



Week 3: 20 Sept.: Paleography: letter forms; Monumental capitals; The Middle Ages (Merovingian writing; Carolingian minuscule); “alphabetical order”

– Drucker *Alphabetic Labyrinth*, chaps 4-6

– Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*, Introduction, chaps. 1-4.

Assignment: 1-2 page reflection regarding the implications of an ordering principle for the alphabet. You may want to consult some books that are ordered alphabetically (e.g. books of recipes, children’s books, etc., or even critical works (such as the *Abécédaire critique* by Jean-Charles Gateau, Weldon: PQ 294/ .G 38/ 1987).

Week 4: 27 Sept.: Letters and meaning: *carmina figurata*

Week 7: 18 Oct.:

What's in a Typeface?

Alexander Lawson, *Anatomy of a Typeface: "Arrighi" and "Baskerville"* (Weldon Reserves)

Meggs, *History of Graphic Design* (Western Reserves, Z244.5.M42 2012) (pages tba)

J. Abbott Miller and Ellen Lupton, "A Natural History of Typography." In *Looking Closer: Critical Writings on Graphic Design* (on reserve)

–Ray Russell, "A Note on the Type," *The Paris Review* 82 (1981) (in stacks)

Assignment: 1-2 page reflection paper on how letter forms create (or are seen as creating) meanings. Include a reproduction of any typeface you discuss.

Week 8: 25 Oct.: letters and universal language projects (16th-18th century)

Week 12: 22 Nov.: *Oulipo* and the Potentiality of Literature
– Perec, *La Disparition*

Assignment: 1-2 pages on the application of arbitrary rules to production of “letters.” To consider perhaps: if arbitrary rule is applied is it no longer arbitrary – that is, does it have implications that infuse it with meaning and rob it of arbitrariness? (NB: your essay is to discuss these matters not to imitate them, though if you can write your whole essay as one long palindrome, so much the better).

will report on (e.g. analyze) **one** of the readings for the week. You must let the professor know one week in advance which text you have chosen. I will circulate a sign-up sheet on 13 September. Each student will be held to 25 minutes **and no more**, since for conference presentations you will need to learn to respect a strict time limit (practice your presentation at home more than once so that you know exactly how long it takes). In your seminar report you will want to work from notes, but, as at conferences, you can put your audience to sleep if you simply read a text that a person would need to read carefully in order to follow. The seminar report may be used as a basis for the research paper, if you wish. You will be evaluated on both content and accessibility of the presentation.