In *The History of the Book* you will explore the impact of the book as an object and a technology, from medieval manuscripts to e-readers. You will examine examples of books from different periods, both to understand how book production changed over time and to explore broader questions about the nature of texts, their reception, and their associated communities and contexts. By learning how books were made and used, you will gain a clearer appreciation of how culture was shaped by the development of books, and how it shaped the development of books in turn. The archival and research skills you learn during this course will serve you in future research projects.

This course explores the influence of the book as a force in history and literature from the medieval period to the present. It will include hands-on examination of books and manuscript fragments as well as discussion of books as objects, social forces, and vehicles for text.
Course Text:

We will refer to James Raven’s readable survey What is the History of the Book? (Oxford: Polity Press, 2018) several times: if you find the subject matter interesting you might want to purchase a copy. Other readings will be available online or through NTULearn.

Assessment:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Essay (2,500-3,000 words) (16 April)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catalogue entry and short essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital editing project</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class presentations (5 April)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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The research paper can deal with any book historical topic, broadly defined. You might choose to work on a specific book or to compare two books (digital collections will give you 'access' to a wider range of materials than we have in the library at NTU). Alternatively, you might choose a broader topic that engages more with historical and sociological questions than with the physical object itself. If you have trouble picking a topic, try thinking of two things that you’ve found interesting from the course, or two (physical) books you particularly like. How do they relate to one another? How might that connection be expanded into a more general question, or narrowed to a specific area of focus?

The paper should be substantial, polished, and fully referenced, examining both primary and secondary sources and engaging critically with relevant scholarly debates. It should make a clear and well-argued claim. All paragraphs should be related to this topic and follow a coherent, persuasive structure. Points should be fully developed and supported with specific evidence. Your essay should demonstrate the significance of your chosen topic.

For the catalogue entry assignment you will work directly from a book or object in the NTU library. You will prepare a formal description of your chosen item, drawing attention to its significant features and including photographs where relevant. Your short essay will place your chosen object within its social and historical context, explaining its relevance to a general audience. The catalogue entries and essays will be combined to form a digital timeline of the history of the book as represented in NTU’s collections. You will have opportunities to edit your catalogue entries before they are made public.

The class will work together to prepare a digital edition of a medieval manuscript, including a description, transcription, digital image, and contextualising information. You will collaborate to decide on the important physical and textual features of the manuscript and the best ways of representing them in digital form. You will be expected to produce correct and accurate code, but will also be assessed on your contributions to group discussions about editorial practice. No previous coding or editing experience is expected! You will have opportunities to revise your portions of the edition before they are made public.
You will present on your research papers, situating them within the broader academic field. As presenters you will gain experience in synthesising and presenting academic research. Non-presenting students develop their critical listening skills. The presentations will give you a chance to receive and incorporate feedback on your research projects before submission. Presentations should be seven minutes long and should be accompanied by a powerpoint or other visual aid.

**Course Policies:**

Attendance and Participation: The success of any seminar depends on the active participation of all its members. Barring illness or emergencies, you must attend every seminar. You must arrive on time, having done the required readings and any assigned work, and be ready to participate in the class discussion. Failure to do so will reduce your participation grade significantly. If you need to miss a class you must get in touch with me before that week’s meeting.

Late Work and Extensions: if your essay is late, it will be marked down by one third of a letter grade for each day that it is overdue (i.e. a paper that would have received a B will receive a B-). No work will be accepted more than seven days late. Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, including documented illness or genuine emergency.

Seeking Help Outside Class: you are encouraged to use any form of legitimate aid to help you write papers and research topics that interest you. Obvious sources of legitimate assistance include me, the coaches at the LCC Communication Cube, and the subject librarians at the library.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: Don’t do it! If I find that you have misrepresented someone else’s work as your own you will fail the assignment and possibly the course. If you are unsure of how or when to cite a source, please ask me or refer to the university’s academic integrity resources online.

**Questions?**

Feel free to come to me if you have any questions! Most importantly, if you feel that you’re falling behind in the course for any reason, please talk to me. The sooner we discuss any obstacles to your success in this class, the more likely it is that we will be able to fix them.
COURSE SCHEDULE

1. **What is Book History? (11 January)**


   If interested, you might also read:


2. **Format: Clay Tablets to the Kindle (18 January)**


4. **Process: Print (1 February)**


   Watch video on course blog explaining how hand press printing works.

5. **The Impact of Print (8 February)**


6. **Letterpress Workshop (15 February)**
7. Book Economics (22 February)


RECESS WEEK

8. The History of Reading (8 March)


9. Owning Books (15 March)

Extracts from Gabriel Naudé, ‘Instructions Concerning Erecting of a Library’.
10. Censorship and Circulation (22 March)


11. The Electronic Age (29 March)


12. Presentations (5 April)

13. Conclusions (12 April)