

**History 7970 and MLIS 7970
Libraries and Literacy in History
Syllabus -- Summer 2008**

Instructors

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This is a summer course. The summer semester is very short and there is much reading and writing expected of our students. It is imperative that you not fall behind as catch-up will be difficult.

June 11: Classes Begin

July 4: Holiday

July 19: In-class Seminar (optional) 10:00 am- 4:00 pm. Brownbag your lunch. Meeting Room, First Floor, old Odum Library. RSVP

August 1: Classes and exams end

Course Philosophy

Graduate courses are often best taught in a seminar format. Were it possible, we would prefer to meet weekly to discuss our reading, ideas, and concepts. The online environment tends to limit somewhat the free-flow of ideas and the exchange of information, etc. Technology, like WebCT helps facilitate the process, but it is never quite the same as the face-to-face interpersonal exchange.

We offer "leading questions" for each of the readings we require. We expect you to use the discussion facilities of WebCT to communicate amongst yourselves and with us. We have also scheduled an optional seminar at VSU on Saturday July 19. Seminar participation can serve to replace one written assignment

Reading List, In the Order in which Works are to be Discussed:

Kilgour, Frederick, **The Evolution of the Book**. Oxford, 1998.

Casson, Lionel, **Libraries in the Ancient World**. Yale, 2001.

Macleod, Roy, ed. **The Library at Alexandria: Center of Learning in the Ancient World**. I.B. Tauris, 2004.

Eco, Umberto. **The Name of the Rose, Including the Author's Postscript**. Translated by William Weaver. Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994. The novel is available at any bookstore or library. Please note the specific edition.

Headrick, Daniel. **When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution, 1750-1850**. Oxford, 2000.

Briggs, Asa and Burke, Peter. **A Social History of the Media From Gutenberg to the Internet**. Blackwell, 2001

Course Discussion Questions:

Answer each of the following questions in the essay format with specific references to material in the assigned works. Write coherent, well developed paragraphs in which you articulate your ideas clearly. Provide examples to support generalizations. Use consistently the documentation style of your choice (MLA, Chicago, etc.). Because discussion is central to this course, think of each of these questions as an essay exam. Your answers should reflect graduate level analysis of the material.

*As you read, be sure to keep track of new words, terms or concepts that you discover. You should always be in the habit of looking unfamiliar words up in the dictionary when you read. It improves your vocabulary and makes the experience of reading more meaningful.

Grades: There will be seven written (or six written and one oral optional) discussions, weighted equally in your final grade. You will be graded on your six best discussions. Each discussion question will represent 15% of the grade for a total of 90% of the course grade. The remaining 10% will be determined based on participation in online WebCT discussions.

A= 91-100
B= 81-90
C=71-80
D=61-70
F=below 61

1. Questions over **The Evolution of the Book** – **Due June 20**

In the introduction, the author explains that the development of the book can be understood in terms of “punctuated equilibria,” an analogy to the biological sciences. Explain how Kilgour develops this explanation throughout his book.

On pages 5 and 6, Kilgour gives five concurrent elements necessary for innovations in the form of the book. Explain how these elements merge at each of the points at which he sees a punctuation of equilibria.

Discuss what the evolution of the book reflects about the changing role of knowledge and information in society.

2. Questions over **Libraries in the Ancient World. Due June 27**

Library collections in the ancient Near East, (Mesopotamia and Egypt), Greece and Rome were of a specific nature that answered the needs of the civilizations. What were the needs of each of these civilizations vis a vis the production, storage, organization and consumption of information. How did libraries meet these needs?

How was the function of libraries in each of these ancient civilizations similar and how was it different?

3. Questions over **The Library at Alexandria. Due July 7**

Explain how the library at Alexandria fits into both history and myth. Discuss how that library functioned as a library and as a cultural symbol. Why has it remained a cultural symbol?

In the introduction, the editor introduces the major themes of the book. He describes the library as “a new way of seeing” and relates the library to the concept of “textual hegemony” in western culture. Explain how the essays in the book connect to develop these and other concepts.

4. Questions over **The Name of the Rose. Due July 11**

How is the library presented in the story? How is it organized and managed? What is its role? Outtakes from the film will be made available on line from July 1 to July 8. We will provide the urls when needed.

How is the book perceived? What are the purposes and meanings, both literal and figurative, of the book and the library in the story? What are the connections between the book, the library, knowledge and power in the story?

In **The Library at Alexandria**, the essay by J. O. Ward (chapter nine) offers an interpretation of the library in **The Name of the Rose**. Explain how he connects Eco’s fictional library to the Library at Alexandria.

Compare and contrast the concept of the book as presented in Eco's **The Name of the Rose** to the medieval book as it is explained in chapter seven of Kilgour's **Evolution of the Book**.

5. Questions over **When Information Came of Age. Due July 19**

This book is not over books or libraries per se, but about information and modernity. How does the author explain the relation between information—what it is, how it is produced, stored, organized, disseminated, consumed—etc., and the development of modern culture? How do books and libraries fit into the emergence of modern society?

Discuss the points that the author raises about of the advent of the information age.

6. Questions over **A Social History of the Media. Due July 31**

What topics covered in this book connect most directly with the study of books, libraries and literacy in society?

How does development of the various forms of media discussed in this book reflect the changing needs of society with regard to knowledge and power?

Based on the content of the two above books, explain how society shapes information and how information shapes society.

Academic Dishonesty

“Valdosta State University expects that graduate students will pursue their academic endeavors and conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner. All work that a student presents to satisfy course requirements should represent his or her own efforts, including appropriate use and acknowledgement of external sources. Specific regulations related to student conduct and behavior are contained in the *Student Handbook, Student Code of Ethics*.

Special Needs Statement

Valdosta State University is an equal opportunity educational institution. It is not the intent of our institution to discriminate against any applicant for admission or any student or employee of the institution based on the sex, race, religion, color, national origin or handicap of the individual. It is the intent of the institution to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent executive orders as well as the Title IX section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Students requiring classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability should discuss this need with the professor at the beginning of the semester. Students not registered with the Special Services Program should contact Special Services in Nevins Hall, Room 2164, 229-245-2498.

Attendance

This class has participation elements. Good participation is integral to the course design. Therefore, it is expected that students will make consistent, contributive online and where possible in class participation a high priority. **If you are compelled to miss deadlines, you must negotiate a mutually acceptable alternative with the instructor in order to earn a passing grade.**