

English 359 460  
Seminar: Topics in Media Theory: Cuneiform to Twitter

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hours after class in Murray Hall 012

Tuesday, 11:30-2:30  
Honors College, N104 Office

What is a book? How do you make one? Who has the power to decide how printed matter is stored, sold, lent, and pulped – and how have those decisions evolved over the past three centuries? This seminar will explore the history and future of reading through four activities:

1. Readings: Throughout the semester, we'll read instalments of a long and gripping 18<sup>th</sup>-century novel, *Pamela*, narrated by a newly literate servant corresponding with and about a more powerful master. Against its backdrop, we'll read more recent essays and stories (print and online) as well as histories of writing, making and reading.
2. Writing: blog posts in weeks indicated; analytical assignments in close reading; creative exercises in pastiche and parody.
3. In-class discussion and group exercises in bookmaking: Over the course of the semester, we will make paper; typeset and print a page; design a zine; and record an audiobook. An open mind is required; technical or artistic background is not.
4. Field trips in weeks indicated.

## Requirements

### *Note Taking Through the Ages (and through the semester)*

Each week the means by which you will take notes in class will vary. (No phones, laptops, pens, or pencils are allowed in the classroom except where indicated.) Please refer to the week's assignments for further instruction. The devices on which you will be allowed to take notes in class will vary by week, but you are always welcome to bring in an annotated copy of the text (hardcover or paperback, printout or photocopy) and/or a printout or manuscript of your reading notes.

### *Class discussion (20%)*

One of the skills in which this class aims to provide practice is listening: following the thread of a debate among multiple classmates, figuring out the logic of a claim with which you disagree. Another is thinking, including deciding when and how to jump in with a counterargument or with evidence that confirms a position advanced by someone else. Some people feel more comfortable talking than others; the less comfortable you feel, the more useful practice talking and being listened to can be. Your grade for participation will depend on what you contribute to our collective thinking, listening and talking.

This class is not a lecture course, so its success depends on everyone's participation, both as speakers and as listeners.

Given the hands-on nature of this class, much of our work is impossible to reproduce or replace outside of the times and spaces scheduled. There is no way to make it up or “get the notes” (in whatever format). Likewise, blog posts designed to be written while the hands-on activities are fresh in your mind cannot be postponed. That said, each person can miss up to one of our weekly classes over the course of the semester without explanation or penalty. You should register each absence with the online system: <https://sims.rutgers.edu.ssra>.

*Blog posts (5% each, for 20% total)*

On dates indicated by +++ on the schedule, you must, by midnight, post a 250-500-word contribution to the class blog, identifying one argument in the readings that was either corroborated or challenged by this week’s hands-on exercise. Where possible, also identify one point which, conversely, you wouldn’t have noticed in the reading if you hadn’t done the hands-on exercise. The blog post may include external links or responses to your classmates’ posts, and must use full sentences and correct grammar.

*Short assignments (including pastiche, artist’s statement, audio recording, and occasional reading quizzes) (25%)*

All take-home assignments should be word processed (typed) in a standard 12-point font (e.g. Times New Roman), double-spaced, stapled, with page numbers, and with a title of your choice. Because these short assignments are time-sensitive, no later submissions will be accepted; likewise, if you miss class you will also be missing the only opportunity to complete the in-class assignments and quizzes.

*Close reading (10%, due Feb. 13)*

*1200-1500-word paper (25%, due Apr. 30)*

Extensions will not be granted less than 24 hours before a due date. There is a grade penalty for late assignments.

**Books to Purchase. (All other required readings are available through the Canvas site.)**

1. Richardson, Samuel. *Pamela*. Edited by Thomas Keymer, Oxford World Classics paperback edition, 2008. ISBN: 9780199536498. MSRP: \$9.95. (Please buy this edition only; the text of other editions is significantly different, since Richardson and others radically revised the book several times.)
2. Borsuk, Amaranth. *The Book*. MIT Press (Essential Knowledge Series), 2018. ISBN: 9780262535410. MSRP: \$15.95.

### **Academic Integrity**

For an intellectual community to flourish, we all need to allow our readers to understand the origins of our ideas and the extent of our own labor. Failing to do that (plagiarism) can take various forms: quoting or paraphrasing without citing your source; presenting someone else's idea as yours, whether orally or in writing; or recycling one piece of work to fulfill multiple assignments without explicit prior permission. If in doubt, you can consult <http://wp.rutgers.edu/academics/undergraduate/plagiarism> or come to office hours. Please err on the side of asking, since any plagiarized assignment will be (at a minimum) failed and (at a maximum) will trigger disciplinary proceedings.

### **Accommodations**

I am committed to making this course accessible to all students; that's part of my job. If you have a documented disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Services (<https://ods.rutgers.edu/>) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs, the earlier the better.

### **Social Media**

From time to time, I will wish to take photos of class activities for posting on either @rutgersbook or @leahatwhatprice. 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.

### **Office Hours**

Please come to office hours early in the semester, even if it's just to say hello. You're welcome to make an appointment in advance or just to walk back from the Honors College together. I look forward to meeting you.

**Schedule**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Read in advance</u>	<u>In Class</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
Jan. 21	Honors College, Room N104		Intro.  Please bring your copy of <i>Pamela</i> to class.  Notes: clay tablets/tongue depressor.	

<b>Schedule</b>				
<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Read in advance</u>	<u>In Class</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
Jan. 28	Honors College, Room N104	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Keith Houston, <i>The Book</i> (2016), pp. <a href="#">35-73</a>.*</li> <li>● Amaranth Borsuk, <i>The Book</i> (2018), pp. ix-12, 35-46, 54-74 &amp; 106-109.</li> <li>● optional: explore <a href="http://paper.lib.uiowa.edu">http://paper.lib.uiowa.edu</a></li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p>	Papermaking.  Guest instructor: Milcah Basel.	+++Due <b>midnight Thursday, Jan. 30:</b> <a href="#">blog post</a> .
Feb. 4	Honors College, Room N104	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Pamela</i>, through p. 91.</li> <li>● Borsuk, pp. 86-91 &amp; 97-100.</li> </ul>	Typeset and print valentine.	Due <b>midnight Thursday, Feb. 13:</b> <a href="#">Pamela close reading</a> (400-600-word close reading of a 40-80-word passage).

<b>Schedule</b>				
<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Read in advance</u>	<u>In Class</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
<b>Feb. 14 (not Feb. 11) 12-3</b>	Honors College, Room N104	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jeffrey T. Schnapp &amp; Matthew Battles, <i>The Library Beyond the Book</i> (2014), <a href="#">pp. 38- 53</a>.*</li> <li>• Listen: <i>This American Life</i>, <a href="#">“The Room of Requirement”</a> (podcast, Dec. 28, 2018).</li> <li>• <i>Pamela</i>, through p. 219 (end of Volume I).</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Douglass Day Transcribe-A-Thon</a>.</p> <p>Transcription exercise.</p> <p>Note: class meets on Friday this week; anyone with a scheduling conflict may come to office hours AT LEAST ONE WEEK IN ADVANCE to discuss make-up assignments.</p>	+++Due <b>midnight Sunday, Feb. 16:</b> <a href="#">blog post</a> .
Feb. 18	Honors College, Room N104	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Pamela</i> continued, through p. 353 (to wedding).</li> </ul>	<i>Pamela</i> pastiche.	Due <b>midnight Thursday, Feb. 20:</b> artist’s statement for <i>Pamela</i> pastiche.

**Schedule**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Read in advance</u>	<u>In Class</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
Feb. 25	<b>Alexander Library, Special Collections, meet in the Clifford Case Room in the basement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Jill Lepore, <a href="#">“The Cobweb”</a> (2015).* (<a href="#">New Yorker link</a>)</li><li>● Borsuk, pp. 205-255.</li><li>● Watch in advance: Terry Belanger, <a href="#">“Anatomy of a Book”</a>.</li></ul>	Notes: pencil sketch.  Guest: Dr Barbara Heritage, University of Virginia, Rare Book School.	+++Due <b>midnight Thursday, Feb. 27:</b> <a href="#">blog post</a> .

Mar. 3	Honors College, Room N104	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Pamela</i> continued, through p. 353 (to wedding).</li></ul>	Notes: slate/chalk.	<b>Extra credit:</b> attend and blog or tweet (by <b>midnight Thursday, Mar. 5</b> ) <a href="#">talk</a> by Prof. <a href="#">Jill Lepore</a> on Mar. 5 at 4:30 in Academic Building West, CCA, Room 6051.
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<b>Schedule</b>				
<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Read in advance</u>	<u>In Class</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
Mar. 10	<b>Alexander Library, DH Lab, Room 406-407</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julia Flanders, Syd Bauman, and Sarah Connell, “Text Encoding,” pp. 104– 22 in <i>Doing Digital Humanities: Practice, Training, Research</i> (2016), edited by Constance Crompton, Richard J. Lane, and Ray Siemens.*</li> </ul>	Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) session with Francesca Giannetti.  Notes: audio recording.	
<b>Spring Break</b>	<b>No Class</b>			
Mar. 24	Honors College, Room N104	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borsuk, pp. 135-139.</li> <li>• Johanna Drucker, <a href="#">“The Myth of the Artist’s Book As A Democratic Multiple”</a> (1997).*</li> </ul>	Transcription exercise: typewriter.  Notes: memory, to recite next week.	<b>Extra credit:</b> attend and blog or tweet (by <b>midnight Tuesday, Mar. 24</b> ) <a href="#">talk</a> by Prof. <a href="#">Matthew Rubery</a> on Mar. 24 at 4:30 in Academic Building West, CCA, Room 6051.

<b>Schedule</b>				
<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Read in advance</u>		<u>In Class</u>
Mar. 31	Honors College, Room N104	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● From Mark Todd &amp; Esther Pearl Watson, <i>Whatcha Mean, What's a Zine?</i> (2006), pp. 1-65.*</li> <li>● Alex Wreck, <i>Stolen Sharpie Revolution</i> (2005), pp. 1-47.*</li> <li>● Jenna Wortham, "<a href="#">Why the Internet Didn't Kill Zines</a>" (2017).</li> </ul>	Zinemaking.	Notes: collective Google Doc.
Apr. 7	<b>Alexander Library, meet in front lobby</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Short readings on Book Traces, to be distributed week before.</li> <li>● Borsuk, pp. 111-113 &amp; 140-195.</li> <li>● "<a href="#">Guidelines for Writing an English Paper</a>" handout.*</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Book Traces</a> scavenger hunt, with guest instructor Prof. Andrew Stauffer (UVA).	+++Due <b>midnight Thursday, Apr. 9:</b> <a href="#">blog post</a> .

<b>Schedule</b>				
<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Read in advance</u>	<u>In Class</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
Apr. 14	Honors College, Room N104	<i>Pamela</i> , through p. 503 (to end).	Notes: social media platform of your choice, verbal and/or visual. Anyone with a principled objection to engaging with social media may come to office hours AT LEAST ONE WEEK IN ADVANCE to plan a make-up assignment.	
Apr. 21	Honors College, Room N104	[no reading – use prep time to work on your paper]	Guest artist Brian Dettmer – altered books.	
Apr. 28	<b>Field Trip: Mason Gross Letterpress</b>	[no reading – use prep time to work on your paper]	Guest instructor: Ms. Amanda Thackry.	Due <b>midnight Thursday, Apr. 30:</b> <a href="#">1200-1500-word paper.</a>

\* = Reading available on Canvas.  
Class blog post due.

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Acknowledgments: thanks to syllabus advice from Lauren Tsudama, Matthew Kirschenbaum, Ryan Cordell, Jill Lepore, Carla Cevasco, & Whitney Trettien.