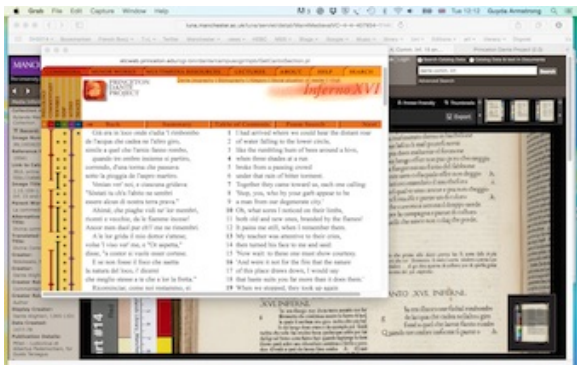


University of Manchester, Academic Year 2020-21

ITAL30431: Introduction to Book History

Course Unit Director: Dr Guyda Armstrong

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This course unit will provide an introduction to the discipline of book history via a study of some of the incarnations of the seminal Italian book, Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In addition to focusing on the authored text, however, we will also investigate the material form of the book, through manuscript, print, and digital media, and the text's transmedial adaptations. In this way, we can analyse both the relationship between the text and its material form and wider issues around the production, dissemination and reception of the book-object in various reading communities. The course will use, where appropriate, primary material held in the John Rylands Library (e.g., manuscripts, incunabula, early print books, etc.).

This course is unique in that it has a major practical 'hands-on' component in the study of the book. Our aim is to trace various physical and electronic manifestations of one text over a very long period of time, and from this, draw conclusions about Dante's changing place in various reading communities and cultures. Throughout, you will be encouraged to make connections between the literary text, its material features and its place in literary histories. Each piece of assessed coursework is therefore designed to assess your understanding of each of these key areas, and also to provide a record of your discoveries in the class.

Students who complete the course will be able to demonstrate:

- an advanced knowledge of the cultural history of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in a range of historic and medial contexts from Trecento Italy to twenty-first century computer games.

- a detailed knowledge of manuscript and hand-press book production techniques.
- facility in both the critical theory and applied practice of book history and textual studies.
- the ability to situate historically specific literary productions within macro narratives of taste and transmission
- how to make a book.

The course will make use of a vast array of online resources for the study of the historic and contemporary book, including digitizations of books and manuscripts held in the University of Manchester Special Collections and other major rare books libraries of the world, videos and TV programmes, online catalogues, and practical instructional materials centring on the material text. As part of their learning on the course, students will also create their own online wiki project on the cultural and material history of the poem.

Methods of Delivery and Assessment (PLEASE NOTE: NO KNOWLEDGE OF ITALIAN REQUIRED)

Delivery: The course is delivered via a mixture of blended synchronous (seminar discussions) and asynchronous learning (lectures, videos, discussion board, etc.) If conditions permit, we will hold the close-up sessions with the books and manuscripts in the John Rylands Library, but if this is not possible, these will be delivered via video.

Assessment: The course is assessed via two summative coursework assignments: one **book case-study** (40%) and one final summative **essay** (60%). Students will also contribute to a formative group wiki project, including an informal group presentation. The wiki will provide a shared learning resource for the class as a whole. (Please note that the assessments and weightings here are provisional and will be confirmed at Course Unit Selection.)

Key Readings:

Kathleen Speight, 'The John Rylands Library Dante Collection', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 44 (1961- 1962), 175-212

A copy of Dante's *Commedia* in Italian or in translation.

The Book History Reader, ed. by David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

Brian Richardson, *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy 1470-1600* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994)

Peter L. Shillingsburg, *From Gutenberg to Google: Electronic Representations of Literary Texts* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006)



