

HI270 Technology and Culture: The Invention of the Printing Press

Weekly Schedule: Mon & Wed 10:45–12:15

Seminar Leader: Andrea Ottone

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

We are currently living through a rapid technological revolution in communication, the implications of which have not yet been fully grasped or addressed. But human societies have been here before. The invention of the moveable type printing press is thought to have produced a revolution not only in communication but in society, affecting the development of language and usage, the formation of beliefs, and the structures of authority and governance. To what extent did it really bring about irreversible, radical change? Our exploration of this question will start in the late Middle Ages when the collapse of feudalism coincided with a general reset of communication infrastructures and a progressive growth of literacy and scribal practices. We will examine the transition between manuscript and print culture and the nature of its relationship to social conditions. Our journey will then touch on key cultural and political shifts of the early modern period including the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment and the liberal revolutions of the eighteenth century to end with the advent of industrialization and the beginning of mass society. How does looking at these developments through a focus on the physical basis of communication change our understanding of their significance and dynamics? Throughout, we will look at analogies between the past and today, to develop an analysis of the common mistakes that arise from taking a deterministic view of technological development.

Requirements

Students are expected to attend classes regularly and actively participate in discussion having critically read the assigned material. As part of their classwork, students are also expected to complete five response papers.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL 2021: Some students may need to begin the semester remotely

due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Assignments

Writing assignments will consist of five reaction papers of a minimum of 1000 words each. Students are expected to base their papers on five of the weekly assigned readings (refer to the reading list in the section “Schedule”). Papers should highlight the relevant point or points conveyed by the chosen sources, and discuss the strengths or eventual weaknesses of the text at task. Papers should reflect both the individual standpoint of the student and the relevant points that emerged during the class discussion. In order to achieve this, papers are due the week after each chosen text has been covered in class (i.e. by 10:45 of the Monday or Wednesday after the source has been discussed in class). Ideally, students should select their sources ahead of time and report their choice to the seminar leader. All the assigned readings will be made available to students electronically by the seminar leader.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors’ office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

30%	active participation to class discussion
70%	five response papers (each worth 14% of the final grade)

Schedule

Week 1

30 August - Introductory class
No assigned readings

1 September - Some Theory Behind the Facts

Trevor Pinch and Wiebe Bijker “The Social Construction of Facts and Artefacts: or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology might Benefit Each Other,” in *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* Wiebe Bijker, Thomas Hughes and Trevor Pinch (eds.), Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989, pp. 17–50.

Week 2

6 September - Some theory behind the facts

Robert Darnton, “What Is the History of Books?” *Daedalus*, 111 (1982), pp. 65–83.

8 September - Before the Printing Press

Michael T. Clanchy, "Looking Back from the Invention of Printing," in *Literacy in Historical Perspective*. Daniel P. Resnick (ed.). Washington: Library of Conference, 1983, pp. 7–22.

Week 3

13 September - The Coming of the Printing Press

Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010, pp. 21–42.

15 September - A Few Bare Facts about Early Modern Printing

Sarah Werner, *Studying Early Printed Books, 1450–1800: A Practical Guide*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2019, pp. 8–25.

Week 4

20 September - A Few Bare Facts about Early Modern Printing

Sarah Werner, *Studying Early Printed Books, 1450–1800: A Practical Guide*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2019, pp. 26–55.

22 September - A Few Bare Facts about Early Modern Printing

Sarah Werner, *Studying Early Printed Books, 1450–1800: A Practical Guide*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2019, pp. 55–78.

Week 6

27 September – Players in the World of Printed Books: Printers

Johan Gerritsen, "Printing at Froben's: An Eye-Witness Account," *Studies in Bibliography*, 44 (1991), pp. 144–63.

29 September – Players in the World of Printed Books: Authors

Jane C. Ginsburg, "Proto-property in Literary and Artistic Works: Sixteenth-Century Papal Printing Privileges," *The Columbia Journal of Law and the Art*, 36 (2013), pp. 345–376.

Week 7

4 October - Players in the World of Printed Books: An Extraordinary Reader

Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, Introduction & sections (§) 1–8.

6 October - Players in the World of Printed Books: An Extraordinary Reader

Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, § 9–21.

Week 8

11 October - Players in the World of Printed Books: An Extraordinary Reader

Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, § 22–38.

13 October - Players in the World of Printed Books: An Extraordinary Reader

Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns

Hopkins University Press, 1992, § 39–49.

Week 9

25 October – Players in the World of Printed Books: An Extraordinary Reader

Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, § 50–62.

27 October – Players in the World of Printed Books: Censors

Allyson F. Creasman, *Censorship and Civic Order in Reformation Germany: 1517–1648*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012, pp. 109–147.

Week 10

1 November - Impact and Ramifications: Political Communication

Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 164–186.

3 November - Impact and Ramifications: Political Communication

Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 186–208.

Week 11

8 November – Impact and Ramifications: Cultural Consolidation

Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 123–144.

10 November - Impact and Ramifications: Cultural Consolidation

Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 144–163.

Week 12

15 November – A Revolution at Last! The Literary Background of the French Revolution.

Robert Darnton, *The literary underground of the Old Regime*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982, pp. 1–30.

17 November - A Revolution at Last! The Literary Background of the French Revolution.

Robert Darnton, *The literary underground of the Old Regime*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982, pp. 30–60.

Week 13

22 November – A Revolution at Last! The Literary Background of the French Revolution.

Robert Darnton, *The literary underground of the Old Regime*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982, pp. 60–90.

24 November - A Revolution at Last! The Literary Background of the French Revolution.

Robert Darnton, *The literary underground of the Old Regime*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press,

1982, pp. 90–120.

Week 14

29 November – A Revolution at Last! The Literary Background of the French Revolution.

Robert Darnton, *The literary underground of the Old Regime*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982, pp. 120–150.

1 December – A Revolution at Last! The Literary Background of the French Revolution.

Robert Darnton, *The literary underground of the Old Regime*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982, pp. 150–180.

Week 15

6 December – A Revolution at Last! The Literary Background of the French Revolution.

Robert Darnton, *The literary underground of the Old Regime*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982, pp. 180–208.

8 December - What Now?

George P. Landow, "We are already Beyond the Book," in *The History of the Book in the West*, Jane Roberts and Pamela Robinson (eds.), vol. I. Farnham: Ashgate 2010, pp. 573-582.

Simone Murray, "Books as Media: The adaptation Industry", *ibid.*, pp. 593–600.

Scheduled class times will be available online under the relevant course heading:

<https://berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/>