Center for the Book

Director
  • Timothy D. Barrett

Graduate degree: M.F.A. in book arts
Graduate certificate: book studies/book arts and technologies
Faculty: https://book.grad.uiowa.edu/faculty-and-staff/instructors
Website: https://book.grad.uiowa.edu

The University of Iowa Center for the Book represents a community of faculty, staff, students, and local book specialists with interests in all facets of book production, distribution, and use. Some members of the center actively research the history and circulation of the book, examining the role of books in cultural and historical processes. They also look at how changes in book production affect the way books are viewed as artifacts. Specialists in book arts and technologies study the history and technique of book crafts, including letterpress printing, typography, calligraphy, papermaking, and bookbinding. Others engage in the conservation or production of books, including artists’ books and literary fine press publications.

The center offers classes; sponsors lectures, seminars, and workshops; and encourages the exchange of ideas among individuals with interests in the book. A wide range of perspectives on the book as an aesthetic, cultural, and historical artifact is provided by associated faculty, staff, and graduate students in the Schools of Art and Art History and Library and Information Science; the Departments of History and English; University of Iowa Libraries; the Creative Writing Program (Iowa Writers’ Workshop); and other areas. This interdisciplinary membership and the center’s facilities combine to provide an exceptional environment for studying the history of the book, its evolution, and its future.

Graduate students may earn a master’s degree or a graduate certificate through the center. Undergraduate students may add dimension to their majors in English, art, journalism, history, and other disciplines by taking Center for the Book courses in book arts and book studies. They also may include an emphasis on book arts or on cultural and historical aspects of the book in the interdepartmental studies major.

Programs

Graduate Programs of Study

Major
  • Master of Fine Arts in Book Arts

Certificate
  • Certificate in Book Studies/Book Arts and Technologies

Courses

Center for the Book Courses

UICB:2110 Introduction to Book Arts 3 s.h.
Topics related to artist books, hand bookbinding, letterpress printing, papermaking, and lettering arts. GE: Engineering Be Creative. Same as BKAT:2110.

UICB:2600 Graphic Design II 3 s.h.
Fundamentals of typography as a core element in visual communication; introduction to historical typographic practices as well as modern modes of designing with type. Prerequisites: ARTS:1510 and ARTS:1520. Corequisites: DSGN:2500. Same as DSGN:2600.

UICB:2900 Book Design for Publishing 3 s.h.
Introduction to the major aspects of book design, including typography, layout, standard industry software, discussion of trends in the field. Same as ARTS:2900, ENGL:2900, WRIT:2900.

UICB:3140 Literature and the Book 3 s.h.
English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: Literary Theory and Interdisciplinary Studies. PERIOD: Varies by semester. Same as ENGL:3140.

UICB:3142 Topics in Book History 3 s.h.
Authorship, publishing, and so forth within specific historical and cultural contexts. English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: Literary Theory and Interdisciplinary Studies. PERIOD: Varies by semester. Same as ENGL:3142.

UICB:3280 Elements of Book Art 3 s.h.
Overview of book art process and techniques for nonmajors; introduction to traditional bookbinding skills, nontraditional book structures, and content development for artist books. GE: Engineering Be Creative. Same as BKAT:3280.

UICB:3380 Elements of Letterpress 3 s.h.
Introduction to letterpress printing; metal type, relief printing, page layout, and basic typography; basic use of Vandercook Proof Press; experimentation with diverse letterpress techniques; for non-book art majors. GE: Engineering Be Creative. Same as BKAT:3380.

UICB:3400 Calligraphy: Foundational Hands 3 s.h.
Fundamental calligraphic skills using Roman majuscule, Humanistic minuscule, Italic; basic layout and color theory incorporated into letter practice. Same as BKAT:3400.

UICB:3900 Special Project for Undergraduates arr.
Independent study.

UICB:4100 Paperworks 3 s.h.
Conceptual and methodological approaches to 2-D and 3-D paper works; creation of works that couple unique properties of paper-pulp medium with personal visual ideas and clarity of intent; contemporary issues in paper pulp, medium’s relationship to larger art and craft contexts. GE: Engineering Be Creative. Same as BKAT:4100.

UICB:4150 Introduction to Book Studies 3 s.h.
Theory and practice of book studies; meanings of word and image in the book format; comparative study of other media, applied study of the codex as physical artifact. English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: Literary Theory and Interdisciplinary Studies. PERIOD: Varies by semester. Same as ENGL:4150, SLIS:4150.

UICB:4205 Bookbinding I: Materials and Techniques 3 s.h.
Hands-on introduction to materials and techniques commonly used in bookbinding. Same as BKAT:4205.

UICB:2100 Creative Writing for Book Arts 3 s.h.
Creative writing in context of book arts; text and image, typography, visual sequence, graphic narrative; zines, chapbooks, broadsides, and artist’s books.
UICB:4210 Boxes and Enclosures 3 s.h. Hands-on techniques for a variety of book enclosures; appropriateness, aesthetic issues concerning box design; Japanese wraparound case, drop-spine box, hinged and lidded boxes, slipcase; technical skill development. Prerequisites: UICB:4205. Same as BKAT:4210.

UICB:4270 Bookbinding II 3 s.h. Builds on skills acquired in UICB:4205; projects to complete six bindings based on historical and contemporary models; sewing styles, board attachments, endband types; nonadhesive and case-bound structures, varied materials and binding styles, their effects on structure, aesthetic considerations, further development of solid binding skills; historical development of particular binding practices. Prerequisites: UICB:4205. Same as BKAT:4270.

UICB:4280 Artists’ Books 3 s.h. Exploration of the book as a form for artistic expression; emphasis on conceptual development; relationship between content, form, and structure; how a book’s structure and design can enhance and integrate part of the work’s meaning. Prerequisites: UICB:4205 or UICB:4205. Same as BKAT:4280.

UICB:4290 Historical Book Structures 3 s.h. Historical development of book structures examined through surviving examples, construction of historical models. Prerequisites: UICB:4205 or UICB:4205.

UICB:4300 Letterpress I 3 s.h. Mechanics of letterpress printing, typography, and design as applied to hand set metal type and edition printing; printing on a Vandercook proof press; introduction to photopolymer plates and methods of illustration related to edition printing, historical aspects of printing technology, typecasting, type classification; role of letterpress in modern private press and contemporary artist books. Same as ARTS:4300.

UICB:4305 Computer Graphics for Book Arts 3 s.h. Introduction to Adobe Creative Suite graphic design software (InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop); emphasis on using software for book arts applications; typesetting and pagination of multipage documents; methods for combining text and image; tools and techniques for digital illustration; creation and manipulation of digital images; preparations of digital files for desktop or letterpress printing and services bureau output.

UICB:4340 Digital Design for Artists’ Books 3 s.h. Introduction to concepts, techniques, and technologies used to design and produce artists’ books with personal computers and graphic design software. GE: Engineering Be Creative. Same as ARTS:4340.

UICB:4380 Letterpress II 3 s.h. Builds on skills acquired in UICB:4300; students produce an editioned letterpress printed chapbook or artist book, a poster for a public event, and an image built from metal type; exploration of hand-set metal, digital typesetting, printing from photopolymer plates, and pressure printing; press mechanics and operation; publication philosophies, manuscript acquisition, and topics specific to literary fine press and artist books; historical and contemporary context for literary fine press publications and artist book work. Prerequisites: UICB:4300.

UICB:4390 Book and Publication Design 3 s.h. Students plan, design, and produce a book using Adobe Creative Suite; page layout software, typography, page layout and design, book formatting, handling of image files, preparation of materials for print and other contemporary book media; history of book design, book design in contemporary publishing; visit to University of Iowa Libraries Special Collections. Prerequisites: DSGN:2600 or UICB:4300. Same as ARTS:4390.

UICB:4400 History of Western Letterforms 3 s.h. History of Western letterforms, with focus on tools, materials, techniques; the major hands, their place in history, their influence on modern times; creation of letterforms using appropriate tools; hands-on approach with emphasis on understanding rather than mastery. Same as ARTS:4400.

UICB:4415 Calligraphy I: Foundational Hands 3 s.h. Hands-on instruction in italic and pressure pen scripts; historical relationships, effects on modern letterforms. GE: Engineering Be Creative. Same as ARTS:4415.

UICB:4420 Calligraphy I: Blackletter Hands 3 s.h. Explores some of the many calligraphic forms known collectively as blackletter hands (medieval introduction to calligraphy); study of various hands from the heavily vertical Textura to the floridly expressive Gothic Cursive, and the distinctive connotations these unique letterform carry; emphasis on exploring the creative process while refining calligraphic skills and understanding the historical and social connections this hand has with other disciplines.

UICB:4490 Advanced Studies in Letter Arts 3 s.h. Special topics and advanced projects in calligraphy and letter arts. Prerequisites: UICB:4400 or UICB:4415 or UICB:4420. Same as ARTS:4490.

UICB:4910 The Book in the Middle Ages 3 s.h. Relation of text, decoration, function, creators, and audience in different genres of medieval manuscript books 400-1500 A.D. Same as HIST:4910, SLIS:4910.

UICB:4920 The Transition from Manuscript to Print 3 s.h. History of the book and communication in Europe 1400-1800; production, distribution, and use of texts in cultural context. Same as HIST:4920, SLIS:4920.

UICB:4930 Topics in Material Analysis 3 s.h. Analysis and description of physical book artifacts and their component parts (parchment, paper, bookbinding) and allied specialties (the lettering arts, printing and illustration techniques); reading, writing, presentations. Same as HIST:4430.

UICB:5110 Islamic/Asian Papermaking History and Technique 3 s.h. History, technique, and aesthetics of traditional Islamic and Asian hand papermaking. Same as BKAT:5110.

UICB:5130 European Papermaking History and Technique 3 s.h. History and technique of traditional European hand papermaking and related aesthetics; students gain confidence in pursuing independent production of handmade papers or undertaking related research in their own particular areas of interest; fiber preparation, sheet forming, and drying/finishing methods; concurrent readings and discussions of related history and aesthetics; special projects selected by student with instructor approval. Same as BKAT:5120.

UICB:5160 Studies in Papermaking arr. Topics in the history and technique of papermaking. Prerequisites: UICB:4100 or UICB:5110 or UICB:5130.
UICB:5170 Advanced Papermaking Production  3 s.h.
Independent Western- or Japanese-style projects undertaken at UICB Research and Production Paper Facility at Oakdale Campus under faculty guidance; plan, implement, and evaluate professional scale production runs using full-scale equipment. Prerequisites: UICB:5110 or UICB:5130 or BKAT:5110 or BKAT:5120. Same as BKAT:5170.

UICB:5180 Advanced Projects in Paper  3 s.h.
Advanced independent projects undertaken in a classroom setting; collaborative group discussions to plan, implement, troubleshoot, and evaluate student projects. Prerequisites: UICB:5110 or UICB:5130 or BKAT:5110 or BKAT:5120. Same as BKAT:5180.

UICB:5210 Bookbinding III  3 s.h.
Bookbinding structures based on historical and contemporary models; differences in various binding practices, how these differences affect function, why the styles developed; experience choosing appropriate structures for particular uses; emphasis on fine tuning skills and techniques required for advanced binding practices; sewn endbands, rounding and backing, sewing on varied supports, board attachments, and covering methods. Prerequisites: (UICB:4205 or BKAT:4205) and (UICB:4270 or BKAT:4270). Requirements: for UICB:5210 —UICB:4205 and UICB:4270; for BKAT:5210—BKAT:4205 or BKAT:4270 or UICB:4210 or UICB:4270. Same as BKAT:5210.

UICB:5220 Book Conservation  3 s.h.
Practical methods, materials assessment, conservation history and evolution. Prerequisites: UICB:4270. Same as SLIS:5535.

UICB:5260 Studies in Bookbinding  3 s.h.
Topics related to hand bookbinding. Same as BKAT:5260.

UICB:5280 Bookbinding IV  3 s.h.
Advanced studies in bookbinding; fine binding styles, leather paring and tooling, advanced finishing techniques, refining skills; continued look at differences in regional binding practices, how these differences affect function, and why particular styles developed. Prerequisites: UICB:5210.

UICB:5330 Letterpress III: Imagemaking  arr.
Advanced work in alternative and innovative letterpress technologies as they apply to imagemaking processes for fine press printing; topics include pressure printing, photopolymer from nondigital negatives, explorations of type-high surfaces, monoprints on the Vandercook, and applying hand work to editioned prints; students complete a series of print exercises for each process, a small printed book sketch, and a longer format editioned artist book. Prerequisites: UICB:4380. Same as ARTS:5530.

UICB:5340 Letterpress III: The Handprinted Book  3 s.h.
Advanced work in fine press book design; exploration of problems in hand-printing books, choice of manuscript, editing, design, typesetting, proofreading, printing and binding; histories of printing and of the book, emphasis on 20th- and 21st-century book design and literature; issues of book design and production related to letterpress printing. Prerequisites: UICB:4380. Same as ARTS:5340.

UICB:5370 Studies in Printing  1-3 s.h.
Development of individual book projects and production of one substantial project or several smaller ones; focus on acquiring or creating a text and/or other content; project development; range of print techniques available in letterpress printing; issues involved in producing editioned artist books or fine press work; opportunity to expand on existing printing; classroom setting used to augment work sessions with in-progress critiques, readings, and visits to special collections.