

ENG425W: English Seminar
Literature and the Technologies of Textual Production

Dr. Jessica Barr
jbarr@eureka.edu
Office: Burrus Dickinson 301

Fall 2011; TuTh 11-12:15
Burgess 101
Phone: x6337

Office hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 9-10 and by appointment

Course Description

In studying literature, we often take for granted the basic technologies of textual production—the form of the book, the means of publication, a certain naturalized idea of who “the audience” for a literary text might be. But methods of producing texts for audiences have changed drastically from the ancient period to the modern day, with significant implications for how literature is written, for whom it is written, how authors conceive of their audiences, and even how audiences conceive of authors. Examining the variation between ideas of authorship and audience, the scope of the reading public (who is actually reading), distribution of and variation between editions of texts, electronic vs. print vs. manuscript culture, and the transition from orality to literacy can help us to get at the intersections between literature and its social, economic, and political contexts.

In this course, we will consider some of the above-mentioned ideas, focusing in particular on how authors have responded to and addressed different technologies of text-production and ideas of the reading public. We will explore Anglo-Saxon poetry written in the transitional period from an oral to a literate culture, medieval anxieties about readers’ interpretation, postmodern playfulness with textual format, and the question of how “the digital revolution” has changed habits of reading and writing. Readings will be from literary texts, scholarly criticism, and literary and cultural theory.

Course books

Calvino, Italo. *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*. Trans. William Weaver. Orlando: Harcourt, 1981.

Drabble, Margaret. *The Seven Sisters*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2002.

Nabokov, Vladimir. *Pale Fire*. New York: Vintage International, 1989.

Stoicheff, Peter and Andrew Taylor, Eds. *The Future of the Page*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.

Additional readings will be provided in a course pack that can be purchased at the book store.

*Bede’s introduction to *Caedmon's Hymn* and the poem *Judith* are in the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 1 (The Middle Ages). Please let me know if you do not have a copy of *NAEL*.

Assignments and Expectations

I expect you to come to class on time. Frequent tardiness will affect your attendance record.

Absences: If you must miss class for any reason, let me know as far in advance as possible, preferably in writing (via email). More than two absences may adversely affect your grade. **Missing 20% (6 or more) of the class meetings will be grounds for failing the course.**

Participation: This class is the culmination of your English experience at Eureka, and as such, a high degree of scholarship and engagement is expected. I expect everyone to speak frequently in class and to

participate actively in discussion. Please prepare for class by doing all of the assigned readings and writing assignments, reflecting and making notes on the discussion questions that are posted on Moodle, and making notes of issues that are of interest to you throughout the semester.

Assignments for this course will include the following:

- ***A presentation.*** Your 10-minute presentation will report on a chapter from *The Future of the Page*. The first 5 minutes of your presentation will summarize some (or one) of the main ideas in your chapter of *FotP* (bearing in mind that most of the class will not have read it); the second 5 minutes should be dedicated to your reflections on the issues raised by the chapter. What big-picture questions does the chapter bring up? What do you think of them? What would you like us to discuss about them? Be bold and exploratory in this part of the presentation: This is your chance to theorize! Each presentation will be followed with class discussion of the questions that you've raised. See the handout on "Guiding Questions" for inspiration, if needed.

You will be paired with one or two other students whose chapters relate to yours. Each group should meet at least once prior to your presentation date to discuss what you plan to say. I also expect each group to make a few (insightful, non-trivial) connections between your chapters. However, each student is responsible for his or her own presentation. See p. 6 for presentation topics and dates.

- ***A paper based on your presentation.*** This 5-page paper will be due one week after your presentation. Basically, you should write up your presentation in paper form (i.e. not a bulleted list, but actual, well-crafted paragraphs). I encourage you to also incorporate any discussion or feedback from your presentation that you feel helps to complicate or advance your ideas.
- ***Discussion questions, Moodle posts, and miscellaneous participation.*** During the course of the semester, you will need to submit at least five discussion questions and five substantive posts reflecting on the readings and discussions. (A post is about 500 words long.) In the synopsis and on the Moodle page, I have suggested some possible topics for posts, but, in general, questions and posts may be about anything from the class and/or reading that interests you and may be submitted for any class period from Tues. 8/29-Thurs. 11/3. (If participation is minimal in the first few weeks of the course, I will implement mandatory deadlines.) Questions and posts should be submitted either under the specific "Post Topic" fora or in the fora entitled "Open Topic."

In addition, a percentage of your grade will be based on "miscellaneous participation": commenting on others' posts, submitting additional posts or questions, and generally participating in the on-line life of the course. The course Moodle page can be found through <http://moodle.eureka.edu/>.

- ***Workshop leading and draft submission.*** We will have in-class workshops on all final papers. Drafts will be graded based primarily on completion and effort. In addition, each student will be responsible for leading the workshop for one other student's paper, and your doing so will be graded. Details to follow.
- ***A final paper.*** Your final paper should be at least ten pages in length. It will be on a topic of your choice, but it must engage substantively with at least two of the readings done for this course. You may choose to explore an issue in book history, a theoretical issue that arises in class, a genre or type of literature, or an interpretation of one or more of the literary texts that we will read together.
- ***A Capstone presentation*** (in the Gammon room, date TBA). This is a formal presentation of an abridged version of your final paper (about 10 minutes, or 4-5 pages).

- Submission to and presentation at the *English Language and Literature Conference* at the University of St. Francis in March. Although there are no points for participating in the conference, it is a required component of the course.
- **English Major Assessment.** This is a reflective paper in which students will review their work as an English major at Eureka; details of the assignment will be handed out on the first day.

Grades for the course will be determined according to the following rubric:

Presentation (in-class component)	10%
Paper based on presentation	10%
Discussion questions	5%
Moodle posts	10%
Miscellaneous Moodle participation	5%
Workshop leading	5%
Draft submission (final paper)	5%
Topic proposal for paper	5%
Final paper	30%
English major summary paper	5%
Participation	10%
Total	100%

Grading scale: 0-59.99% = F, 60-69.99% = D, 70-79.99% = C, 80-89.99% = B, 90-100% = A

Learning Center

The Learning Center, located on the first floor of Alumni Hall, provides academic services to all Eureka College students. Consultations are available in the areas of math and writing. Study groups, individual academic counseling and course-specific tutoring are also available by contacting Jason Zimmerman at x6520 or jzimmerman@eureka.edu. *I highly recommend that you use the Writing Tutors at the Learning Center (a free service offered to Eureka students).*

ADA Statement

Any Eureka College student with a disability or other special circumstances requiring accommodations or other consideration in order to successfully complete the requirements of this course is requested to identify himself/herself to the instructor and discuss the matter privately. This disclosure should be made within the first week of the course so proper accommodations can be made.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty constitutes a major breach of the trust that exists between the instructor and the student. It includes passing off another's ideas as one's own, any attempt to gain information about a test or exam prior to the test or exam date without the instructor's consent, and providing unauthorized assistance on a test, exam, paper, or other assignment to another student. Copying text directly off of the Internet, or rewriting materials found on-line in one's "own words" but without proper attribution, constitute cheating. Cheating on any assignment—no matter how seemingly trivial—will result in a failing grade for this course. Students who fail for academic dishonesty will not have the option of withdrawing. If you are in doubt about what plagiarism means, or about how to appropriately document sources in your work, please contact me; I will be happy to help.

Course synopsis (subject to change)

Th 8/25	Introduction: Course overview and a very short history of the book
Tu 8/30	What is a book? Readings: Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library"; select a chapter of <i>The Future of the Page</i> to present (summaries are provided in the book's introduction) Moodle discussion: Which chapter of <i>FotP</i> would you like to present? Post topic: How do you read?
Th 9/1	Readings: E.R. Curtius, selection from "The Book as Symbol," from <i>European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages</i> ; Jacques Derrida, "The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing," from <i>Of Grammatology</i> Post topic: What does the concept "book" mean to you, and how does that compare to what Benjamin, Curtius, and/or Derrida say?
Tu 9/6	Orality and Literacy Readings: Walter Ong, "Orality and Literacy"; Bede, excerpt on Caedmon's "Hymn"; <i>Judith</i> Post topic: Can we see traces of oral composition in Bede and/or <i>Judith</i> ?
Th 9/8	Readings: Isak Dinesen, "The Blank Page"; Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel"; Chaucer, <i>The House of Fame</i> (lines 1-508)
Tu 9/13	Manuscript culture Reading: Chaucer, <i>The House of Fame</i> (lines 509-1090) <i>FotP</i> presentations: Chapters 2 and 3
Th 9/15	Reading: <i>House of Fame</i> (lines 1090-2155 [end]) <i>FotP</i> presentation: Chapter 4 Post topic: Can we read <i>Fame</i> as reflecting specific concerns about patronage and/or manuscript culture?
Tu 9/20	Textual reproducibility Reading: Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Post topic: What is the "aura"? Is it a helpful concept?

Th 9/22	Print and politics Readings: Benedict Anderson, “The Origins of National Consciousness” and “Patriotism and Racism,” from <i>Imagined Communities</i> <i>FotP</i> presentations: Chapters 5 & 6
Tu 9/27	Theorizing authorship Reading: Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author”; Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?”
Th 9/29	Continue discussion of Barthes and Foucault <i>FotP</i> presentations: Chapters 8, 10, & 11
Tu 10/4	Reading: Jorge Luis Borges, “The Garden of Forking Paths” and “Pierre Menard, Author of the <i>Quixote</i> ”; David Foster Wallace, “Consider the Lobster”; <i>The Onion</i> , “Girlfriend Stops Reading David Foster Wallace Breakup Letter at Page 20” Post topic: Can we apply any of the theoretical readings from earlier in the semester to (some of) these texts?
Th 10/6	Class canceled for faculty workshop
Tu 10/11	Readings: Margaret Drabble, <i>The Seven Sisters</i> , pp. 3-162.
Th 10/13	Reading: <i>The Seven Sisters</i> , pp. 162-end.
Tu 10/18	Reading: Nabokov, <i>Pale Fire</i> (Foreword and Canto 1)
Th 10/20	Reading: <i>Pale Fire</i> (Canto 2)
Tu 10/25	Readings: <i>Pale Fire</i> (Cantos 3 and 4; Index); Rabinowitz, “Truth in Fiction”
Th 10/27	Reading: Calvino, <i>If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler</i> (pp. 3-53) Post topic: Initial exploration of your paper topics
Tu 11/1	Reading: <i>If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler</i> (pp. 54-198) Topic proposals due
Th 11/3	Reading: <i>If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler</i> (pp. 198-end)
Tu 11/8	Rethinking the book Reading: TBA (or catch-up) <i>FotP</i> presentations: Chapters 9 and 12
Th 11/10	“Reading”: Look at some of the examples of artists’ books on reserve.
Tu 11/15	Workshop 1
Th 11/17	Workshop 2
Tu 11/22	Workshop 3
Th 11/24	Thanksgiving – No class
Tu 11/29	Capstone presentation rehearsal

Th 12/1	Capstone presentation rehearsal
M 12/5	Capstone presentations, Gammon room, 7:30 pm (tentative date and time)
Tu 12/6	Book-making workshop and party

Final papers and English major assessment due in my office by 3:30 pm on Friday, 12/9.

Presentation dates and topics

Medieval and early modern manuscript culture:

FotP chapters 2, 3, & 4 (September 13/September 15; paper due September 20/September 22)

Orality and postcolonialism:

FotP chapters 5 & 6 (September 22; paper due September 29)

Readers, writers, humans:

FotP chapters 8, 10, & 11 (September 29; paper due October 6)

The future of the book:

FotP chapters 9 & 12 (November 8; paper due November 15)