The book’s role and significance within literary culture is being scrutinized today with an intensity unseen for five centuries. Nowhere is this questioning more acute, sophisticated, and nuanced than in the burgeoning field of the book arts, an umbrella term encompassing artists’ books, book sculpture, zines, and print-oriented forms of electronic poetry. This is an inherently collaborative and interdisciplinary field. Its practitioners skirt the thresholds between visual art and literature, technology and philosophy, producing uniquely bookish artifacts that defy easy categorization. These are artworks made not for the white walls of a gallery, but to be read and used; they are works of literature that engage the visual, tactile, and even olfactory senses. Difficult to reproduce in print editions or literary anthologies, they challenge our expectations of the codex as a platform for delivering and consuming textual information. Despite the diversity of the book arts, what brings these practices together is a shared interest in the potential of the book to model radical new forms of creativity, subjectivity, and political engagement. “if i can sing through my mouth with a book,” writes El Lissitzky in a treatise on book design, ”i can show myself in various guises.”

Working directly with the Sloane Art Library’s extensive collection of artists’ books, this course will trace the book arts from their emergence as a semi-coherent set of avant-garde practices at the beginning of the twentieth century to their resurgence today with digital technologies. Because the book arts have not developed along a straightforward chronology, our route through time will not be linear. Rather, we will proceed by navigating the various social, political, and formal vectors that book artists have explored. Understanding how each artist situates her/himself along these vectors, and
what that placement can teach us about her/his aesthetic affiliations, will be the task of this course. When relevant, we will also be reading short stories, poems, and novels that address similar themes. By the end of the course, these vectors will together form a map detailing where the book has been, what it means to literary culture today, and the directions it is headed in the near future.

**Books**


**Learning Objectives**

During this course, students will:

- learn the basic history and technologies of the book;
- deploy a diverse array of critical methods to the work of interpreting intermedial, multimodal artworks that defy traditional aesthetic categories;
- appreciate the codex as a unique platform that has shaped, and continues to shape, literary production;
- gain hands-on experience working with special collections;
- produce a digital project that demonstrates the above skills;

**Readings**

Because many of these works are not anthologized anywhere, our approach to the readings will by necessity vary throughout the semester. Anything listed under “Readings” must be read for that day in class. Anything listed under “To examining in class” will be viewed in class together, but I encourage you to explore the related links beforehand.

**Assignments**

**Discussion Questions Blog Post (10 points)**

Each student will be responsible for putting together discussion questions related to the readings for one class. Due midnight the day before class.
Zine (20 points)
Each student will produce a zine of their own during our unit on zines (the equivalent of 5 pages of writing). Due December 1, 5pm.

Artists’ Book (20 points)
Each student will design and construct an “artists’ book” (loosely conceived) that remediates one of our theoretical readings. This assignment is an opportunity to experiment with the material form of the book in a digital milieu, and to do so through a process of reflection and hands-on creation. Students will write short critical responses to each others’ work and have an opportunity to revise their project based on peer and instructor comments. Proposals are due September 22; drafts will be discussed October 27; books are due November 3; responses are due November 10.

Collaborative Digital Exhibition (40 points)
Students will collectively produce an online exhibit that explores the codex in the digital age, drawing on examples from Sloane’s collections. Each student will contribute to design and production of the exhibit, generating a total of 10-15 pages of critical writing and a significant amount of digital work. We will work on storyboarding, drafting, and revising these projects together throughout the semester through brief in-class workshops and homework; see our class website for a break-down of due dates for these draft components. The completed exhibit must be finished by the last week of class (due December 6).

Final Exam (10 points)
Students will have the opportunity to reflect on and demonstrate their learning.

Policies

Special Collections
UNC Libraries is lucky to have a large and diverse collection of artists’ books and zines in its holdings. We will be working with this collection. Many of these items are delicate. You must abide by all library policies when handling them or working within the library.

Attendance
Each class, we will be learning, practicing, making things, and discussing new ideas together. If you miss class, you will quickly feel lost and behind, and you may be impacting your classmates’ ability to learn. Attendance is imperative. That being said, I understand emergencies. You may miss two classes this semester, no questions asked and no notice needed. If you require additional absences, you must email me before the missed class to excuse yourself. Although there is no formal participation grade, I reserve the right to reduce your final grade for unexcused absences, and to require additional work from you in the case of an excused absence.

Late assignments
If you anticipate that you will not be able to finish an assignment on time, be in touch with me well before it is due to set an alternative deadline. Not doing so will result in a 2-point reduction of your grade for each day that it is late.

**Technology**
You may bring and use your laptop to class to take notes. Please turn your cell phones to silent during class.

**Plagiarism**
You must never copy someone else’s work and pass it off as your own under any circumstances. Not only is doing so a violation of the Honor System and academic integrity, it also results in the loss of credibility and respect. Always err on the side of caution. If you have any questions about what counts as plagiarism, speak with me or review this handout on the topic from the Writing Center: [http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/plagiarism/](http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/plagiarism/)

**Honor System**
The community and culture of our classroom is a microcosm of the much larger community of UNC Chapel Hill as a whole. As such, it must reflect and embody our institution’s standards of academic integrity, as dictated by the student-led Honor System. You can read more about the Honor System at the website of the Office of Student Conduct: [https://studentconduct.unc.edu/honor-system](https://studentconduct.unc.edu/honor-system)

**Accommodations**
If you have a disability that may prevent you from fully participating in any of the activities of this course, please contact Accessibility and Resources Services as soon as possible via its website: [https://accessibility.unc.edu/](https://accessibility.unc.edu/)

**Getting in touch**
I’m here to help you learn and improve as a writer and critical thinker. Please approach me with any questions, comments, or concerns. The best way to get in touch is through email ([trettien@email.unc.edu](mailto:trettien@email.unc.edu)). Please give me 24 weekday hours to respond. I’m also available to you on Twitter (@whitneytrettien) or during my office hours (Tuesday and Thursday, 2-3PM).

**Schedule**

*This schedule is subject to change. Changes will be posted to the schedule on our class website and announced in class.*

**Tues 8/23 – Greenlaw 305 – Entrances & Introductions**

*Introduction to codex form and the book arts; discussion of the changing relationship between books and readers in the digital age.*

**Thurs 8/25 – Greenlaw 305 – What is a book?**
Readings:
- Johanna Drucker, “What is a Book?,” in *What Is*

**Tues 8/30 – Wilson Library – What was a book?**

*We’re visiting the Rare Book Room today. Please meet in the lobby of Wilson Library.*

Optional reading:
- Peter Stallybrass, “Books and Scrolls: Navigating the Bible”

**Thurs 9/1 – Greenlaw 305 – What will the book be?**

Discussant: ______________________

Readings:
- Octave Uzanne, “The End of Books” (1894) [link]
- Bob Brown, “The Readies” (1929)
- Robert Coover, “The End of Books” (1992) [link]

**Tues 9/6 and Thurs 9/8 – NO CLASS**

*We won’t be meeting for class on 9/6 or 9/8, as I’m at a professional conference. Please read *The Thing The Book* and see our class website for an alternative assignment. Completing this assignment will count as your participation grade for these two classes; failure to complete it will result in you being marked as absent.*

**Tues 9/13 – Greenlaw 305 – Bookforms**

Discussant: ______________________

Readings:
- Keith A. Smith, “The Book as Physical Object”
- Johanna Drucker, “Self-Reflexivity in Book Form”
- Karl Young, “Bookforms”
- Julie Chen, *How Books Work*

**Thurs 9/15 – Sloane Art Library – Architextures**

To examine in class:
- Cendrars and Delaunay, *La prose du transsibérien* (1913) [facsimile]
- Sarah Bryant, *The Index* (2006)
• Anne Waldman, “My Life A Book”

• Julie Chen, Panorama (2008)
• Lauren Rosenthal Political/Hydrological (2006)
• Sarah McDermott, Channel & Flow (2014)
• Chan K’in, Words of Chan K’in (200-?)

• Amaranth Borsuk and Brad Bouse, Between Page and Screen (2012)
• Jennifer Brook, Descendant (2008)
• Heather Weston, Read Past Tense (2000)

• Ken Leslie, Space + Time
• Karen Chance, Parallax (1987)

Tues 9/20 – Special Collections Conservation Laboratory – Conserving the Book

Please meet on the 3rd floor of Wilson Library.

Thurs 9/22 – Greenlaw 305 – The Book, Spiritual Instrument

Proposal for artists’ book due.

Discussant: ____________________

Readings:
• Johanna Drucker, section on Mallarmé in “Conceptualizing the Book”
• Stéphane Mallarmé, “The Book, Spiritual Instrument”
• Mallarmé, Un coup de dés (A throw of the dice)
• Marcel Broodthaers, Un coup de dés (A throw of the dice)

To examine in class:
• Malini Gupta, The Story of O

Tues 9/27 – Sloane Art Library – The Page, Conceptual Playground

Readings:

To examine in class:

• bpNichol, First Screening: Computer Poems (1984)

• The Xerox Book (1968)
• El Lissitzky, About Two Squares, in 6 Constructions (1922) [facsimile]
• Sol Lewitt, *Lines and Color*
• Romano Hanni, *Typo Bilder Buch* (2012)

• Madeline Gins, *Word Rain* (1969) [explore the whole thing, read listed excerpts]

• Brad Freeman, *Sumo Geisha Sashimi*

• *The Art of Google Books*: http://theartofgooglebooks.tumblr.com

**Thurs 9/29 – Greenlaw 305 – Book to Come**

Discussant: ________________

Readings:
• Jacques Derrida, “The Book to Come,” *Paper Machine*
• Alain Resnais, *Toute la mémoire du monde* (2016; 20 minute film about the Bibliothèque nationale): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0RVSZ_yDjs

**Tues 10/4 – Sloane Art Library – Encyclopedic Imaginations**

To examine in class:
• *Fünffacher Denckring* (1651) [facsimile]
• Allison Parrish, @everyword (2007-2014)
• Elisabetta Benassi, *The Dry Salvages* (2013)

• Julie Buck, *Finite Sets* (2013)
• Paul Soulellis, *530* (2013)

• Xu Bing, *Book from the Ground*


**Thurs 10/6 – Greenlaw 305 – From the Forest into the Land of Artificial Intelligences**

Discussant: ________________

Readings:
• Villem Flusser, “Books,” other selections from Does Writing Have a Future?
• El Lissitzky, “Topography of Typography”

Tues 10/11 – Sloane Art Library – Artificial Memory

To examine in class:
• Scott McCarney, Memory Loss (1988)
• Sheryl Oring, Collective Memory (2012)

• Andrea Botto, 19.06_26.08.1945 (2014)
• Cristina De Middel, The Afronauts (2012)
• Fred Hagstrom, Passage (2013)

• Karen Hanmer, Beaut.e(CODE) (2002)
• Cory Arcangel, The Source zines
• Chumbe weaving belt

• Mishka Henner, Source Code (2013) and Printing Out the Internet collaborative project

Thurs 10/13 – Greenlaw 305 – William Blake

Discussant: _________________

Readings:
• Johanna Drucker, section on Blake in “Conceptualizing the Book”

Tues 10/18 – Print Studio, Hanes

Please meet at the Print Studio in Hanes.

Thurs 10/20 – NO CLASS (Fall Break)

Tues 10/25 – Greenlaw 305 – Navigations

Discussant: _________________

Readings:
• Vannevar Bush, “As We May Think”
• Terry Harpold, “Reading Machines,” Ex-foliations: Reading Machines and the Upgrade Path

To examine in class:
• Maria Fischer, Traumgedanken (2011)
• Richard Moore, Paper Pong (2008)
Thurs 10/27 – Sloane Art Library – Altered Pathways

Check-in on drafts of artists’ books.

To examine in class:
• Tom Phillips, *A Humument* (1966-present)

Tues 11/1 – Greenlaw 305 – Cutting Up Culture

Discussant: __________________

Readings:
• Graham Rawle, *Woman’s World*

To examine in class:
• Tan Lin, *Heath Course Pak* (2012)
• Ben Fry, *Frankenfont* (2011)

Thurs 11/3 – Sloane Art Library – Fragmented Selves

*Artists’ books due.*

To examine in class:

• Hannah Höch, *Album*, selections [facsimile]
• Bettina Hubby, *Uniforms*

Tues 11/8 – Greenlaw 305 – Post-Photography

Discussant: __________________

Readings:
• Susan Sontag, “In Plato’s Cave”
• Robert Shore, “Introduction,” *Post-Photography*

Thurs 11/10 – Sloane Art Library – Surveillance & the Information State

*Responses to artists’ books due.*
To examine in class:
- Gray Frost, *The Mission*
- Hussein, *On Democracy*
- Judith Blumberg, *In This Land* (1988)
- Mishka Henner, *Dutch Landscapes* (2011)

(to calm us down after all that surveillance...)

Tues 11/15 – TBA – Zinemaking Workshop with Trisha Remetir

Readings:
- Selections from Alison Piepmeier, *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism*
- Explore the Papercut Zine Library website: [http://www.papercutzinelibrary.org/wordpress/](http://www.papercutzinelibrary.org/wordpress/)

Thurs 11/17 – Greenlaw 305 – Zines

*Please find two zines through the POC Zines Project ([http://poczineproject.tumblr.com/](http://poczineproject.tumblr.com/)), download them, and read them for class.*

Discussant: ________________

Readings:

Tues 11/22 – Greenlaw 305 – The End of the Book

Discussant: ________________

Readings:
• Garrett Stewart, “An Exhibit in Mind,” Bookwork

To examine in class:
• Alicia Martin, Biografias installations (2012)
• Nahoko Kojima, various paper cut sculptures
• Matej Kren, Scanner installation (2010)
• Jacqueline Rush Lee, Ex Libris series (2000)
• Brian Dettmer, various works (2008-2014)

Thurs 11/24 – NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Tues 11/29 – Greenlaw 305 – Workshop

Thurs 12/1 – TBA – Workshop

Zine due in class.

Tues 12/6 – TBA – Workshop

Final Exam

This class has a required final exam. During this time, you will be examined on your presentation of your digital editions.