



Study abroad.

## **SYLLABUS**

### **BOOK ARTS IN ITALY: THE MAKING OF BEAUTIFUL BOOKS**

**Instructor: Dr. Michael Holstein**

**Contact Hrs: 45**

**Language of Instruction: English**

**MACERATA, ITALY**

It is a great thing to start life with a small number of really good books which are your very own.

*Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859 - 1930)*

One cannot divine or forecast the conditions that will make happiness; one only stumbles upon them by chance, in a lucky hour, at the world's end somewhere, and holds fast to the days --*Willa Cather*

I have wandered all my life, and I have traveled; the difference between the two is this: we wander for distraction, but we travel for fulfillment. --*Hilaire Belloc*

Travel has a way of stretching the mind. The stretch comes not from travel's immediate rewards, the inevitable myriad new sights, smells and sounds, but with experiencing firsthand how others do differently what we believed to be the right and only way. --*Ralph Crawshaw*

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover. --*Mark Twain*

We must get beyond textbooks, go out into the bypaths and untrodden depths of the wilderness and travel and explore and tell the world the glories of our journey. --*John Hope Franklin*

Just the knowledge that a good book is awaiting one at the end of a long day makes that day happier.

*Kathleen Norris, Hands Full of Living, 1931*

### **COURSE CONTENT: Overview**

Book arts, which have enjoyed a renaissance today, have a long and glorious history in Italy. In this course you will see, smell, touch, and hear about how books were developed from their beginnings. But this study of Italian book arts is also meant to be preparation and inspiration for your own creative work. No special skill is required. We will move from simple book forms to more elaborate ones, building on and borrowing techniques that we learn from our readings, our workshops, and our travels in Italy.

We will study and then practice elements of book arts from six different vantage points:

- paper-making and paper enhancement
- page design and layout
- calligraphy and typography
- illustration and decoration

- binding styles and techniques
- production and distribution

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES: The Book as Artifact, The Book as Expressive Art**

In “Book Arts in Italy” you will learn how books were/are made and you will make your own books. This course will study the history of Italian book arts and then put into practice what we are reading about and seeing in our excursions. You will be introduced to elements of book making including paper choice, calligraphy, layout, illustration, titling, and binding, and you will produce several different kinds of books in which to record your living, travels, and studies in Italy. You will develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the art of the book as you see medieval manuscripts, colorful, illuminated pages, hand-bound books, and visit the places these books were created and places where book arts continue today. And by making your own books, you will develop an awareness of the art of the book and record and express your study and travel in Italy. I speak from my own experience when I say making books is very, very satisfying. You will enjoy this class.

To sum up: in this course you will

- learn about the history and development of books in Italy,
- understand how a variety of books are constructed,
- and (best of all, I think) create a series of your own hand-made books that include material drawn from your study, residence, and travels in Italy.

### **SUGGESTED EXCURSIONS**

Everywhere we go will be grist for our book-appreciation and book-making enterprises. We will learn about book making and book arts, we will see contemporary expressions of book arts, and we will write during and about the variety of excursions planned by NCSA which will sharpen our appreciation of Italian book arts. In addition, special course-specific excursions such as the following will be included:

1. A trip to **FONTE AVELLANA MONASTERY** for its scriptorium, medieval illustrated and illuminated texts, etc. As one of the on-line guides says, “This early monastic retreat on the eastern flanks of Monte Catria stands in one of the most breathtaking settings imaginable. . . . Founded in 980, visited by Dante in 1310, and once presided over by St Peter Damian, this is one of the few monasteries in the Marche which retains its medieval monastic form. Guided tours take you to the extraordinary scriptorium. This was once an important centre for the production of illuminated manuscripts and was built with an ingenious system to maximize the hall's natural lighting.”
2. Because Le Marche is famous for its historic paper mills (its waters were so pure), a visit to one or more of the **PAPER MILLS IN FABRIANO**, would be appropriate.
3. Also, local **PAPERMAKER NATAN KAAREN** hosts demonstrations of paper-making techniques at The Nightcloud Studio. See <http://www.nightcloud.eu/who.htm>.
4. A workshop in calligraphy by a **LOCAL CALLIGRAPHER** showing us in particular the Roman and italic hands might be arranged. (I offered this kind of workshop in Siena and it was attended by many NCSA students not in my course as well as my students.) I have a series of italic and Old English practice lettering guides that would provide a useful supplement to formal calligraphic instruction.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY**

“Book Arts in Italy” will combine a seminar format with a series of hands-on workshops. The workshops will introduce various materials and methods for all phases of book arts. Students will choose projects to submit for credit from among these workshops. Large and small groups will be used to discuss topics such as paper making and paper choice, calligraphy, versals, and illumination, binding styles, format and design choices, with special reference to what we see in Macerata and during our excursions. Students will work individually and in work groups, and work will be critiqued by the large group with an eye to revision and improvement, especially important for the eventual Presentation Project each student submits. Collaborative assignments will be options for various projects. Students will meet periodically with the instructor in individual and small-group conferences to choose, develop, and revise projects.

## **METHOD OF EVALUATION**

### 1. Journal: (20%)

Everyone will keep a journal including responses to program excursions and language learning as well as other experiences and reflections. In your journal, you collect the raw material for your writing. Your journal will serve as the bedrock on which you will found your own book projects for this course. It will also be a permanent record of your Italian sojourn and continue to inspire memories and maybe even your writing (since some of the best travelers’ tales are written at home) long after the course is finished. You will be encouraged to combine closely observed details with your own reflections, always to think critically about the topics you choose. I suggest that during or after each of your excursions, you write something down. You may decide to keep a notebook and then at the end of the day, write up your notes in your journal. Members of the class will be invited to read from their journals from time to time. Care for yours with all the attentive love that you give to your passport, credit card, and ATM card. Put your name and local contact information in yours, and write in Italian and English “Please return--reward given.” A journal may also be the place for photographs, sketches, brochures, and memory aids, which you can then include in your book projects.

### 2. Four Completed Projects: (10% each) chosen from projects such as

- Accordion book (various binding formats to choose from)
- Pamphlet binding (we will do soft- and hard-cover versions)
- Three signature, sewn binding, one signature of decorative paper, collage, etc.
- Loose leaf, stab binding
- Cloth, hard-bound, sewn signatures
- The altered book

### 3. Presentation Project: (10%)

You will revise and polish your project. and then present it to the class, NCSA participants, friends, etc. The revision should represent a substantial improvement in content and technique over the original, it should be signed off by your peer edit and critique group, and you should include their written critiques.

### 4. Final Examination: (20%)

### 5. Attendance and Participation: (10%)

You get three “free” cuts, no questions asked. With the fourth and unexcused cut, your course grade will be impacted.

Your participation grade depends on the quality and quantity of effort you put into the “public” dimensions of the course—peer editing, class discussion, positive attitude, helpfulness, etc. I will ask myself, did your participation in this course make a positive contribution to the commonweal?

**Please note: All work must be completed to pass the course, and all work must be completed by the end of the course. I do not give incompletes.**

## **PLAGIARISM**

If you copy the words or imitate the organization of others, you are committing the academic sin of plagiarism. You must give credit when you use someone else’s writing. This can be done by a formal foot- or end note, but more often in travel writing by internal documentation.

The penalty for plagiarism, the worst form of academic dishonesty, is a failing grade for the project (for instance if paragraphs or parts of paragraphs are plagiarized) or for the course (if a substantial part of a project is plagiarized). Writers have been blacklisted for plagiarism and editors fired for not catching writers who plagiarize or fabricate sources. Avoid anger, embarrassment, lowered grades, or loss of course credit—use quotation marks and cite sources for material you borrow from others, even if you are paraphrasing and not quoting directly. There is, however, no need to cite generally known, widely available facts (e.g., the population of Siena). If in doubt, ask your instructor.

## **COURSE TEXTS AND READINGS**

- 1) De Hamel, Christopher. *Medieval Craftsmen: Scribes and Illuminators*. University of Toronto Press. ISBN: 0-80207707-2
- 2) Rothenberg, Jerome and Steven Clay, *A Book Of The Book: Some Works and Projections about the Book & Writing*
- 3) McCarthy, Mary and Phillip Manna, *Making Books by Hand: A Step-by-Step Guide*
- 4) Course book from the instructor

## **WEEKLY SCHEDULE (course readings will be integrated with the following weekly classes/activities).**

Week 1: Book arts and artists’ books: An Overview

WORKSHOP: The Eight-page book from one sheet

Week 2: The art of calligraphy; Introduction to Roman and Italic letter forms

WORKSHOP: Quick and clean binding of loose pages; lettering practice

Week 3: A history of the book in Italy; scribes and illuminators:

EXCURSION to scriptorium

Week 4: Week 5: Versals

WORKSHOP: Creating Versals; pamphlet binding

Week 5: Principles of page design; decorative elements

WORKSHOP: The Abcedarium

**Due: Journal**

Week 7: Paste-paper making; maybe marbling

EXCURSION to paper makers

Paper chase: Trip to Florence (and Siena?) paper shops

Week 8: WORKSHOP: Paper-bound three-signature book, illustrated, with decorative paper

Week 9: continue WORKSHOP: Paper-bound three-signature book, illustrated, with decorative paper

Week 10: Calligraphic lettering review

WORKSHOP: Creating your broadsheet

**Due: Journal**

Week 11: WORKSHOP: Multi-signature, case-bound book

Week 12: continue WORKSHOP: Multi-signature, case-bound book

Week 13: WORKSHOP: The altered book

Group and instructor critiques of case-bound book

Week 14: WORKSHOP: Work on your **Presentation Piece**

Week 15: Presentation of **Presentation Piece** to class, NCSA participants, friends  
and Final Exam