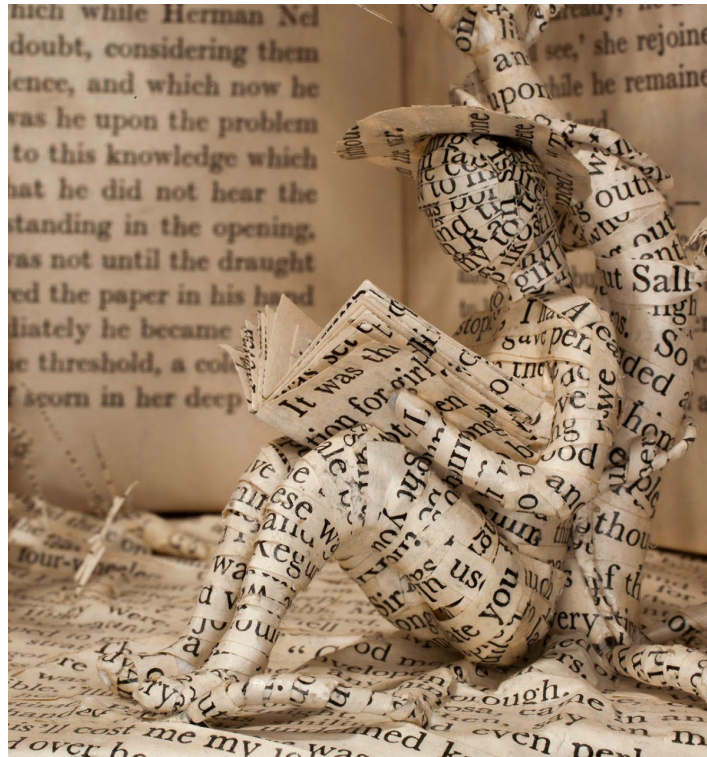


ENGL 479P: BookLab

“Everything in the world exists in order to end in a book.”

—Stéphane Mallarmé



Sculpture by [Emma Taylor](#)

Fall 2019

University of Maryland

Dr. Matthew Kirschenbaum

he/him/his

mgk@umd.edu

Tuesdays, Thursdays: 12:30 – 1:45pm (Tawes 3252)

Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursdays: 2:00 – 4:00 (Tawes 3248)

Introduction

The bite of lead type into handmade paper where ink pools in recesses pressed by the weight of the letters; a literal subtext on the page surfaced through acts of erasure; the hot liquid polymers of 3D-printed objects, deposited in tiny

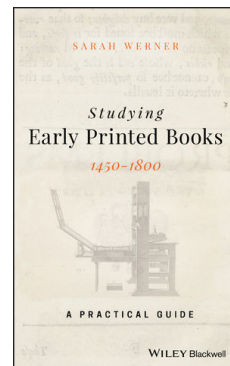
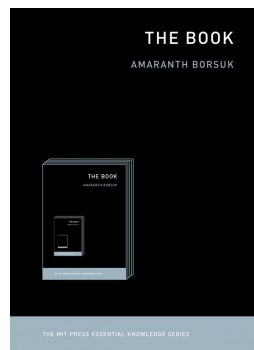
incremental layers to make shapes; lines of circuitry written into lines of text and animated with current; a book that tweets at you; a book that is also a toy box, or the gateway to an augmented reality. Taught with the resources and facilities available in our BookLab (Tawes 3248), this course will be a historical, imaginative, and experiential introduction to the multitudinous forms of what is not the oldest but is surely among the most enduring of human technologies, the codex book.

Our work will be organized around practical and in-depth explorations of different elements of books and bookmaking, including letterpress printing with traditional lead and wood (movable) type, different techniques for bindings, 3D printing, zines, making altered and treated books, and so on. Class-time will be a mix of discussion and hands-on activity. The course will culminate in each student designing and creating their own book object, which might take the form of an artist's book, chapbook, zine, an altered or treated book, or something else entirely.

No prior experience or expertise is necessary. That said, it will be essential that you make a full commitment to the course, both in terms of constant attendance and to putting in the additional extramural hours your individual projects will require. This course is part of the Media Studies track in the English Major.

Books to Buy

These are required, and may be sourced from any quality bookseller:



- Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book* (MIT Press, 2018)
- Sarah Werner, *Studying Early Printed Books, 1450-1800* (Wiley, 2019)

You will need both right away.

In addition, you are required to purchase the Chibitronics Light Sensor Bundle (consisting of booklet and add-on materials):



Please buy exactly this, and not any other Chibitronics product. You do not need to purchase a separate Chibi chip. You will need this by November 12.

Last, each of you will be required to select and keep in BookLab one unique book of your own possession which will form the basis for various activities and experiments throughout the semester. It shouldn't be just *any* book—it should have some personality, some character, maybe mean something to you. At the same time, it shouldn't be a valuable book, or one that you're *too* attached to: because we will be writing in it, cutting parts of it out, gluing new things in, and otherwise altering and remaking it! It should contain prose, and ideally some illustrations. An older book with some history to it is likely to be more interesting than a brand new one. Think about it, and please choose intentionally. You will need it by September 19.

Grading and Requirements

The distribution of requirements and their percentage of your final grade is as follows:

- Labs: 20%
- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Book Report: 20%
- Final Project: 40%

The Final Project is assumed to be a complete book object of your own making, which might take the form of an artist's book, chapbook, zine, a treated or altered book, a game-book, a book-in-a-box, or something else. You will also submit a 500-word artist's statement to accompany it. You will be expected to meet with me to discuss your final project at least once before the end of the semester.

The Midterm Exam will be a written in-class exam covering key concepts, people, and terms from the first half of the course.

The Book Report will be based on any one book from a designated shelf in BookLab. You will be responsible for a 750-word write-up according to a rubric I will distribute. It may be completed and submitted at any time during the semester, but must be submitted by November 5.

Labs will form the building blocks for your final project. We will be looking at individual techniques throughout the semester: letterpress, binding, zines, 3D printing, circuitry and sensors, and more. These activities will not be graded individually, but if you too often fail to be present and participate (including absences, whether excused or otherwise) you will receive a poor grade in this category—and, even more importantly, you will lack the know-how to produce a successful final project.

About BookLab

BookLab (Tawes 3248) will function as a direct annex for our work, both during our class meetings and outside of class. BookLab is the Department's dedicated space for the study of books as material, cultural, and imaginative artifacts; it is a makerspace, a library, a press, and a studio. We will be using BookLab's resources extensively throughout the semester; you should think of it as your default workspace. You will have access to the printing press and type collection there, the 3D printer, and other tools and materials.

If there's a book you want that we don't already [have on our shelves](#), ask us and we may well be able to order it; if there's something you need for your project that we don't have on hand, ask us and we'll try to get it; if there's something you want to do but don't know how, ask us and we may be able to help (or point you to someone else who can). You never need a specific reason or a task to be in BookLab; feel free to just drop by and sit on our couch, heat up some water for tea or cocoa, think, play, make a mess (as long as you clean it up), and hang out.

BookLab will be staffed this semester by myself and two Graduate Assistants, **Mal Haselberger** and **Britt Starr**. Open hours are posted on the door. You may reach us collectively at booklab@umd.edu and follow us on Twitter and Instagram at [@umd_booklab](#).

Course Policies

This course will operate according to the University of Maryland's [Course-Related Policies](#) (PDF). It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with these policies and to ask me if you have a question about any of them or how they apply to this course. Some particular points of emphasis follow.

Diversity: UMD English considers the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff to be critical to its educational mission and expects every member of the community to contribute to an inclusive and respectful culture in the classroom, work environment, and at campus events. It is my intent that students from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and learning needs be well served by this course and that the diversity students bring to class be viewed as a resource and strength. Dimensions of diversity include intersections of sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, intellectual and physical ability, primary language, faith and non-faith perspectives, income, political affiliation, marital or family status,

education, and any other legally protected class. I endeavor to present materials and activities that foster a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Please let me know of ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or other students or student groups.

If you experience issues related to diversity and inclusion in your English courses or as part of the English department community—or if you have suggestions for improving diversity, inclusion, equity, and access in the department—please contact our Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Committee at: englishidea@umd.edu.

Academic Integrity: The University is one of a small number of universities with a student-administered [Code of Academic Integrity](#) and an [Honor Pledge](#). The Code prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. All students in this class are expected to abide by the terms of this code at all times and are assumed to be operating under its strictures. More information is available here: <http://www.shc.umd.edu/SHC/Default.aspx>.

Attendance: University policy excuses the absences of students for illness (self or dependent), religious observances, required military service, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, and extreme extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control.

Given the hands-on nature of this class, much of our work will simply be unreproducible outside of scheduled class sessions. It will not be possible to make it up, arrange for a special individual tutorial, or “get the notes.” Failure to regularly attend, for whatever reason, will result in a poor grade in the Labs section but also deprive you of the necessary skills to produce a successful final project.

Religious Observances: The University of Maryland policy “Assignments and Attendance on Dates of Religious Observance” states that students should not be penalized in any way for participation in religious observances and that, whenever feasible, they be allowed to make up academic assignments that are missed due to such absences. It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences or need for other accommodation for religious observances in advance.

Disabilities: The University will provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. In order to ascertain what accommodations may need to be provided, students with disabilities should inform the instructors of their needs at the beginning of the semester. They will make arrangements with the student to determine and implement appropriate academic accommodations. Students should also register with Disability Support Services (DSS) <http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS> (301-314-7682).

Canvas (ELMS): The class is listed on Canvas (ELMS). We will use the ELMS site to distribute readings. Course news and announcements will also be distributed through ELMS. Please make sure you have a current email address recorded in ELMS and that you check that address regularly; and that your spam filter is not blocking ELMS messages. You are responsible for the content of any ELMS announcement 24 hours after it has been distributed.

Social Media: From time to time I will wish to take photos of class activities for posting on either BookLab or the English department's social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram). If you would prefer not to appear in such images, just tell me so: no reason or explanation is necessary, and it will not prejudice your standing in the class in any way. I will generally not name/tag people without their explicit permission, but if you know that you never want to be named or tagged in a public image please tell me that too and I will make a note of it. If you tweet or otherwise post anything from class yourself, I ask that you follow these same guidelines out of consideration for your classmates (I am fine with photos, and am fine with being identified or tagged by name or as "@mkirschenbaum" if you so wish). Likewise, I will want to document your final projects with photos and/or video—I will distribute a separate release form specifically for final projects when the time comes.

Course Schedule

If not from Borsuk or Werner, or else linked directly here on the syllabus, then readings are available as PDFs in the Files folder on Canvas. There will also be a dedicated reserve shelf in BookLab where additional books for you will be available.

August

Openings

8/27 Welcome

8/29 Anakana Schofield, "[What We Gain from Keeping Books](#)"
Olivia Martin, "[Gweneth Paltrow Hired a Personal Book Curator . . .](#)"
Viewing: "[Marie Kondo Organizes a Bookshelf](#)" (Youtube)

September

Beginnings and Ends

9/3 Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book*, Preface
Octavio Uzanne, "The End of Books"
Matthew Kirschenbaum, "Bookscapes: Modeling Books in Electronic Space"

9/5 Ulises Carrión, "New Art of Making Books"
Browse [Kit Davey's Instagram](#)

Borsuk, 111-117, 125-149, skim 149-195

LAB: Orientation to BookLab

The Anatomy of a Book

- 9/10 Borsuk, 74-91
Sarah Werner, *Studying Early Printed Books*, 8-25
Viewing: "[How to Operate a Book](#)" and "[The Anatomy of a Book](#)"
(Youtube)
- 9/12 Borsuk, 36-46
Werner, 42-55

LAB: Format and Folding

A Feel (and an Ear) for Books

- 9/17 Borsuk, 25-31
Werner, 26-34; 102-114
Josephine Livingstone, "[What Do Our Oldest Books Say About Us?](#)"
- 9/19 Ken Liu, "[The Bookmaking Habits of Select Species](#)";

LAB: Listening to a Book

Letterpress

- 9/24 M. Sophia Newman, "[So, Gutenberg Didn't Actually Invent the Printing Press](#)"
Borsuk, 61-74
Werner, 55-61
- 9/26 Lindsay Lynch, "[How I Came to Love the En Space](#)"
Borsuk, 91-97
Werner, 34-42

LAB: Letterpress I

October

- 10/1 Glen Fleishman, "[How Letterpress Printing Came Back from the Dead](#)"
Werner, 61-70
Viewing: "[FarewellEtaoinShrdlu](#)" (Youtube)
- 10/3 {no reading}

LAB: Letterpress II

Bindings

10/8 Ricardo Dantas, [“How to Design an Awarded Letterpress Printed Book”](#)
Charles Chesnutt, “Baxter’s Procrustes”
Borsuk, 1-24, 31-34
Werner, 71-78

10/10 Viewing: [“Easy Binding Tutorial for Beginners”](#) (Youtube)

LAB: Pamphlet Stitch

10/15 Review

10/17 **Midterm Exam**

Zines

10/22 Borsuk, 135-139
Johanna Drucker, “The Myth of the Democratic Multiple”
Jenna Wortham, [“Why the Internet Didn’t Kill Zines”](#)

10/24 “The Zine Librarians Code of Ethics”
Viewing: [“What is a Zine and How do I Make One?”](#)

LAB: Zines!

10/25-10/26	American Printing History Association annual conference, “One Press, Many Hands: Diversity and the History of American Printing.” In Tawes Friday and Saturday.
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Altered States

10/29 Jessica Pressman, “Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Tree of Codes*: Memorial, Fetish, Bookishness”
Browse Tom Phillips, [A Humument](#)

10/31 Trish Hopkinson, [“Six Styles of Erasure Poetry”](#)

LAB: Erasure

November

Bookspace

11/5 **All Book Reports Due**
Johanna Drucker, [“The Virtual Codex: From Page Space to E-Space”](#)
Élika Ortega, [“Not a Case of Words”](#)

11/7 Debbie Chachra, "[Why I am Not a Maker](#)"

LAB: Visit to [John and Stella Graves Makerspace](#) (McKeldin Library 2nd floor)

Bibliocircuitry

11/12 Kari Kraus, et al. "Bibliocircuitry and the Design of the Alien Everyday"

11/14 Viewing: "[Electronic Popables by Jie Qi](#)" (Youtube)
"[Let There Be Light](#)" (Youtube)

LAB: Paper Circuits

Volumes

11/19 Philip K. Dick, "Pay for the Printer"
Cory Doctorow, "[PrintCrime](#)"
Kendra Pierre-Louis, "[3D Printing . . . the Humble Book](#)"

11/21 Viewing: "[3D Printer Training Videos](#)" (both videos)

LAB: 3D Printing

11/26 William Gibson, "[Agrippa: A Book of the Dead](#)"
Browse [The Agrippa Files](#)

11/28 **Thanksgiving**

December

Closings

12/3 Merve Emre, "[This Library Has New Books By Major Authors but They Can't be Read until 2114](#)"

12/5 Craig Mod, "[The 'Future Book' is Here, But it's Not What We Expected](#)"

12/16 **Final Projects Due by 4pm**

Version 1.2 August 27, 2019. For their suggestions and contributions, I am grateful to Ryan Cordell and Kari Kraus.

