

**LIBA 497: The Book**  
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**University of Southern Indiana**

**Overview of the course**

**Course Purpose**

This is a capstone course, and as such, it “will encourage students to draw on their educational experiences to develop interdisciplinary responses to a problem or issue in contemporary life.” Most students who take this course have never thought about the history of books, but by the end of this course, you will never look at books in the same way again. The methods of analysis that we will use in this course can be broadly applied to other questions within other disciplines, and will help you hone your skills at analysis and creating a viable argument based on evidence. **This is a writing-intensive course; you will submit written assignments every week.**

“Books” in this class is broadly defined as works intended for a reading public, whether inscribed on clay tablets, painted on vellum, or created in a computer. This is a vast topic, including thousands of years of the written word, and it is an interdisciplinary topic, one that includes (at a minimum) art, history, technology, education, literature and economics. Yet despite the scope and variety of the topic, the basic significance of the written word remains relatively constant – manuscripts, books, newspapers, and other forms of writing are not only material objects, but they are agents within their individual social contexts, often functioning as instruments of intellectual and social change. We will look at the entire span of the written word in Western Civilization, but the heaviest emphasis will be on the period after the development of moveable type printing.

**Course Objectives**

After successfully completing this course, you should be able to do the following:

1. Demonstrate your ability to identify, explain and analyze central issues in assigned readings by raising credible and thoughtful questions about them and making lucid, substantive responses to questions raised by others.
2. Demonstrate that you can explain the major points of the theoretical readings and are able to apply these ideas to specific case studies.
3. Demonstrate that you are able to analyze, compare, contrast, or otherwise organize the work of various authors into a lucid argument that is expressed effectively and persuasively in grammatically correct writing.

**Required Texts**

Finkelstein, David, and Alistair McCleery. *The Book History Reader*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge, 2006. ISBN: 978-0415359481

Howard, Nichole. *The Book: The Life Story of a Technology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. ISBN:978-0-8018-9311-7

Other articles and book chapters will also be assigned.

**Course Requirements**

This course requires you to read carefully, write thoughtfully, and work in a timely manner. If you have never taken a distance education course in the past, you need to realize that this course – like any other – requires that you set aside time each week to work on the assignments. The advantage for you is that you have the ability to set your own schedule for work within the defined time parameters of each assignment. I **strongly** recommend that you work on the class every day; while many of the reading assignments are relatively short, some of them are quite complex and will require careful reading (and re-reading). Don't wait until the due date to begin work on your questions and responses!

**To successfully complete this course:**

- You need to have:
  - a stable internet connection. A high-speed internet connection is most desirable; if you do not have this at home, you can usually find this kind of connection in your local library or here at USI.
  - All of the books assigned in this class
- You need to be able to:
  - Link to articles in the USI database

- Open and read pdf. files
- Link to websites and open YouTube videos
- Attach documents as Word or Rich Text files to assignment pages in Blackboard
- Post questions and responses on the Discussion Board on the class website
- Access your USI e-mail account on a regular basis

**Lectures:** Each week, I will post one or more narrated PowerPoints that address the issues raised in the assigned readings. These lectures are not a substitute for reading the assignments – they are intended to explain difficult theoretical issues, highlight correlations between the various readings, provide historical context for understanding the readings, and offer additional examples to further explain the assignments. The lectures are set up to show who viewed them, and how long each person viewed them. You must view them all to achieve full credit.

**Discussion responses and critiques:** A senior-level class presumes that the students will be able to intelligently discuss the assigned material. Raising questions about what one has read is a significant element of the learning process. It promotes the exchange of information, ideas, and opinions, which raises the level of discourse and encourages the expansion of one’s mental horizons. It also helps you understand the materials assigned. Thus, each week, all students will answer one of ten “questions for consideration” about the assigned reading and each student will also post a critique of another classmate’s response to a question. Each posting is worth 20 points for each question for consideration and 20 points for each critique of another student’s post. No discussion board responses or critiques during the weeks that an exam is due.

**Assessment Key for Discussion Board Postings**

- E = Excellent:** virtually flawless execution of this component
- G = Good:** shows mastery of this component but may be less complete or less sophisticated than an “Excellent”; may have minor errors.
- F = Fair:** indicates basic mastery of skill or content, but does not show greater sophistication and complexity of thought; may a significant omission or a major error.
- P = Poor:** indicates only partial mastery of the skill or content; may have several errors or omissions.
- U=Unsatisfactory:** indicates lack of mastery of skill or content; component may be missing, incomplete, or incorrect.

CRITERIA for evaluating a response to a “question for consideration”	E	G	F	P	U
It begins with a statement that contains an assertive answer to the question.					
It paraphrases/quotes appropriately; it includes citation, uses quotes sparingly & avoids plagiarism.					
It reflects an accurate understanding of the assigned readings and applies them appropriately.					
It goes beyond description to include analysis that compares, contrasts, assesses accuracy, etc.					
It contains no errors of fact or interpretation					
It is NOT based on your unsupported opinions or experiences					
It is a minimum of 250 words in length, avoids repetition, use of vague terms, or “filler”					
It is written in Standard English appropriate for scholarly or business communications					

CRITERIA for evaluating a critique of a classmate’s response to a “question for consideration”	E	G	F	P	U
It begins with a statement that summarizes your critique.					
It paraphrases/quotes appropriately; it includes citation, uses quotes sparingly & avoids plagiarism.					
It reflects an accurate understanding of the assigned readings and applies them appropriately					
It goes beyond mere agreement to include analysis that compares, contrasts, assesses accuracy, etc.					
It contains no errors of fact or interpretation					
It is NOT based on your unsupported opinions or experiences					
It is a minimum of 250 words in length, avoids repetition, use of vague terms, or “filler”					
It is written in Standard English appropriate for scholarly or business communications					
It incorporates material that was not used by your classmate, drawn from other portions of the same authors’ works or from other authors assigned for the class.					

**Examinations:** Four times in the semester students will write a longer essay that is an exploration of the material assigned in that unit of class. Each exam is cumulative.

### Assessment Key for Essay Exams

**E = Excellent:** virtually flawless execution of this component

**G = Good:** shows mastery of this component but may be less complete or less sophisticated than an “Excellent”; may have minor errors.

**F = Fair:** indicates basic mastery of skill or content, but does not show greater sophistication and complexity of thought; may a significant omission or a major error.

**P = Poor:** indicates only partial mastery of the skill or content; may have several errors or omissions.

**U=Unsatisfactory:** indicates lack of mastery of skill or content; component may be missing, incomplete, or incorrect.

Criteria for assessment	<u>E</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>U</u>
It contains a valid thesis (assertion) that provides your conclusions about the readings you are analyzing.					
It contains a brief summary of the readings that you will use in your essay.					
It contains a valid analysis of each of the sources as they pertain to the conclusions you have reached about them. It refers to specific ideas and evidence presented by the authors. It explains how the evidence of each author seems to support, refute, or provide alternative interpretations of the conclusions you reach.					
It compares the various readings with each other; that means comparing the same element across the work of several authors. Make sure you include specific evidence drawn from each of them to show that your assertion about their agreement/disagreement is valid.					
It is factually accurate and draws valid conclusions based on the assessment of the evidence provided in the paper.					
It is typed in 12-point font and double-spaced, has page numbers on every page, and is written in Standard English. It will be free from grammatical and typographical errors. It will be approximately 2000 words (7 pages)					
It includes parenthetical citations in the text for all quotations; it paraphrases and uses quotes/data appropriately from each source and includes a bibliography (cited correctly) at the end of the paper.					