

Final essay (5-7 pp.)

The final paper is a chance for you to show off your writing skills and delve more deeply into any topic that has interested in you this term. You may choose to expand on an existing field report, or pick up a new question from scratch. No matter what option you choose, your five pages of writing should be chock full of information and facts. Quote and cite prodigiously. Your reader should be impressed with the wealth of knowledge you've amassed this term. Use at least two reputable outside sources that are not included in our assigned readings. (The bibliographies of our assigned readings and our syllabus point to great sources you may use).

Options (of different genres):

- **A personal essay** in the style of Anne Fadiman centered on some theme or aspect of books and bibliography. Though this will be written in a personal voice, it's not all fun and games and should still feature research. It should be chock full of footnotes and parenthetical asides that contain plentiful information about books, book studies, book accessories, book reading practices, book collecting etc. Incorporate as much new terminology and vocabulary from our bibliography studies as you can.
- **A research-oriented essay** that presents information on a particular topic: e.g. a particular book stall or bookseller, volvelles, the printing press, paper-making practices, a particular typeface, illustration processes, etc. This may be an expansion of an already existing field report.
- **A reflective & argumentative essay** that engages any of the discussion questions we have been chipping away at this term: What happens to the physical book as we move more completely into the digital world? In what ways is the study of the book democratizing? Why is it valuable to understand the book as an object, as a material thing, as a nostalgic concept, or as an art object? What is the place of book studies in 2020, post-coronavirus? What myths about reading practices and human behaviors surrounding the book should be exploded, and why? What surprising parallels exist between ancient reading practices and digital ones?
- **A topic of your choice**, presented to me in a succinct email or in office hours.

Checklist:

- Includes many footnotes & references. Makes allusions to important lessons and scholars we've learned about this term (Howsam, Price, Gaskell, McKerrow, etc.)
- Not your run-of-the-mill paper. Exploding with quirky information that is not just common knowledge.
- Is loaded with bookish terminology and concepts
- Has been proofread by a classmate or friend

I encourage you to "meet" with me during office hours to briefly discuss whatever option you intend to take. Please also choose a partner with whom you can exchange final drafts. Your final paper deserves the attention of an outside proofreader before it gets sent to me by the due date: May 20.