Printed Books and print cultures (part II)

J. D Sargan, '[What Could a Trans Book History Look Like? Toward Trans Codicology](#)', *Criticism* (Detroit) 64, no. 3/4 (2023): 571-86.

Paula Rabinowitz, 'Pulp: Biography of an American Object', in [\*American Pulp: How Paperbacks Brought Modernism to Main Street\*](#) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 1-39.

→ Bibliographical terms (see handout)

## Week 8: Books and Prints: bibliography and the study of visual cultures

Paul Goldman, '[The history of illustration and its technologies](#)', in *The Book: A Global History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 231-244.

Leah DeVun, '[Monstrous Races: Mapping the borders of sex](#)', in *The Shape of Sex: Nonbinary Gender from Genesis to the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 40-69.

→ Visit the following resource: MET Museum, *The Printed Image in the West*: woodcut, engraving, etching, aquatint, mezzotint, drypoint, lithography in the nineteenth century, and the print in the nineteenth century. Available [here](#).

## Week 9: Book history work

→ Bibliographical terms (see handout)

## Week 10: Book history and social movements

Simone Murray, 'Part III', in [\*Introduction to Contemporary Print Culture: Books as Media\*](#) (New York: Routledge, 2021), 201-237.

Magalí Rabasa, [\*The Book in Movement: Autonomous Politics & the Lettered City Underground\*](#) (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019), 1-59.

→ Bibliographical terms (see handout)



## Week 11: Books, libraries, and archives

Paul Nelles, 'Libraries and catalogs', in *Information: A Historical Companion* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2021), 567-578.

Kate Ozment, '[Rationale for Feminist Bibliography](#)', *Textual Cultures* 13:1 (2020).

→ See the following resource: *Women in Book History Bibliography*, [here](#).

## Week 12: Course Review

→ Content to be determined by the class. See handout for readings and case studies.

## Reference sources

- Michael F. Suarez and H. R. Woudhuysen. *The Oxford Companion to the Book*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Available [here](#).
- Michael F. Suarez and H.R. Woudhuysen. *The Book: A Global History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Available [here](#).
- Sidney E. Berger. *The Dictionary of the Book: A Glossary for Book Collectors, Booksellers, Librarians, and others*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023. Available [here](#).
- John Carter. *ABC for Book Collectors*. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 2016. Available online [here](#).
- Sarah Werner. *Studying Early Printed Books 1450-1800: A Practical Guide*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2019. Available [here](#).
- James Raven. *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Book*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Available [here](#).
- Elaine Treharne and Claude Willan. *Text technologies: A history*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020. Available [here](#).
- Ann Blair, editor. *Information: A Historical Companion*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2021. Available [here](#).

SHARP in Focus: *Decolonizing Book History Roundtable*, organized by Melanie Ramdarshan Bold and Danielle Fuller (15 June 2020):

→ Panel discussion: [https://youtu.be/SRM\\_dYS8S9s](https://youtu.be/SRM_dYS8S9s)

→ Blog post (8 October 2020): <https://www.sharpweb.org/sharpnews/2020/10/08/on-decolonising-book-history>