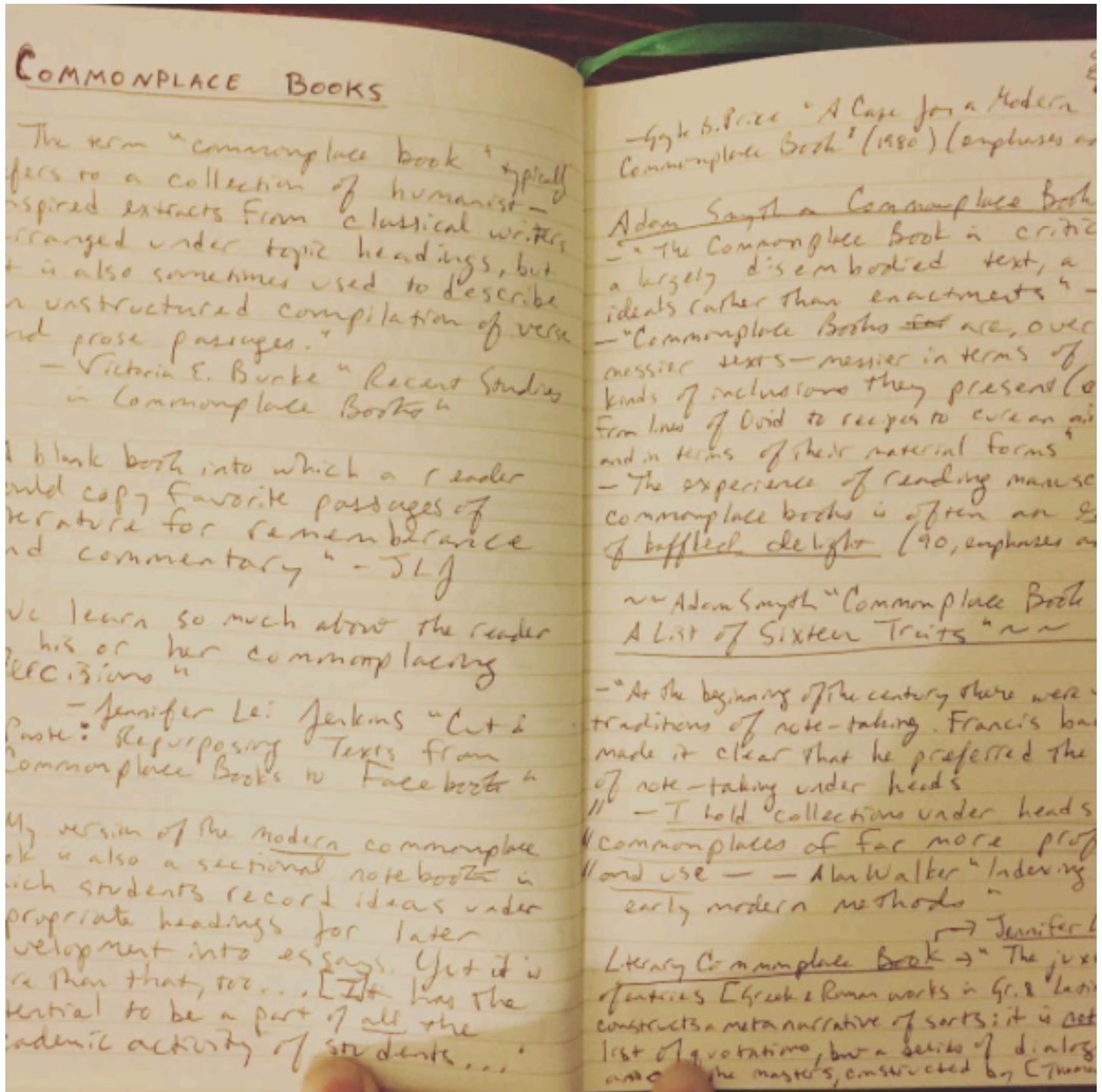


Creating a Commonplace Book (CPB)  
(20% of the Final Grade)

This semester, you will keep your own commonplace book (CPB). What is a commonplace book? (Figure 1)



(FIGURE 1: DR. KENNEDY'S COMMONPLACE BOOK. (TYPED TRANSCRIPTION CAN BE ACCESSED HERE.))

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one of the most important tools of a reader or writer was a commonplace book. Peter Beal, leading expert on English manuscript studies, defines a **commonplace book** as “a manuscript book in which quotations or passages from reading matter, precepts, proverbs and aphorisms, useful rhetorical figures or exemplary phrasing, words and ideas, or other notes and memoranda are entered for ready reference under general subject headings.”

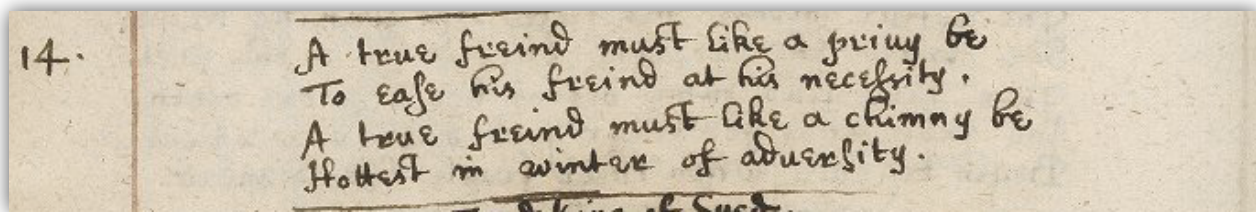
For example, here is a short poem copied into a Commonplace Book that we may file under the heading of “Friendship” (Figure 2):

A TRUE FRIEND MUST LIKE A PRIVY\* BE

TO EASE HIS FRIEND AT HIS NECESSITY.

A TRUE FRIEND MUST LIKE A CHIMNEY BE

HOTTEST IN WINTER OF ADVERSITY.



(FIGURE 2: AN (UNATTRIBUTED) EPIGRAM WRITTEN IN THE COMMONPLACE BOOK OF MATTHEW DAY (1574-1661, MAYOR OF WINDSOR) [MANUSCRIPT], CA. 1650. (FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY, V.A.160, 4 || 5).

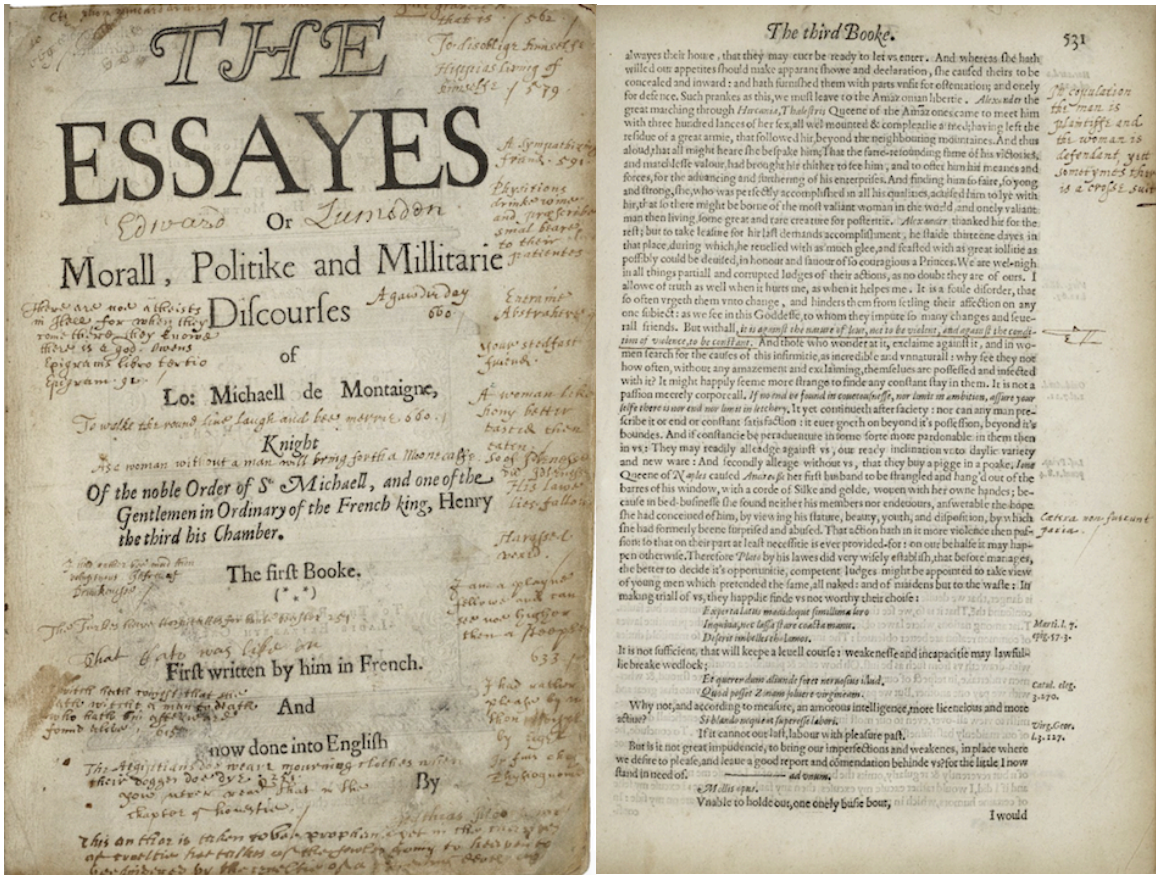
The Renaissance commonplace book allowed readers to actively engage with their texts, choosing and curating passages that spoke to them, and to transcribe those passages into journals under organized headings. Early modern readers marked up their texts, underlining favorite lines, writing marginal notes (such as attribution tags), using asterisks and *manicules* (these cute little pointing hand signs (☞)) to point out favorite passages, cross-listing page numbers, crossing out text they did not like, writing lists, practicing their signature, drawing obscene images, etc. (Figures 3, 4, and 5)

Commonplace books were something like diaries or journals, but writers recorded favorite quotations rather than daily events or emotions. This does not mean that they were impersonal in any sense. We learn so much about early modern readers by their choice of organizational headings, chosen passages, and other materials collected in their commonplace books. In addition, they were often circulated among friends and passed down in families, demonstrating that they were semi-public repositories of knowledge and self-improvement.

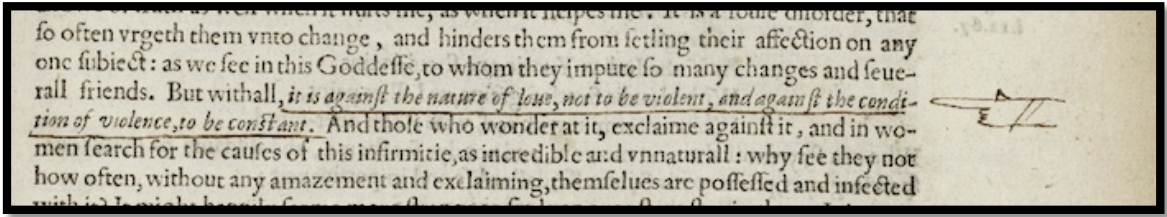
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\* A PRIVY IS A TOILET.





(FIGURES 3 AND 4, TITLE PAGE AND P. 531 OF JOHN FLORIO'S 1603 TRANSLATION OF MONTAIGNE'S *ESSAYS*. EVEN ON THE TITLE PAGE, WE CAN SEE ANNOTATIONS IN SEVERAL DIFFERENT HANDS, INCLUDING THE CENTRAL SIGNATURE OF A FORMER OWNER EDWARD LUMSDON. ON THE TITLE PAGE, THE READER(S) HAVE CREATED THEIR OWN HEADINGS AND HAVE LISTED THE PAGE NUMBERS TO FIND MORE ON SOME OF THE FOLLOWING TOPICS: "PHYSICIANS DRINK WINE AND PRESCRIBE SMALL BEER TO THEIR PATIENTS," "A WOMAN LIKE HONEY BETTER TASTED THAN EATEN," OR "TO WALK THE ROUND, LIVE, LAUGH, AND BE MERRY." ON P. 532, WE SEE A MANICULE (POINTING HAND) POINTING TO THE UNDERLINED PASSAGE. THE READER HAS REMARKED AT THE TOP MARGIN SOME SEX ADVICE: "IN COPULATION THE MAN IS PLAINTIFF AND THE WOMAN IS DEFENDANT YET SOMETIME THERE IS A CROSS SUIT" (FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY, V.B.327).

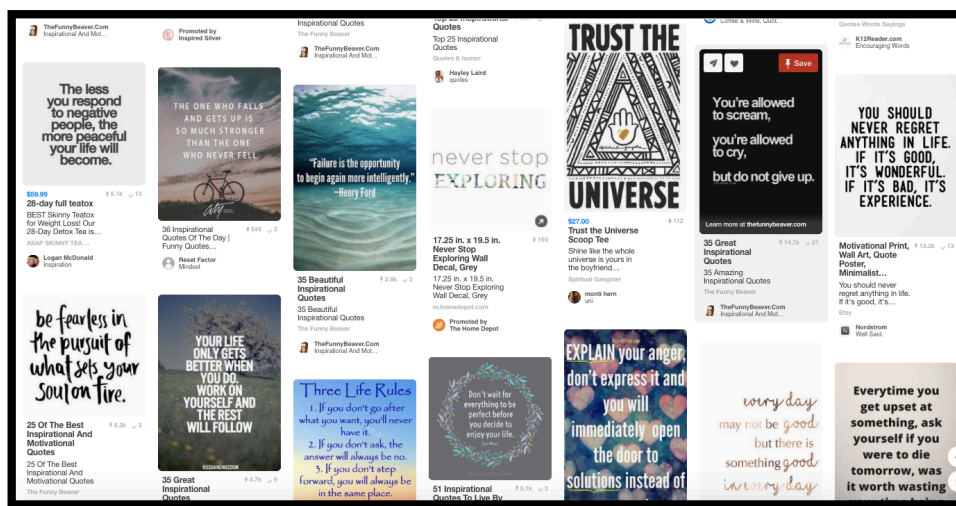


(FIGURE 5: DETAIL OF THE ABOVE MONTAIGNE TEXT. UNDERLINED PASSAGE: IT IS AGAINST THE NATURE OF LOVE, NOT TO BE VIOLENT, AND AGAINST THE CONDITION OF VIOLENCE TO BE CONSTANT. ACCOMPANYING MANICULE HIGHLIGHTS HOW MUCH THIS READER WANTED TO EMPHASIZE THIS PARTICULAR PASSAGE. P. 532 OF THE ABOVE COPY OF MONTAIGNE'S *ESSAYS*)

Tudor schoolboys were encouraged to keep commonplace books for their spiritual and rhetorical education, but they often practiced their handwriting skills, attempted their maths, and drew crude figures in their books as well. Renaissance women kept commonplace books, quoting from scripture and love poems, and adding recipes, medical cures, and more. While we will be compiling literary commonplace books, there were legal commonplace books (Thomas Jefferson famously compiled those, and used such writings when composing our major U.S. documents), philosophical (John Locke), medical, theological, artistic (think of Da Vinci’s famous sketch journals), and scientific commonplace books as well.

Adam Smyth explains, “Commonplace books are, overwhelmingly, messier texts—messier in terms of the kinds of inclusions they present (everything from lines of Ovid to recipes to cure an ailing horse) – and in terms of their material form” (90). He suggests instead that scholars embrace this messiness—the actual use and (dis)organization of commonplace books as part of larger reading and writing cultural practices, or what he terms “Commonplace Book Culture” (“the sum of expectations, textual practices and approaches to language that the commonplace book—as theory, process and text – created or encouraged” (94)).

The commonplace book was (and is) a way of collecting and organizing knowledge for personal edification, improvement, and pleasure. We may think of Pinterest as a visual form of commonplacing, as people choose and curate images (and very often inspirational quotations) that they find motivating, educational, or idealistic (Figure 6). Whenever we choose a passage to cite while sharing an article on Facebook or Twitter, we are creating a very public commonplace book on social media. Every time we post favorite lyrics from a song or movie to social media or a blog, we are nearing the concept of Renaissance commonplace book culture.



(FIGURE 6: “INSPIRATIONAL” + “QUOTES” ON PINTEREST)





We will read selections from Stallybrass and Lesser on the commonplace markers in *Q1 Hamlet*, and David Summers' essay on the epistemological crisis of Hamlet and the failure of commonplacing. As we will see, Summers does not consider *Q1 Hamlet*, so we will consider how his overall argument changes when we read his work alongside *Q1*'s commonplace markers and Hamlet's book for "To be."

### *Class Readings on Commonplace Books:*

☞ (excerpts) Beal, Peter. *Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology: 1450 to 2000*. Oxford, GB: OUP Oxford, 2007. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 19 December 2016.

☞ Lesser, Zachary and Peter Stallybrass. "The First Literary Hamlet and the Commonplacing of Professional Plays." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, (2008), 371–420.

☞ Smyth, Adam. "Commonplace Book Culture: A List of Sixteen Traits." *Women and Writing, c.1340-c.1650: The Domestication of Print Culture. Manuscript Culture in the British Isles*. Eds. Lawrence-Mathers, A. and Hardman, P. Rochester, U.S.: Boydell and Brewer, 90-110.

☞ Summers, David. "—the proverb is something musty: The Commonplace and Epistemic Crisis in Hamlet." *Hamlet Studies* 20.1-2 (1998): 9-34.

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## ***YOUR Commonplace Book***

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Your sources can include, first and foremost, the assigned readings and supplementary materials, as well as any other useful texts you come across.

I encourage you to supplement CPB entries with extra-curricular material: quotations from readings for other classes, lyrics from songs, lines from movies, tweets with relevant hashtags, an occasional quotation from a classmate during discussion, etc. These extra-curricular commonplace passages, however, are in addition to and not in place of the required passages as described below.

### **Your Commonplace Book requires the following, and in roughly this order:**

☞ **A title page.** The title page should include your name, and a title unique to your book, i.e. *not Revenge!* (If you wish to make your own colophon or other embellishment, that is wonderful but not necessary)

☞ **A table of contents** (at the front of your Commonplace Book). Ideally, this would be in alphabetically order, but as you discover new areas of interest and inquiry (and reach dead ends or exhaust old ideas) your commonplace book will grow and change. **(Figure 8)**

*The Contents of this Book.*

Thoughts of a private man directed to Synke three gentlemen in Nov: 1689. puruing it to be neither against Scripture nor moral honesty to defend just and legal rights against the Illegal invasion of them.	20
The Case of the Catholics stated.	20
A Brief account of the Nullity of St. James's title, and of the obligation of the present oaths of allegiance.	32
An Apology for the Church of England in relation to the point of persecution for she is accused.	39
Notes taken out of a certain whig book called the true portraiture of Kings of England	48
Notes taken from a certain political charterism, added to the foregoing discourse	61
The address of the a theists or epicurians presented King James II. in 1688	66
Notes taken out of a certain pamphlet called pro populo adversus Tyrannos: 1689.	67
Notes taken out of the Art: mercuriorum: or: Character by Hicheringil. 1689.	75
Miraculous extacies of Eliza: Vincent.	97

(FIGURE 8: TABLE OF CONTENTS WITH COLUMN FLOURISHES FOR PAGE NUMBERS FOR JOSEPH BEACON'S COMMONPLACE BOOK. *JOSEPH BEACON: HIS BOOKE*. MANUSCRIPT, 1689. MS AM 528. HOUGHTON LIBRARY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY.)

☞ **Approximately 50 or so Quotations** (3-4 per week), arranged under **8-12 topical/thematic headings**, each with a brief bibliographic reference (so that you may easily find the quotation again, in context). Make sure to number each entry.

☞ Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, the great Dutch humanist and theologian, extols the virtues of commonplacing in his rhetorical textbook, *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style*. *Copia* (or “abundance”) covers the concepts of *imitatio*, or paraphrasing; *copia*, or the expansion and revision of pre-existing ideas; *rhetoric*, the study and use of various literary techniques and styles; and *inventio*, the recording, altering, and creation of new ideas and texts from others’ materials. A notorious exercise from the book includes 150 stylistic variations of the phrase: “Your letter has delighted me very much” (*Tuae literae me magnopere delectarunt*). Unsurprisingly, the commonplace book is central to Erasmus’ rhetorical exercises, and he offers a helpful section on commonplacing, and how to create headings and subheadings. (You may also consult the *indices* of your favorite academic books for suggestions.)

Prepare for yourself a sufficient number of headings and arrange them as you please, subdivide them into the appropriate sections, and under each section add your commonplace and maxims; and then whatever you come across in any author, particularly if it is rather striking, you will be able to note down immediately in the proper place, be it an anecdote or a fable or an illustrative example or a strange incident or a maxim or a witty remark or a remark notable for some other quality or a proverb or a metaphor or a simile. This has the double advantage of fixing what you have read more firmly in your mind, and getting you into the habit of using the riches supplied by your reading. – Erasmus, *De Ultraque Verborum ac Rerum Copia* (1512)



☞ **An index** (the final pages of the Commonplace Book) of at least 20 words. The index will be listed alphabetically (or thematically, then alphabetically) by your commonplace book headings with page numbers. You may decide to also add cross-references to authors, other frequently appearing terms that were not heading chapters, etc. (Figure 9)

(FIGURE 9: FIRST INDEX PAGE OF THOMAS SHEPPEY’S “A BOOK OF CHOICE RECEIPTS COLLECTED FROM SEVERAL FAMOUS AUTHORS A GREAT PART IN MONASTERIES AND OFTEN EXPERIMENTED AS TO A GREAT NUMBER OF THEM [MANUSCRIPT], CA. 1675.” (FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY, V.A.452.)

☞ **Remember: Be diligent! You should be adding to your commonplace book every week!**

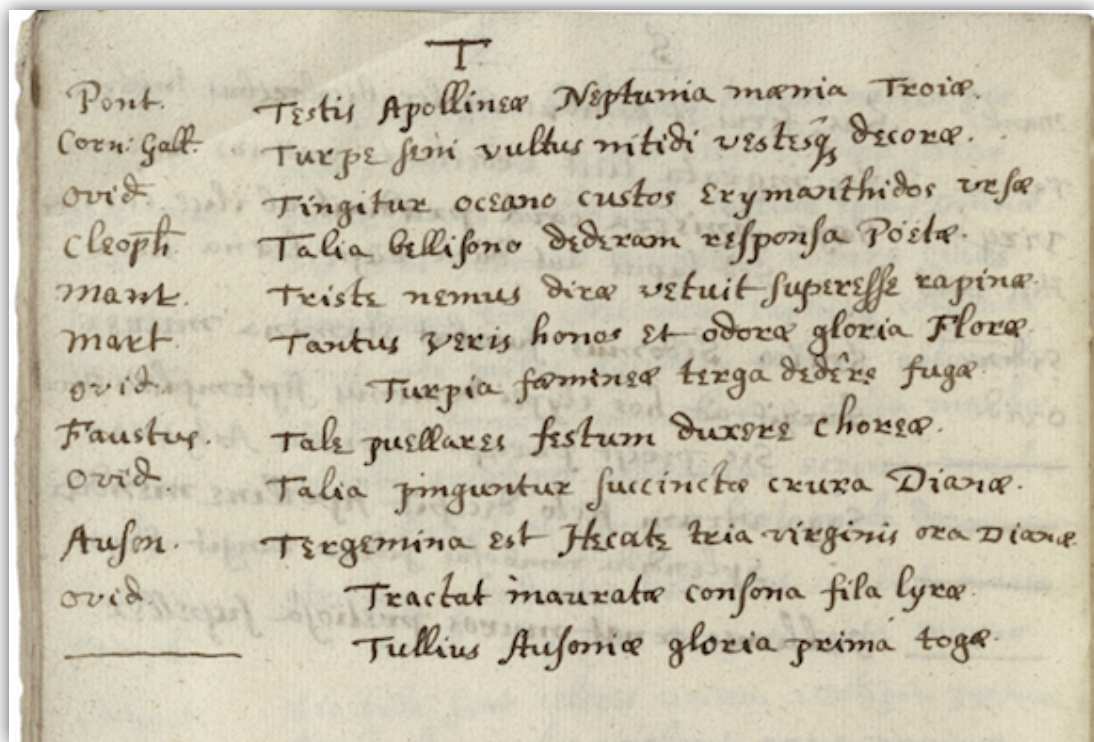
### Further Information on your Quotations and Headings:

☞ Entries must be listed under a specific and clear heading. For example, I will be keeping my own Commonplace Book this semester, and because of my particular research interests I may include headings such as “Cosmetics,” “Perfume,” “Odors,” and “Cannibalism.” (These headings will all also appear in my Table of Contents and Index.)

☞ Entries might be as small as one line (See Figure 10) or as long as a full stanza or paragraph.

☞ You should have an average of 4 entries/quotations per week from course texts (so you will have about 50 entries by the end of the semester). However, you are *strongly* encouraged to add entries from varied sources—other readings, music lyrics, witty remarks by friends, quotable graffiti, etc.





(FIGURE 10. DETAIL IMAGE OF THE COMMONPLACE BOOK (BEGAN C. 1605) OF SIR EDWARD DERING (1598-1644) SHOWING PITHY LINES AND PHRASES FROM VARIOUS SOURCES, LISTED BY AUTHOR IN THE LEFT-HAND COLUMN. FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY, M.S. X.D.530, FOLIO 29 VERSO. ACCORDING TO THEIR CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION: LINES OF LATIN VERSE ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY BY THE FIRST LETTER OF THE LINE. POSSIBLY STARTED WHEN A BOY. THE AUTHORS, BOTH CLASSICAL AND MODERN, HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE LINES ENTERED IN LATER LIFE.)

- ☞ Please include *only* quotations, and a brief bibliographic reference. Do not add commentary explaining why you like or chose a particular quotation. (e.g. Hieronimo in *The Spanish Tragedy* 3.2.1-15, or Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy* 3.2.1-15, or even as simple as *The Spanish Tragedy* 3.2.1-15).
- ☞ Each page must be numbered. You can decide whether you wish to write on both sides of a page—or only the verso or recto, depending on the quality or your chosen paper and ink. You may also wish to number each entry, as that will help me determine that you are on track.
- ☞ Exemplars of proper commonplace books are nearly impossible to find—more often than not, texts (literary or otherwise) appear alongside a diverse range of material, often with little or no relation to the texts collected. You will need to find your own method in the madness. Would you like to include a recipe for meat pasties while we are reading *Titus Andronicus*? Wonderful. Would you consider “He better call Becky with the good hair” (Beyoncé, “Sorry”) a modern day aphorism that you would include under the heading of “Adultery”? Fantastic. Exploit this potential in order to find the practices of reading that work for you—in doing so, you will better understand the active and practical process of early modern reading.

☞ Indeed, you may need to expand the practice of commonplaceing beyond its strict definition, in order to make this a useful process for the work we need to accomplish this semester.

☞ As our first writing assignment is to analyze a short passage, including using *The Oxford English Dictionary* and *The Shakespeare Concordance* to consider etymologies, usage, frequency of use, etc. following a specific word—so you may wish to follow a major word or concept from our course theme, such as *Revenge*, *Vengeance*, *Forgiveness*, *Retribution*, etc.

☞ Our second major writing assignment for the course will be based on *your* Commonplace Book entries, so please be very aware of what you would like to focus on this semester.

☞ You will not simply choose a few topical headings of your own choice, and copy down brief and suitable quotations. This should instead be a more thoughtful process that adapts to *your* own interests and habits of thinking—so while you will want to be relatively consistent in your methodology, you will also need to be flexible.

☞ **Trial and error:** You may begin a heading topic, and then discover that you are not finding as many quotable passages as you had wished. It is fine to only have a few entries and abandon that topic. Conversely, you may find so many quotable passages on another topic that you may need to create a continuing entry if you run out of room in your allotted space.

e.g. *“Women Scorned” (Con’t. from page 17)*

☞ Commonplace Books are personal, but not private: at times—and especially at the end of the semester—we will pass them around and let others view them.

### Other criteria:

☞ Your Commonplace Books *must* be handwritten.

☞ Your Commonplace Book must be bound together—no looseleaf paper. The Commonplace Book can be a composition notebook, journal, or three ring binder, with lined or unlined paper. On the second floor of Prairie Lights Bookstore, there is a wonderful selection of various notebooks that would be ideal for this project, or you can always just buy a cheap marbled cover composition notebook. Others may invest in a Bullet Journal. You may also choose to make your own notebook of blank, lined, or colored papers folded in half and secured together with staples or stabstitch binding.

☞ You do not have to include any of the following, but may wish to add or alter in any way:

☞ A personalized bookmark.

☞ A decorative cover for your Commonplace Book. Maybe you wish to include movie posters from your favorite revenge-themed films, a page of *Hamlet* as redacted poetry, a knit or cross-

stitched cover (Figure 11), a collage of your favorite quotations, etc.



(FIGURE 11 (LEFT): THE WHOLE BOOKE OF PSALMES (1639), WITH AN EMBROIDERED BINDING FEATURING DAVID AND GOLIATH. (FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY. STC 2689, COPY 1) FIGURE 12 (RIGHT): CONTEMPORARY COMMONPLACE BOOK/MISCELLANY BY “[Ellina from Russia](#)” DEMONSTRATING THE USE OF DIFFERENT COLORED INKS AS ORGANIZATIONAL AID.)

☞ Feel free to play with your own chosen handwriting styles, color of ink (Figure 12), size of letter, etc. I can provide early modern handwriting examples for those who wish to try their hand (all puns intended) at early modern paleography and calligraphy



☞ Reader’s marks. Go back and re-read entries, and underline key words or create a new heading based on recurring subtopics you find interesting. You can add *manicules* ☞ to your favorite passages.

☞ Especially for those of you who are taking classes in the Center for the Book, you may wish to incorporate any materials created or skills developed in those classes.

☞ An occasional illustration. Do you wish to design a costume for Revenge? Do you feel compelled to doodle a skull and crossbones? Would you like to try replicating the title illustration for *The Spanish Tragedy*? (Figure 13)

(FIGURES 13: HENRY TIFFIN COMMONPLACE BOOK AT THE PHILLIPS LIBRARY OF THE PEABODY ESSEX MUSEUM. TIFFIN WAS A BRITISH SAILOR AND INCLUDED 78 WATER COLORS IN HIS COMMONPLACE BOOK, MOSTLY NOTES ON NAVAL SHIPS AND QUOTATIONS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE ROYAL NAVY. YOU CAN READ MORE ON THE MANUSCRIPT [HERE AT CONVERSANT](#), THE BLOG FOR THE PHILLIPS LIBRARY. MSS 322, HENRY TIFFIN COMMONPLACE BOOK, 1748 – 1776.



**Grading:** You will be asked to submit your Commonplace Book on the following dates:

- ☞ W Feb. 8: Commonplace Book Check-In #1 DUE in class (10 entries+); short reflection DUE by 11:59 pm
- ☞ F. Mar. 3: Commonplace Book Check-In #2 DUE in class (20+ entries); short reflection DUE by 11:59 pm
- ☞ F Mar. 31: Commonplace Book Check-In #3 DUE in class (~30 entries); short reflection DUE by 11:59 pm
- ☞ M May 1: FINAL Commonplace Book DUE in class (~50 entries); short reflection DUE by 11:59 pm

**Your commonplace book for the first three submissions will be marked:**

- ☞ satisfactory (meeting the number of submissions with brief citations and adhering to the above criteria)
- ☞ unsatisfactory (not meeting the above criteria),
- ☞ or exemplary (a new Francis Bacon or John Locke in the making!)

You will also be asked to complete several short reflections throughout the semester about your commonplacing experience.

Overall, we are all working toward Renaissance reading, recording, rhetorical, and writing practices, so I will be looking for your conscious choice in your entry selections, dedicated organizational patterns and curation techniques, self-reflection and thoughtful responses in your short writing exercises, and as a whole, your engagement with and understanding of our various texts.

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I want to thank the various Renaissance scholars who shared their Commonplace Book Assignments with me. My own prompt is beautified with others' feathers!: Sonya Brockman, Josh Calhoun, Joshua Eckhardt, Adam Hooks, Jennifer Higginbotham, Emily Isaacson, Elizabeth Kolkovich, Patti Taylor, and Katie Will. In addition, I want to thank Natalie Eschenbaum and Anya Bertolet from the Shakespeare Association of America session on "Alternatives to the Term Paper" for their feedback and suggestions.

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