

COMM 599: Researching, Writing, Publishing, and Marketing Books in the Digital Era

Fall 2015 - 4 units

Professor: Geoffrey Cowan
Day/Time: Tuesdays, 6:30-9:20 p.m.
Classroom: Kerckhoff Hall Living Room
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

The digital revolution is producing profound changes in the area formerly known as books. As has often been observed, the transformation is as profound as the creation of movable type. Books remain a vital part of the media ecology. They are still a vital means of presenting and absorbing information and indeed by some measurements the combined sale of printed books, e-books and audio books means that more “books” are sold today than ever before. But publishers, writers and consumers are just beginning to learn how to navigate a world that is changing as quickly as the field formerly known as journalism.

Consumers can purchase and read books in a variety of new formats and on a variety of devices – from print, to e-books, to audio. Publishers are facing a challenging and exciting new world, as are readers who are faced with a range of new purchasing choices each of which allows them to absorb and process information in different ways. As one indication of the field’s new ecology, The New York Times Book Review has separate listings for “combined print and e-book bestsellers” and “print hardcover bestsellers.” There are also listings for audio books as well as paperbacks.

Students throughout the Annenberg School and, indeed, the university, hope to write and publish books but know that the new landscape they will confront is both exciting and unsettling. For journalists, scholars, novelists and public intellectuals, for those producing non-fiction and fiction, trade books and textbooks, each stage of the process offers new challenges and opportunities. There are now new ways to conduct research; new ways to write; new ways to publish; and new ways to promote their work.

With a mixture of history, theory, and practical study, this new 12 week, four unit course will explore the ways in which the digital revolution has transformed the experience of writers, readers and publishers. Most class sessions will combine a

discussion of the readings with student presentations and a discussion with visitors including leading writers and publishers. There will also be special class visits and conversations at two or three relevant venues including the LA Central Library and the Huntington Library.

While the course is properly housed on the Annenberg School, which teaches and studies journalism, communication and public relations, the course should attract students from around the campus. It will be limited to 12-16 students, admitted by an application process, who have a special reason for taking the class. In most cases, we will expect students to include a proposed book-length project that they hope to be able to develop during the class.

Course Goals

1. To familiarize students with the ways in which new technological advances can be used to conduct research and to write books
2. To explore the ways in which various formats of books – from the most ancient to the most recent – impact the reader and listener as well as the writer
3. To expose students to the old and new worlds of publishing and to familiarize them with the opportunities, options and challenges of various forms of publishing, including the myriad legal issues that have developed in recent years
4. To examine ways in which books can be promoted by the innovative use of old and new tools
5. To offer students practical exposure to some of the most successful book writers in various genres and to top professionals from the publishing industry

Course Assignments and Grading

Participation (15%) – Students should come to class having completed that week's assignments and they will be expected to participate actively in class discussions. All students should meet with the instructor at least once within the first six weeks of class.

Group projects (15%) – For each of the four primary themes of the class (research, writing, publishing, and marketing), students will work in groups to develop a short project and presentation that explores two recent case studies of their choosing: one successful and one unsuccessful. Based on research, students will be expected to explain what made each case a success or failure, what general lessons can be learned from that story, and how the lessons of that case study might apply to their own work.

Blog posts (10%) – Throughout the class, each student will contribute at least four unique posts on a topic related to the course, and will make a substantive response to at least four blog entries posted by other students during the semester.

Final presentation (20%) – As part of the process of developing their final project, students will present their work in progress and will receive feedback from students and the instructor.

Final project/book proposal (40%) – The final project will be a book proposal that could be submitted to a publisher or for some other means of distribution. The proposal will explain how they will use old and new media to research, write, publish and publicize their book.

Schedule of Classes

**** Note: The readings below are tentative and meant to be *illustrative* of the kinds of reading that will be assigned in the class. An updated syllabus with final readings will be circulated in advance of the class.**

Week 1 and 2 — Introduction and context

Week 1: Introduction

Darnton, R. (2010). *The Case for Books: Past, Present, and Future*.

Drucker, Johanna, *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production* (2014)

Bain & Company, *Publishing in the Digital Era* (2011)

Bu, Lisa. “How books can open your mind.” (2013). TED Talk.

http://www.ted.com/talks/lisa_bu_how_books_can_open_your_mind?language=en

Week 2: Context

McGuire, Hugh & O’Leary Brian. (2012). *Book: A Futurist’s Manifesto: A Collection of Essays from the Bleeding Edge of Publishing*. (1st half of the book).

Man, John. (2009). *The Gutenberg Revolution: How Printing Changed the Course of History*.

Cope, B. & Phillips, A. (2006). *The Future of the Book in the Digital Age*.

Lowenstein, A. (March, 2014). “Kindle v Glass, apps v text: the complicated future of books.” *The Guardian*.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/26/kindle-v-glass-apps-v-text-the-complicated-future-of-books>

Week 3 and 4 — Researching: The importance of research and how to use the tools that are becoming available

Week 3: The importance of research then and now

Darton, R. (2012). “The Research Library in the Digital Age”. *Harvard Business Review*.

“Harvard’s Head Librarian Is Delighted That Google Will Expand Fair Use.” Motherboard. (2013). <http://motherboard.vice.com/blog/harvards-head-librarian-is-delighted-that-google-books-will-expand-fair-use>

“Reading, writing, and research in the Digital Age.” Pew Research Center. <http://www.slideshare.net/PewInternet/k-zickuhr-edui-slides-extended>

Week 4: How to use new tools for digital history

Blair, Ann (2010). *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age*

Bolick, Cheryl Mason, “Digital Archives: Democratizing the Doing of

History,” *International Journal of Social Education*.

Shulman, Holly. “Hope, Fear, and the Digital Future of Scholarly Editing,” (October, 2014)

The art of investigative history

Erik Larson, Interview, “Creative Non-fiction,”
<https://www.creativenonfiction.org/online-reading/erik-larson>

Jean-Baptiste Michel + Erez Lieberman Aiden: “What we learned from 5 million books”. (2011).
http://www.ted.com/talks/what_we_learned_from_5_million_books

Week 5 and 6 — Writing: The history of writing, why we write, and how to write for digital and other audiences

Week 5: History and why we write

Didion, J. (1976). “Why I write.”
<http://people.bridgewater.edu/~atrupe/ENG310/Didion.pdf>

Cowan, Geoffrey, “The Legal and Ethical Limitations of Factual Misrepresentation,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 560, The Future of Fact (Nov., 1998), pp. 155-164

Mailer, Norman. (2004). *The Spooky Art: Thoughts on Writing*. (1st half of book).

Week 6: How to write for a digital and other audiences

Tyner, Kathleen. (1998). *Literacy in a Digital World: Teaching and Learning in the Age of Information*. Chapter 6: “Representing Literacy in the Age of Information”

Livingstone, Sonia (2009) “Media literacy and the challenge of new information.” <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/1017/1/MEDIALITERACY.pdf>

Nawrotzki, K. & Dougherty, J. (2013). *Writing History in the Digital Age*. (Ch. 4: “Writing with needles from your data haystack.”)

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?cc=dh;c=dh;idno=12230987.0001.001;rgn=full%20text;view=toc;xc=1;g=dculture>

Friedman, J. (2012). "How to Write a Book Proposal."
<http://janefriedman.com/2012/11/09/start-here-how-to-write-a-book-proposal/>

Friedman, Jane. "5 research steps before you write your book proposal."
(2014). <http://janefriedman.com/2014/07/09/5-research-steps-write-book-proposal/>

Penn, J. (2014). "The Indie Author Power Pack: How to write, publish, and market your book." <http://amzn.to/1vVyvap>

Lunsford, A. (2014). "From Twitter to Kickstarter, Stanford English professor says the digital revolution is changing what it means to be an author." <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2014/august/author-everyone-lunsford-081414.html>

"Reinventing the book for the digital age." *Time*. (November 12, 2013).
<http://techland.time.com/2013/11/12/reinventing-the-book-for-the-digital-age/>

Mike Matas, "A next generation digital book." TED. (2011).
http://www.ted.com/talks/mike_matas?language=en

"Book Publishing's Big Data Future." *Harvard Business Review*. (2014).
<https://hbr.org/2014/03/book-publishings-big-data-future/>

Raab, R. "Books and literacy in the digital age." (2010).
<http://www.americanlibrariesmagazine.org/article/books-and-literacy-digital-age>

Week 7 — Publishing: The history of publishing from the printing press to e-books and self-publishing; different avenues for publishing in the different area, and finding the right one for you

Thompson, J. (2012). *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Industry in the 21st Century*. (Ch. 9: "The Digital Revolution").

Woll, Thomas. (2010). *Publishing for Profit: Successful Bottom-Line Management for Book Publishers*. (Part I)

Osnos, P. "How Book Publishing Has Changed Since 1984." *The Atlantic*. (2011). <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/04/how-book-publishing-has-changed-since-1984/237184/>

"People-Powered Publishing Is Changing All the Rules." Mashable. (2014). <http://mashable.com/2014/02/09/self-publishing-digital/>

"The big short - why Amazon's Singles are the future." The Guardian. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2013/sep/05/amazon-kindle-singles-short>

Carnoy, D. (2012). "How to self-publish an ebook." *CNet*. <http://www.cnet.com/how-to/how-to-self-publish-an-ebook/>

Publishing scholarly books

Germano, W. (2008). *Getting It Published: A Guide for Scholars and Anyone Else Serious about Serious Books* "What do publishers do?" <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/288447.html>

Thompson, J. (2005). *Books in the Digital Age: The Transformation of Academic and Higher Education Publishing in Britain and the United States*. Chapter 3 & 14. <http://www.amazon.com/Books-Digital-Age-Transformation-Publishing/dp/0745634788>

Week 8 and 9 — Marketing: How to use old and new tools to try to promote books, earn credibility, and enable them to have impact

Week 8: The book market

Epstein, Jason, (2005) "The Future of Books." *MIT Technology Review*. <http://www.technologyreview.com/featuredstory/403531/the-future-of-books/>

Woll, Thomas. (2010). *Publishing for Profit: Successful Bottom-Line Management for Book Publishers*. (Part II)

“How the digital age rewrites the rule book on consumer behavior.” *Stanford Business Insights*. (2014). <http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/how-digital-age-rewrites-rule-book-consumer-behavior>

Week 9: How to market and new tools

Vaynerchuk, (2013). *Jab, Jab, Hook, Hook: How To Tell Your Story In a Noisy Social World*. (Entire book).

Sinek, Simon. (2009). *Start with Why*. Introduction, Chapter 1: “Assume you know”; Chapter 3: “The Golden Circle”, & Chapter 5: “Clarity, Discipline & Consistency.”

Smashwords *Book Marketing Guide*. (2011).
<http://www.amazon.com/Smashwords-Book-Marketing-Guide-Market-ebook/dp/B004XR57PE>

Penn, Joanna. (2014). *The Indie Author Power Pack: How to write, publish, and market your book*. <http://amzn.to/1vVyvap>

Kidd, Chip. (2012) Designing books is no laughing matter. Ok, it is.” TED
https://www.ted.com/talks/chip_kidd_designing_books_is_no_laughing_matter_ok_it_is#t-17229

Godin, Seth. (2003). “How to get your ideas to spread.” TED.
http://www.ted.com/talks/seth_godin_on_sliced_bread?language=en

Week 10 — Book publishing workshop

Week 11 — Book publishing workshop

Week 12 — Book publishing workshop

****Book publishing workshops will include special guests, hands-on activities, and a class dinner on one evening. *Class location and times may vary.***

Week 13 — Class Presentations

Week 14 — Class Presentations

Week 15 — Conclusion

Bilton, Nick. (2010). *I Live in the Future & Here's How It Works: Why Your World, Work, and Brain Are Being Creatively Disrupted*.

McGuire, Hugh & O'Leary Brian. (2012). *Book: A Futurist's Manifesto: A Collection of Essays from the Bleeding Edge of Publishing*. (2nd half).

Final project deadline TBD

Class Policies and Resources

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more.

Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Course Instructor



Geoffrey Cowan is a USC University Professor, the inaugural holder of the Annenberg Family Chair in Communication Leadership, and director of the USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy. A former director of the Voice of America and dean of the USC Annenberg School, Cowan is also president of the Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands, a nonprofit organization that convenes high-level conferences for world leaders to address global challenges that hosted President Obama's famed summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in June, 2013. He is on the boards of the Pacific Council on International Policy, Common Sense Media, and the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Academy of Political and Social Science.