

## **Syllabus For History 7970 and MLIS 7970**

**Topic:** Libraries and Literacy in History

**Semester:** Summer 2012

**Instructor:** Dr. Melanie Byrd, Department of History, Valdosta State University. Phone: 229 333-5947 E-mail: [mbyrd@valdosta.edu](mailto:mbyrd@valdosta.edu)

**Scope of Course:** This course provides an overview of the impact of literacy and the changing roles of libraries and information in society. This is an intellectual history seminar. Emphasis is on western civilization.

**Course Format and Philosophy:** Graduate courses are best taught in a seminar format. While the online limits the free flow of ideas and exchange of information, it is still possible for students to examine critically the course readings and discuss them in a written format. Each student will be required to read the assigned works and answer the questions (see below) over the readings. This is a summer course and the semester is very short. Significant reading is expected of students. It is imperative that students keep up with reading assignments and submit required essays on time. Catching up with late or missed work will be difficult and can lower the final grade.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

Students will:

Demonstrate the ways in which the role of the library in society has changed over time.  
Assessment: written essays.

Demonstrate the ways in which information technologies have changed over time.  
Assessment: written essays

Demonstrate the ways in which information containers have changed over time.  
Assessment: written essays.

Demonstrate the ways in which information management has changed over time.  
Assessment: written essays.

Analyze the ways in which the past informs and shapes the present.  
Assessment: written essays.

**Reading List in 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. This book 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.

Dalbello, Marija, "A Phenomenological Study of An Emergent National Digital Library, Part I: Theory and Methodological Framework and Part II: The Narratives of Development." The Library Quarterly. Electronic Articles.

<http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/502784> or  
<http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.1086/502784>

<http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/502791> or  
<http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/1086/502791>

**Grades:** This course has seven written essay discussions weighed equally in your final grade. You will be graded on the six best essays that you submit. These must be submitted on time in order to receive full credit. The grading scale is as follows: A=91-100 B= 81-90 C=71-80 D=61-71 F=below 61.

**Course Discussion Questions for Each Reading:** 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 ideas clearly using correct, formal English. Provide relevant examples to support generalizations. Use consistently the documentation style of your choice (MLA, Chicago, APA etc.). Because written discussion is central to this course, think of each set of questions as an essay exam. Answers should reflect a graduate level synthesis and analysis of the material. If you are compelled by a valid reason to miss deadlines, then you must negotiate a mutually acceptable alternative with the instructor in order to earn a passing grade.

1. Questions over The Evolution of the Book. **Due: June 15th**

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 he sees as 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 22nd**

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

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

3. Questions over The Library at Alexandria. **Due July: June 29th**

Explain how the Library at Alexandria fits into both history and myth. Discuss how that library functioned as a library and 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 and develop these and other concepts.

4. Questions over the Name of the Rose. **Due July: 6th**

How is the library presented in the story? How is it organized and managed? What is its role? How is the book perceived in the context of this novel? What are the purposes and meanings, both literal and figurative, of the book and the library in this story? What are the connections between the book, the library, knowledge and power in the novel?

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 it is presented in Eco’s novel to the medieval book as explained by Kilgour.

5. Questions over When Information Came of Age. **Due July: 13th** This book is not about libraries or books 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 and consumed--- and the development of modern culture?

How do books and libraries fit into the emergence of modern society?

Discuss the main points that the author makes about the advent of the information age.

6. Questions over A Social History of the Media. **Due July: 20th**

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

How does the 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.

7. Questions over the online readings by Marija Dalbello **Due July: 27<sup>th</sup>**

Discuss the author's thesis, methodology and conclusions. Explain how topics that she addresses relate to the themes explored in the other readings for this course.

**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 acknowledgment of external sources. Specific regulations related to student conduct and behavior are contained in the *Student Handbook*, *Student Code of Ethics*.

**Special Needs Statement:** 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 modifications because of a documented disability should discuss the need with the professor at the beginning of the semester.