HIS 331 Seminar: Making Knowledge in Early Modern Europe

W, 1-3:50pm and individual meetings; ARH 229 and Special Collections, Burling Library

Dr. Aysha Pollnitz

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A media revolution has transformed the lives of men, women, and children. We work in knowledge economies, we do business in a global environment, we study to succeed in an information age, and we socialize in virtual networks. We discuss the conveniences and burdens, profundities and banalities, marvels and dangers, prophylactics and temptations of vast amounts of easily accessible data. We could be talking about the United States in 2016, but we could also be talking about early modern Europe, a period in which political, religious, economic, and cultural life was transformed by a media revolution—the technology of the printing press.

This course offers students an opportunity to conduct independent research on aspects of the knowledge explosion which took place in Europe between 1450 and 1700. Its powder keg was stocked with newly recovered ancient texts, with stories derived from Europeans' early encounters with the New World, with increasing contact with Africa and Asia, and with the results of the observation and experimental interrogations of nature.

We will study the concomitant media revolution—the printing industry—which many historians argue ignited and sustained this blast of new knowledge in Europe. The new technology of the printing press enabled textual, numerical, and visual information to be standardized, fixed, and disseminated swiftly and cheaply. We will explore its impact on the liberal and creative arts, on natural philosophy, theology and religious practices, and on personal conduct and manners. We will investigate early modern techniques for collecting and organizing the ever-expanding body of old and new information in museums, libraries, archives, databases, state systems,

1. Attendance and participation (10%)

explain what your topic is (its subject matter, chronological parameters, national/regional/or inter-regional context);
identify the historical question you will research;
describe the significance of your investigation. Use pp. 64-5 of Booth to frame this section. Eg “I am studying ..., because I want to find out ..., in order to help readers understand ...”;

5 Historiography, Approaches, and Methods Presentations (10%) in class on Wednesday April 13

Each seminar member will make a 10 minute presentation to their peers on the body of historical scholarship they plan to engage with in their seminar paper. Following the presentation, students should expect to answer questions about this scholarship and about their historical method from their peers and from me for three to five minutes. In planning your presentation, review Booth, pp. 84-100.

In your presentation, you should briefly describe your topic and question and describe the historiographical conversation you will be intervening in. You might identify a relevant debate in existing literature that you plan to take a stand on. You might suggest a way in which you plan to replace, correct, refine, or extend the current frame of research. Alternatively you could describe the way in which your work will fill a gap left by earlier studies. Finally, you should also describe a research *method* that is shaping your approach to your historical questions and/or primary sources. See the assignment sheet on P-Web for further information.

5. Partial draft review; Feedback (10% + 5%) due via email on Sunday April 24 by 9pm

Email a partial draft of your seminar paper (8 pages, 12pt TNR, 2 line spacing) to both me and your designated writing partner. In preparing your partial draft, consult Booth, pp. 186-210, 232-243.

Your partial draft should contain:
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an introduction, with your main argument or thesis **in bold**
at least five pages of argument and source analysis, with the topic sentence of each paragraph underlined
Consistently formatted footnotes (see *Course Style Guide* for details)
An outline of the remaining portions of the paper.

On Wednesday, April 27 the three of us will meet to discuss your work. Between Sunday April 24 and our Wednesday meeting you should read your partner's partial draft and provide written feedback on a hard copy of it or electronically, as long as you save it and bring hard copies to the meeting. Failure to bring two hard copies with you will result in the reduction of your20 (ous w)3 Td(e)4 (dba)

On a separate page, did the feedback offer a helpful suggestion for implementation in the next draft?

In your comments focus on: clarity of argument; persuasive use of reason and evidence in support of this argument; logic in the organization of the paper; critical consideration of existing scholarship; rigorous analysis of primary sources. For advice on a strategy for providing feedback on the clarity and flow of your partnerôs writing, consult Booth, pp. 268-69. Bring two copies of the feedback to our meeting.

In our meeting, you will receive feedback from both your designated partner and from me. Following the meeting, I will also grade the quality of the written and verbal feedback you offered your partner.

6. Full Draft (15%) due Monday, May 9 by 10am.

Your assignment will be graded using the following rubric:

Extensions:

Each student may have *one* 24 hour extension on an individual writing assignment this semester **other than the Partial draft and Review**. Send me an email requesting the extension and I shall grant it automatically and without regard to cause. This 24 hour period may not be broken into shorter extensions on multiple assignments. Otherwise, any request for an extension must be accompanied by **documented evidence of significant hardship or illness**. One transferable skill you will be practicing is to work with others to meet hard deadlines. Generally, late assignments, submitted without an extension, will be penalized one-third of a grade per day. The **Partial Draft** will be penalized one full grade for every day it is late. The **Final Seminar Paper** will be penalized one full grade for every day it is late.

Plagiarism

Unless it is explicitly stated in the assignment sheet, all written work and verbal presentations for this course must be entirely your own work. Please feel free to discuss the class and your reading and research with others—in fact *do discuss these things with others* since talking about the material will improve your understanding of it—but you should compose your assignments independently.

I take plagiarism very seriously. It is an act of intellectual dishonesty which shows a lack of respect for your peers, other historians and this College. You should read Grinnell's formal definition of plagiarism before submitting any written work for this course. In addition I have included a document on Plagiarism in the "Assignments' section of our course website which identifies four types of plagiarism and defines the term "common knowledge" for HIS 331.

Students with disabilities
Any student with a disability who seeks academic adjustments or accommodations should contact Autumn Wilke, Coordinator of Disability Resources. c1 (rf. <0050T Q q 196.58 5604B2 60.264 115

INTRODUCTION

Week 1: Researching the History of Knowledge: An Introduction
January 27: Meet in ARH 229
In addition to introducing the course, its subject matter and objectives we will
a) Practice deciphering early modern print and fonts;
b) Arrange times for individual meetings, so please bring your schedule planner.

We will not have individual meetings in week 1 or 2 to give you and your team time to prepare your side in the debate. If you wish, I can meet your team on Sunday or Monday afternoon to

Exam Period
May 18: **Final seminar paper due by 4pm**