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Philip M. Rappaport
CUNY City College

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**DIGITAL AND EBOOK PUBLISHING
ENG 31131**

City University of New York, City College
Publishing Certificate Program
Spring 2023

Faculty: Philip Rappaport
Contact: prappaport@ccny.cuny.edu
Term: Spring 2023, class meets January 26 through May 11
Class Time: Thursdays 4:50pm - 7:20pm
Location: NAC 5/142
Office Hours: Thursdays 4-4:45pm or by phone appointment

This course uses Open Education Resources/Zero Textbook Cost course material. There are no required books to purchase for this course.

Course content consist of a combination of library eBooks, web materials, PDFs, handouts, videos, podcasts. Students will access all class materials in Blackboard's content section, so make sure you can access the course there.

We will use one full-length book, *Publishing for Profit*, available for unlimited use to all students from the library at this link:

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ccny-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1643160>

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course will provide a history of digital books and context for understanding how digital advances and ebooks have affected the publishing industry, consumer habits, and reading. The course exposes students to practical wisdom from experts across the publishing and book industry. Students will learn about eBook production and design, SEO and metadata, digital and online marketing, social media and sales.

There will be online discussion posts, writing assignments, a midterm, group work and classroom exercises. Students will select an older book for their backlist reissue, write a response-paper to an audiobook and write a publisher profile report. For their workgroup project students will edit, produce and market an original eBook, and present their collaborative work at "sales conference" at the end of the semester.

Course Learning Objectives

- *To demonstrate knowledge of the significance of the eBook in its cultural and historical context
- *To be conversant in the publishing business generally such as job roles, types of publishing houses, wholesale and retail, etc.
- *To express in written work and oral contributions knowledge of the tools necessary for high quality eBook design, production, and distribution
- *To demonstrate an understanding of and ability to execute digital marketing and discoverability of ebooks

Key Questions

- *What makes a good eBook?
- *What are the different selling and purchasing models for ebooks?
- *How are ebooks marketed and discovered?
- *How have digital technologies impacted publishing's work environment?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS and GRADING POLICY

Coursework is graded on following instructions, completeness, research, creativity, and professionalism. Projects, tasks and discussion posts and responses should be free from spelling and grammar errors. The goal is to clearly articulate your ideas.

30%—Online Discussions: We will be using the Discussion feature in Blackboard. You should expect to respond to eight discussion post prompts over the 16 week semester. These will require you to make one post of your own (125-250 words) and reply to two classmates' posts (40 words minimum). Posts should make use of assigned content as well as your own personal experience. Discussions are opened on Thursday and are closed the following Thursday. The discussion group will occur only during weeks when no other tasks or test are due.

30%—Assignments: Students will complete three written homework assignments. Instructions for each will be given in class and available in Blackboard. Assignments should be submitted via Blackboard. **All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, 11-pt. Times New Roman or Palatino font unless otherwise.**

15%—The Midterm exam will consist of four essay questions and cover key concepts, terms and industry players discussed in the preceding weeks, to ensure students possess a basic understanding of the eBook market.

15%—Workgroup Project: Each student will be assigned to a small working group that will engage in bookmaking—coming up with a book idea, creating the eBook, and marketing it—for presentation at the end of term.

10%—Classroom Participation

PCP Students are required to maintain a grade average of "B" or better in order to complete the Certificate Program

ATTENDANCE

Regular, prompt attendance is required. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out from a classmate what you've missed and be prepared for the next class.

CLASS SCHEDULE

PLEASE NOTE: This schedule may be subject to change at any time. Make a habit of checking Blackboard every Friday evening for class updates.

January 26: **Welcome to eBook publishing**

February 2: **Indie publishing: Wearing multiple hats—conversation with a publisher**

February 9: **Backlist publishing, the industry's bedrock**

- February 16: **Digital marketing foundation**
- February 23: **Building a social media and advertising campaign**
- March 2: **Publishing financials and production for eBooks (and print)**
- March 9: **Covers presentation with an art director**
- March 16: **E-book sales & library markets—conversation with a sales director**
- March 23: **Midterm**
- March 30: **International rights--conversation with a literary scout**
- April 6: **SPRING BREAK**
- April 13: **SPRING BREAK**
- April 20: **Bookselling**
- April 27: **Audiobooks**
- May 4: **Self-publishing**
- May 11: **Last class: Group Presentations**
- May 18: All FINAL written materials from the working groups are due*

Assignment #1, due Thursday, March 2nd

REISSUE A BACKLIST BOOK

Your chosen book should be at least 10 years old. It can be in print or out of print. The work we do in class, your readings, and online discussions over the first several weeks of the term will provide you with a solid knowledge base for this project.

Your plan should consist of three documents:

1. Metadata Form (provided)
2. Tipsheet Form (provided)
3. Submit the Plan as Word document to Blackboard.

First section: Publishing/Editorial

- Editor's pitch. This is your chance to address how you feel personally about the book, why you want people to read it, and how it affected you as a reader as well as editor. (Maximum two paragraphs.)
- Add "value" to a backlist title. Consider its packaging-- new cover and new copy; editorial focus--commissioning a new Introduction by a prominent author or expert;

or ask the author to write a new Preface to their nonfiction book. If you selected a book in the public domain (generally speaking, a book that was published in 1927 or earlier), helping your edition stand out from the crowd will be critical to the book's success. Provide your rationale to add new material.

- If your book hasn't been released as an eBook yet, make "first time in E" part of the plan.
- Cover design inspiration. Your task is to suggest a design direction for the eBook to your art director. Choose three "real" eBook covers that inform your direction. Consider the comparable titles that have done well in your book's category. Even if you think the current cover is fine as it is, and doesn't need to be replaced, you're still expected to identify three cover comps. Some students want to include their own design in the mix. That's fine but not required.

Second section: The Marketing Plan

- Get ideas from materials to be discussed in class, particularly from our class and readings on marketing, publicity, social media. Not all of those activities will be relevant or appropriate; nonetheless they'll help you begin to tailor your unique plan to your book and its audience. There are many resources for digital book marketing, including in our textbook and blogs like IngramSpark.com or Jane Friedman's The Hot Sheet.
- Put your publisher's tools to work for you. Does the publisher run the author's Facebook page? Does the author have a website? Are they well maintained or neglected? How will you improve the author's social presence?
- Book/author champions. Not all authors are able to speak for themselves. Perhaps there's a "superfan" of your book--a prominent writer or activist--who'd be open to spreading the word through twitter, Instagram, Facebook, an article in a literary magazine, etc.
- Content partnerships. Some plans lean heavily on a publisher's "owned media"; in other words, their own content sites (websites) in genres like science fiction, mystery, romance, history, true crime, and more. You want to identify websites that are good matches for your book. The publisher of your title may also run content sites—tor.com (St. Martin's) for SF/F and Crown's readitforward.com come to mind. These sites are open to posting content (listicles, excerpts, interviews) from external publishers.
- Limited time discounting or "down pricing." Bookbub.com is the leading portal for readers who want discounted books, and for publishers and independent authors who want to move a lot of units quickly—and possibly catch a "tail" later at full-price. Publishers also run their own price promotions in cooperation with online retailers. Price promotions have become an integral part of marketing campaign.

Assignment #2, due Thursday, March 16

WRITE A COVER DESIGN MEMO FOR AN EBOOK OF YOUR CHOICE

Write a memo to your art director summarizing the content, noting the market you hope to attract, and suggesting other books ("comps") in the same genre for inspiration, and diplomatically suggesting a general approach the designer might take and why. For your convenience a design memo form and examples are in the content section on Blackboard.

Assignment #3, due Thursday, April 20

For this week's assignment you will take on a role as guest curator for a bookshelf in a bookstore (online or bricks and mortar) organize a virtual literary event with three authors.

1. Your personal bookshelf. Choose ten books that have shaped your writing life. They could be in one or multi genres or categories. They can be any mix of classic and recent books. Your bookshelf should include at least one of the following: the last great book you read; a book currently on your nightstand; a favorite book that no one else (or hardly anyone else) has heard of; a surprising choice that bookstore customers wouldn't expect to see on your bookshelf. Be sure to include full titles, author names, and publication dates. Although an explanation for each book on the shelf isn't required, do include a few words about "the little-known book" and the surprising choice.
2. You're organizing a bookstore event. Which three writers, alive or dead, do you invite to discuss one or more current trends in a category of your choice? Why these writers? Write a brief introduction for each author including their best and least known books. Write a sentence or two about the discussion topic(s).
3. During your store "shift" you're going to recommend the one book that no customer should leave the retail website or store without purchasing. In a few sentences explain why you recommend this particular book. You don't need to stay within your genre for this one.

Submit in word to Blackboard. You may include a visual of your bookshelf, but it isn't mandatory.

Group Projects: Creating, Producing, and Marketing an eBook

Presentation on May 11; final written materials due on May 18 via Blackboard

At the beginning of the semester, each student will be assigned to a small working group that will engage in three aspects of bookmaking—coming up with a book idea (editorial), creating the eBook (production and design) and marketing it. It'll be up to each group to decide how to distribute the various jobs.

Editorial work: You will choose the content to publish as an eBook. Brainstorm what you think would be of most interest and value to both the class and a reading public. A guidebook to the City College neighborhood? A collection of poetry from the English Department? A series of essays from your creative writing class? A public domain novel? (These are merely prompts--please come up with your own ideas).

Design and Production work: Each group will design their cover and interior, create the epub file, and ensure the product passes quality control.

Marketing the eBook: You'll create a marketing plan for the eBook.

Presentation day will take place sales-conference style followed by a publisher "reception."

