

Wells Book Arts Center

Goals, Objectives and Measurable Outcomes for Book Arts Courses

Submitted by Nancy Gil, Director of the Book Arts Center on September 16, 2009

Mission Statement

Inspired by Victor Hammer, founder of the Wells College Press and internationally-renowned calligrapher, painter, printer and type designer, the Wells Book Arts Center was established in 1993 to instruct in all areas of the book arts and technologies. Students in Wells book arts classes learn the history and philosophy of their craft as they develop hand skills and cultivate aesthetic awareness in the fabrication of books. In addition, they learn experientially through internships at museums, papermaking studios, conservation labs, letterfoundries, and similar book arts institutions. The Center embraces historical arts and technologies while actively investigating and incorporating innovations of our digital age. The Wells Book Arts Center supports the mission of the College by revealing the essential role of the book in Western culture and the liberal arts.

The paragraph above is the introduction to the Book Arts Center that appears first page of the Book Arts Center section of the College's website. It outlines

- a) our Goals: to instruct in all areas of the book arts and technologies
- b) our general Course Objectives: in our courses, students learn the history and philosophy of their craft as they develop hand skills and cultivate aesthetic awareness in the fabrication of books; students also learn experientially through internships at museums, papermaking studios, conservation labs, letterfoundries, and similar book arts institutions
- c) our contribution to the Mission of the College: teaching historical arts and technologies while actively investigating and incorporating innovations of our digital age; and revealing the essential role of the book in Western culture and the liberal arts.

Annual Meeting

The faculty and staff of the Book Arts Center met on Tuesday, September 8, 2009, for its annual meeting. Present were: Nancy Gil, Director of the BAC; Sarah Bryant, the current Victor Hammer Fellow; Michael Bixler, who teaches BKRT 120 each semester; Mark Argetsinger, who teaches BKRT 220 once a year; and William Ganis, Chair of the Visual Arts Major.

We first discussed the progress that has been made toward the Book Arts becoming a third concentration in the Visual Arts major. In the spring semester 2009, the faculty in the Visual Arts major approved the proposal submitted by Nancy Gil and William Ganis.

They approved the proposal unanimously, as did the Curriculum Committee, and later the Wells Faculty at its April meeting. Gil, Ganis and the registrar have to complete paperwork to send to the NYS Board of Regents for their approval. A copy of the complete proposal is attached.

The second item of discussion at the meeting concerned the courses in the book arts that we want to develop. Because the one area of the book arts that we do not teach is paper making, everyone felt that papermaking should be at the top of our list. In addition, a regular rotation of second level courses in binding and letterpress printing would give a better foundation to our students. This might be more feasible if the Binder-in-Residence position were filled; that person would teach the intro binding class, thus allowing the Victor Hammer Fellow to teach at the second level. The other course in binding that we want to teach is boxmaking.

We briefly discussed ways to let students across campus know what we are about. One solution might be to offer BKRT 100, in which students would learn a little binding, printing, calligraphy and digital design. Another would be to offer weekend workshops in specific areas so that students might get a taste of our courses. The drawback to this idea is that it would require a lot of extra time and energy on the part of our faculty.

Another course idea would be to have a course specifically for students in the creative writing courses, especially in the poetry writing classes, so that they could print broadsides of their work. This is an idea that might be explored at a later date. Again, it would take more time from our adjunct faculty, who already have jobs, as well as requiring a financial commitment from the college.

In the sections below are revised versions of the information submitted last year.

Section 1. Courses Required in the Minor

BKRT 115 Hand Bookbinding I, offered every semester

- A. *Goals.* The principle goals of this course are for the students to learn several traditional techniques of bookbinding by hand and to learn the fundamentals of incorporating original content into a book structure.
- B. *Course objectives.* Students create blank models of seven book structures using techniques demonstrated in class. They learn the fundamentals of paper grain and pastepaper decoration techniques. They use all of these skills to create books with original content based on specific assignments given out in class.
- C. *Measurable learning outcomes.*
 - 1. Binding skills: High level of craftsmanship evidenced by clean books, correct sewing, square cutting and correct paper grain.

2. Creativity: Thoughtful and interesting image-making techniques, Structural relevance to content of books, drafts and early sketches indicating progress and change over time.

3. Aesthetics and design: During critiques, students are able to defend choices they have made about color and design of their content driven books. Students are also able to articulate concerns or criticisms about the books of their peers.

D. *Means of assessment.*

As per the syllabus, the student's success will be determined by the quality of the binding models and the quality of content of their creative assignments and final project.

E. *How assessment data will be utilized assessment.*

F. This data will be used to indicate the level of mastery the student has achieved in producing bound pieces. The final course grade indicates the student's success in the course itself and whether she or he is ready to continue at the next level of binding

BKRT 120 Letterpress Printing, offered every semester

A. *Goals.* The principle goals of this course are to learn to set metal type and print from it on a Vandercook proofing press.

B. *Course Objectives.* Students will learn the lay of the case, how to set metal type by hand, impose it in the bed of the press, and print from it. They will learn some history of printing and history of the book, be able to discern what good printing is, and develop an aesthetic eye for design.

C. *Measurable Outcomes and Means of Measurement*

1. Basics

a) *Measurable learning outcomes:* Students will learn the lay of the case by setting type for projects and distributing it back into the case afterwards; learn and use letterpress terms and tools; learn and use proofreader's marks; learn to tie up their forma for safe storage.

b) *Means of measurement:* Students will demonstrate during class that they can either set or distribute type quickly and correctly; appropriately use the various tools letterpress printing; and use the correct terminology in their discussions with the teacher about the layout, design and actual printing of their projects.

2. Printing

a) *Measurable learning outcomes:* Students will learn how to impose their forms in the bed of the press, safely and correctly operate the Vandercook proofing presses in the typographic lab (roller height, inking, use of side guide & paper grippers, impression and cylinder packing, printing, and cleaning).

b) *Means of measurement*: Students will demonstrate while working on their printing projects that they can print safely, efficiently and correctly.

3. Typefaces

a) *Measurable learning outcomes*: Students will learn to distinguish and compare the elements of a type's design (component parts, ascenders & descenders, proportion, weight and structure of stems & serifs), especially of the five main faces used in the Book Arts Center: Centaur, Arrighi, Dante, Perpetua, Gill Sans.

b) *Means of measurement*: On quizzes and in discussion with the professor on the design of their projects, students will demonstrate their understanding of typeface design and their knowledge of the parts pieces of type and their relationship to each other.

4. Paper

a) *Measurable learning outcomes*: Students will learn how to discern grain direction, a paper's wire and felt sides, the difference between wove and laid paper; they will learn to cut and/or trim paper to size on the guillotine and/or board shear.

b) *Means of measurement*: In class students will use the vocabulary of paper correctly and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding by printing on the correct side and by printing and cutting on the grain.

5. Aesthetics and design

a) *Measurable learning outcomes*: Students will learn traditional basic book design, good typography, optical vs mechanical centering, letter spacing of caps, use of ornaments or illustrations, choice of typeface appropriate to the content, where/when to use roman, italic or bold, etc.

b) *Means of measurement*: As students plan and complete their projects, the professor will see if they have learned and are applying the basics of design and typography.

6. Quality

a) *Measurable learning outcomes*: Students will produce printed pieces that meet the requirements of the assignment.

b) *Means of measurement*: As students plan and complete their projects, the professor will verify that all words are spelled correctly, right side up, in the correct typeface and point size; that the inking is even; that there is no slurring or offprinting. These details are recorded on a checklist for each project.

D. *Grade* As per the syllabus, the student's grade will be determined by the quality of the various printed pieces, several short exams and a final exam. A student's attitude and initiative are considered when he or she has trouble with the manual aspects of printing.

E. *How Assessment Data Will Be Utilized*

1. The checklists for each project will serve to inform the teacher whether individual students or the class as a whole have mastered the skill set of that assignment. This will be vital feedback for the teacher to gauge his or her success in relaying the material in the course.

2. The course grades will be used to indicate the level of mastery that students have achieved in both producing printed work and in using the Vandercooks. In addition, course grades will help to determine whether students are ready to continue at the next level of printing.

Section 2. Electives in the Minor

BKRT 105 Letter Arts I: Introduction to Calligraphy, offered every semester

- A. *Goals* The principle goal of this course is to learn three foundational hands: Italic, Humanistic Miniscules, and Roman Capitals.
- B. *Course Objectives* Students will learn to write these hands using a broad-edged metal nib with gouache. They will design and execute broadsides or manuscript pages in each of the hands. In addition, they will be introduced to the history of western letterforms and the place of calligraphy in modern art and design.
- C. *Measurable Outcomes and Means of Measurement*
 1. Basics
 - a) *Measurable outcomes*: Students will learn the vocabulary of calligraphy and letterforms and create a portfolio of weekly practice sheets of each hand completed outside class, as well as practice sheets completed in class as new letterforms are introduced.
 - b) *Means of measurement*: Students will use correct terminology in their discussions and class critiques. The professor will compare the students' work to examples of the hand being learned to discern the students' proficiency.
 2. Other Skills
 - a) *Measurable outcomes*: Students will learn letter spacing and the design of the page first by observing the demonstrations and examples given in class, and then by practicing in and outside class and producing weekly and final projects.
 - b) *Means of measurement*: The professor will discern whether the students have understood the demonstrations and examples in class by evaluating the practice sheets and final projects in each hand.
 3. Aesthetics and design
 - a) *Measurable outcomes*: Students will look at good design examples as they plan and execute their weekly and final projects.
 - b) *Means of measurement*: The professor will evaluate the success of the students' final designs, looking at the quality of the letterforms themselves, spacing and overall design, and verify that the project meets the assignment requirements.
 4. Quality of craftsmanship

a) *Measurable learning outcomes:* Completed student projects should demonstrate proficiency with letterforms and skill with composition, free of misspellings and visible corrections.

b) *Means of measurement:* The professor will use a checklist to verify the details listed above as well as whether the requirements of the assignment have been met.

D. *How Assessment Data Will Be Utilized*

1. The checklists for each project will serve to inform the teacher whether individual students or the class as a whole have mastered the skill set of that assignment. This will be vital feedback for the teacher to gauge his or her success in relaying the material in the course.

2. The course grades will be used to indicate the level of mastery that students have achieved in writing in the various hands studied. In addition, course grades will help to determine whether students are ready to continue at the next level of calligraphy.

BKRT 220 The Digital Book & Graphic Design, offered every fall

A. *Goals.* The principal goal of this course is explore classical design principles and their continued relevance through the digital medium of Adobe InDesign.

B. *Course Objectives* Students apply layout and design principles as they design projects such as a poster, a brochure, sample title and text pages, and finally a short, digitally produced hand-bound book. .

C. *Measurable Outcomes*

1. Intellectual and theoretical content will show in the students' actual designed pieces.
2. Drafts of the various projects-in-progress will allow students to improve their work according to the instructor's comments and suggestions.
3. Students' designs will show evidence of
 - a) having been well thought out
 - b) having form befit content
 - c) being typeset to a professional standard
 - d) being bound in a harmonious and competent way.
4. students' critiques of each other's work will demonstrate the students' ability to apply critically the principles they will have learned in the course.
5. Students' increasing proficiency in the use of Adobe InDesign will be evident as the projects become more involved.
6. Adobe Photoshop will be used as an ancillary tool.

D. *Means of Assessment*

As per the syllabus, students will design a variety of increasingly complex printed pieces that meet the requirements of the assignment and demonstrate the students'

increasing skill in InDesign. The learning outcomes listed above will be applied in their assessment.

E. How Assessment Data Will Be Utilized

The success of the various projects will be used to assess the measurable learning outcomes, to see if the class has indeed accomplished the course objectives. The instructor will use this information to revise and/or revamp the course as needed.

Section 3. How Assessment Data Will Be Utilized

As stated in the two previous sections, assessment data will be used to evaluate the success of our students and to see if our courses are doing what we say they should. This second element is very important as Book Arts join the Visual Arts Major as a third concentration in Fall 2010. We will be assessing our course offerings not only as they have served us in the Minor, but also as they will correspond to and complement the course offerings and philosophy of the Visual Arts Major.

Section 4. Our Future

Although in our Mission Statement we say that we were “established... to instruct in all areas of the book arts,” we do not yet teach papermaking, the only area in the book arts in which we offer no courses. With the addition of papermaking, we will be able to say that we do indeed instruct in all areas of the book arts. As a concentration, we will also need to develop and teach second level courses in printing and binding on a regular basis.

Our courses meet the standards and goals we have set for ourselves based in part on book arts courses on other campuses. We have earned praise from faculty at the University of Alabama Masters in Book Arts Program, Wellesley College, University of Iowa Center for the Book, and Oregon College of Arts and Crafts. They and our colleagues in the larger Book Arts world are impressed with and envious of the quantity and quality of printing equipment, type and ornaments; binding equipment, tools and supplies; and scriptorium, digital classroom and other studio space that we enjoy.

By joining the Visual Arts Major as a third concentration, the Book Arts will continue to add to the richness and diversity of the majors at Wells while continuing to keep Wells unique among small liberal arts colleges.

Nancy Gil
16 Sept 09