

Culture and Media Forms

The First New Media: The “Printing Revolution” and its Impacts



CHID 250/FRENCH 224/JSISA 224

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IMPRESSIO LIBRORVM.

Potest vt vna vox capi aure plurima: Linunt ita vna scripta mille paginas.

Prof. Geoffrey Turnovsky | MW 2:30-3:50 | I&S | VLPA | WINT14



An 1894 Scribner’s article predicting that “phonography” would spell the “end of books” seems ridiculous today. The sentiment that print books are becoming obsolete has, however, only intensified. Yet before being threatened with extinction by “new media,” print *was* new media. Its appearance transformed early modern life much as digital media are changing our world today. This course introduces students to the “Printing Revolution,” and its impacts on the politics, societies and cultures of Europe and the world. Topics include:

- * How new technologies [print, books] upended established orders of information and knowledge (such as manuscript and oral systems of recording and transmission)
- * The politics and economics of the press: censorship and intellectual property.
- * Evolving reading habits and the stakes of expanded literacy.

Concepts forged in the age of print continue to inform us as they adapt to new technologies – terms like “book” and “pages” now help us process digital data. We’ll contemplate how notions like authorship, originality, copyright, freedom of the press, and public opinion took form in the information era opened up by print in the 15th century and how they still orient us in a rapidly changing media environment.

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