

Cultures of the Book

This schedule was devised for an entry-level, gen-ed undergraduate course on book history taught remotely using Zoom and Canvas. While I usually tailor this course to the unique holdings at my institution, we did not have access to the rare book room; therefore I reorganized the syllabus around Amaranth Borsuk's *The Book* (MIT Press, 2018). Each of Borsuk's four chapters—The Book as Object, Content, Idea, and Interface—became the basis for a three-week unit, with one synchronous class on Zoom and one asynchronous class on Canvas each week. During the synchronous class, I would typically lecture on objects or technologies discussed in the readings, sometimes with discussion or breakout groups. We also remotely toured our campus' letterpress studio and visited books in special collections with the aid of a curator, who was on site operating a document camera. During the asynchronous class, students were assigned a task, such as making a cuneiform tablet or finding incunables on a digital archive, and were required to report their findings on a discussion board. I wrote up text and video prompts for these tasks and posted them as an "Assignment" on Canvas. The bulk of each student's grade came from completing these low-stakes, asynchronous assignments each week. For the final project, I asked students to curate an annotated bibliography of resources for teaching a particular book historical topic and post it on a shared public wiki. Because the class was remote, I leaned heavily on digital collections, video demonstrations, and online projects to augment the core readings, rather than assigning additional essays. I also asked students to purchase a pack of supplies from BLICK Art Materials, totaling around \$50.

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You can view the syllabus below or [download it here](#).

[Trettien_Cultures-of-Book_syllabus](#)

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