

ART OF THE BOOK: MASTER READING SCHEDULE (1)

Readings are to be all well-begun by Monday of each week and complete by Wednesday. The "Essay" Column on the right shows what essays are DUE on the corresponding weeks; note, however, that readings assigned for the second week of each topic are largely transitional and apply more to the next topic than to the one due on that week.

READER		TEXT
week one	<p>Opening Chapters: <i>The Century of Artists' Books</i>, Johanna Drucker "The Library of Babel" & "The Book of Sand," Jorge Borges, <i>Ficciones</i> Selection from <i>Understanding Media</i>, Marshall McLuhan Mallarmé, <i>About the Book & Un Coup de Dés...</i></p>	<p>p. 1-72 <i>The Shape of Content</i></p>
	<p>This first set of readings is designed to introduce a few different approaches to the book. By doing so, we'll gather a collective sense of what we mean by "book" as a culturally bound term and how practicing the "art of the book" can entail more than an interest in fine craft. Meanwhile, Shahn's lectures introduce aesthetic concepts and general discussions of the role of art and the artist in the world and in relation to "Art" and will provide some foundation for our discussions of aesthetics. McLuhan, who famously said that "the medium is the message," will give us something to chew on throughout the quarter. Mallarmé is, from the perspective of the Literati, the modern source for an approach to the book and the material properties of language.</p>	
week two	<p>Readings from <i>The New Bookbinder</i> (by Timothy Ely) Article from <i>Biblio</i>: "Arion Press"</p>	<p>Ch. 4-6 <i>The Shape of Content</i></p> <p>p. 1-139 <i>Smithsonian Book of Books</i></p> <p>Ch. 1-2 <i>Cutting Edge of Reading</i></p>
	<p>Articles from the <i>The New Bookbinder</i> introduce you to some of the creative ways of thinking about the fine craft of bookbinding as an art form that reveal much about how we conceptualize the function and meaning of the book as an artifact of our culture. The article from <i>Biblio</i> proves that something's happening out there in reality.</p>	
week three 3	<p>Excerpt from <i>Compact</i>, Maurice Roche <i>Texts for Nothing</i>, Samuel Beckett from <i>The Rustle of Language</i>, "Death of the Author," Roland Barthes Michel Foucault's essay, "What is an Author?" Excerpts from <i>The Alphabet versus the Goddess</i></p>	<p>p. 140 -307 <i>Smithsonian Book of Books</i></p> <p>p. 1-43 <i>No longer Innocent</i></p> <p>p. 55-75, 110-145 <i>Figuring the Word</i></p> <p>Note: this is a HEAVY reading week. Plan your time well.</p>
	<p>This set of readings emphasizes various approaches to language. In general, we see an emphasis on what we'll call the materiality of language: language as visual, the page as spatial, the alphabet an arbitrary collection of signs. The work from Beckett demands some explanation: for the writing portion of the program, I want us to be concerned about reconceptualizing the "genre" or "mode" in which we write, given the assumption that few, if any, preexisting forms of writing are actually dependent on or native to the <i>book form</i>. My argument would be that, to write a book is, by itself, the taking on of a specific form and that this form, because of its openness and its unfamiliarity, brings us closer to an essential literary question: what is writing? To consider this, we investigate the act of writing, much in the way McLuhan (and Ong) have done, only here with Beckett we have a powerful dig into what it means to write and how the act of writing relates to human consciousness and our sense of being. Both the Barthes and the Foucault provide an appropriate context for what Beckett has meant to writers. You'll begin just a bit of Schlain's <i>Alphabet vs the Goddess</i>, a rather armchair-type speculation on the course of civilization, but well worth it. Though we'll only get a few tastes of it in this program, it's important to know that feminism has had a large part to play in the aesthetics and theory of literature and book arts with which we are concerned.</p>	

ART OF THE BOOK: MASTER READING SCHEDULE (2)

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READER		TEXT
week four	"My Life a Book," Ann Waldman, from <i>A Book of the Book</i> Excerpts from <i>The Alphabet versus the Goddess</i>	skim 45-87, read p. 112-116, <i>No Longer Innocent</i>
	Waldman is among many who have adopted the book as the writer's identity, as, perhaps, the immortal analogue, or the disastrous prison. More of the Schlain will provide some very different reflections on word & image.	p. 6-113 <i>Writing On the Wall</i>
week five	Some introductory materials from <i>Imagining Language</i> , McCaffrey, Rasula	p. 115-209 <i>Writing On the Wall</i>
	These juicy tidbits provide a literary supplement to our reading on radical manipulations of language. <i>Imagining Language</i> is a huge compendium of language and literature's freaks and geeks, outcasts, exiles, and monsters. A copy of the full text will be on closed reserve in the library. I expect the most useful aspects of these materials will be the general discussions and that when they begin referring to specific works that I haven't reproduced for you, you might decide to take a little nap until it gets exciting again.	p. 90-99, 146-166 <i>Figuring the Word</i>
week six	selections from <i>The New Bookbinder</i> Chapters from <i>Writing Machines</i> , N.K. Hayles	p. 137 - 265 <i>No longer Innocent</i>
	These readings will to some degree apply to our considerations of word and image, particularly if we continue to see such combinations as a brand of multimedia (see Hayles). But these pieces apply much more easily to the next essay, and give us to wonder how the form of books is significant, semiotic, and ...sexy.	p. 33 - 164* <i>Cutting Edge of Reading</i>
week seven	"In Defense of Books," William Gass from <i>The Gutenberg Elegies</i> , Sven Birkirts selections from Roy Harley Lewis' <i>Modern Fine Bookbinding</i>	p. 165 - 243* <i>Cutting Edge of Reading</i>
	These pieces provide something of a mixture of concern with the form of the book, the idea of the book, and the literary aura of books. You'll find each of these three authors takes a very different approach to the book, to reading, and to the development of an argument for why books matter. They also sustain some of the thread of the literary world's conception of the book and our relations to it, principally through the act of reading and writing in books. From sources such as these we might articulate a "poetics" of the book, that is, a set of approaches to thinking about books that attempts to account for (or simply describe) complex aesthetic experiences.	*When working through <i>Cutting Edge</i> , it may make sense to skip an artist or two who does not interest you.

ART OF THE BOOK: MASTER READING SCHEDULE (3)

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READER		TEXT
week eight	<p>Poststructuralism: <i>A Very Short Introduction, Creatures of Difference</i> from <i>Barthes: A Very Short Introduction: Structuralist, Hedonist, & Writer</i> Chapters from <i>The Spell of the Sensuous</i>, "Cybernetics & Ghosts," Italo Calvino Something by Maurice Blanchot</p> <p>I've plopped you flat in the middle of literary theory this week as an approach to the final essay question. Before we ask what the relation between literature and books might be, we have to consider what literature is, why literature matters, and everything else related to language. Easy, right? Poststructuralism surfaces here for a few reasons: first, it is relatively contemporary outlook on literature that you should at least be able to reference so as to make others feel bad; second, it allows us to discuss my crazy writing ideas in a way that makes sense—p.s-ism has an approach to the literary work that respects little of what writers have always held dear; finally, it allows us to talk about meaning in a language that is not specific to text or image but plays the two together. Barthes is one of the pioneers of this way of thinking and, among others (incl. Blanchot) has considered what it means to write. The <i>Spell of the Sensuous</i> gives us a seemingly divergent approach to language that, I suspect, brings us to a similar sort of mood. Calvino cannot be matched for his ability to lucidly explore the creative literary mind; he, too, deals with writing in such a way as to reorganize our relationship to language, narrative, and, by extension, books.</p>	<p>p. 167-174, 194-211 <i>Figuring the Word</i></p> <p>Note: this is a DENSE reading week. Plan your time well.</p>
week nine	<p>Interview and work by Edmond Jabes Jonathan Culler, "Toward a Theory of Non-Genre Literature" Selections from Alain Robbe-Grillet's <i>For a New Novel</i> Excerpt from Philippe Sollers' <i>Event</i> Raymond Federman's "Propositions" for a new Fiction, from <i>Surfiction</i></p> <p>These last few pieces give us some things to ponder. The Jabes I hope can be a pleasure, though it offers some significant challenges. Culler and Grillet are, from two very different points in history, urging writers into new territory, discarding shackles, and so on. Sollers provides another approach to what we first encountered with Beckett: the act of writing. Sollers, a champion of the french "new novel," was interested in what it meant to be a writer of "texts," not stories or novels. Federman will be sufficiently BLUNT without being totally clear, and will give us something to talk about; he is somewhat blindly striking out from the enclaves of literature toward some invisible horizon that is, in fact, already well-populated by book artists.</p>	<p>p.239 - 295 <i>Figuring the Word</i></p>
<p>In week ten, we'll take time for a synthesis seminar. You'll want to refresh your mind on all of the materials we've been through and be prepared to identify and discuss the major themes of the quartre.</p>		