



Professional Booksellers School

Basic Bookselling Course

Spring 2023



Class Days: Ten Mondays, March 13 to May 15

Class Times: 7pm ET/ 6 pm CT / 4 pm PT

Dean and Instructors:

Gary Lovely, Manager, Prologue Bookshop, Columbus, OH

Susan Kehoe, Owner, Browseabout Books, Rehoboth Beach, DE

Sarah Bagby, Owner, Watermark Books & Cafe, Wichita, KS

John Evans, Co-Owner, Diesel, A Bookstore, Los Angeles, CA

Heather Herbert, Owner, Children's Book World, Haverford, PA

Gabriel Moushabeck, Owner, Booklink Booksellers, Northampton, MA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A Bookstore is only as good as its booksellers

Bookselling is a career choice, and the Professional Booksellers School was founded to help booksellers advance professionally. We have courses for new and experienced booksellers, managers, and owners. The Basic Bookselling Course helps newly hired staff acquire the knowledge and skills they need to start their careers.

The book industry can seem opaque, and difficult to access. How does a novel go from scribbled notes and a word document to a finished product on bookshelves? What goes into editing, printing, marketing, and ultimately selling a book? This course will aim to shed light on the exciting field of bookselling through a combination of readings, talks with publishing professionals, in-class discussion, and hands-on work. This course will be helpful to those interested in becoming a professional bookseller or advancing within the book industry.

This course is designed to educate first year booksellers and new store owners on the best practices for basic bookselling; the simple tasks that improve customer experience and engagement, while streamlining processes and passing along crucial knowledge that will improve the day to day operations of your bookstore. The course uses a combination of talks, in-class discussions, and hands-on work to help beginning booksellers learn customer service, customer-based book reviewing, store layout and merchandising, and the range of resources available to support bookselling such as Edelweiss, Netgalley, Bookshop.org, ABA and regional trade associations.

PREREQUISITES/COREQUISITES: This course is designed for booksellers and new store owners who have been in the field for one year or less. Students must work in a bookstore, whether brick-and-mortar, pop-up, or mobile. *This course is not for someone who does not own, work, or plan to work in a bookselling business.*

OBJECTIVES: This course will provide a thorough understanding of the bookselling business and an overview of the traits and qualities that a successful bookseller must possess. By the end of the course, participants will be able to:

- Demonstrate effective and confident hand-selling techniques
- Identify and understand the traits, skills, and practices that make a bookseller successful
- Articulate the various roles and practices involved in bookselling, and how these roles operate in coordination
- Understand how independent bookstores fit within the broader book industry
- Gain skills applicable to an entry-level bookselling job, including customer service, display design, and the creation of marketing and publicity ideas
- Write an effective shelf-talker or blurb

REQUIRED ACCESS AND RESOURCES:

- Access to the internet
- Primary email account to receive communications
- Access to Zoom video conferencing to participate in classes
- A Discord account - an invitation to join the course's server will be emailed to you

ATTENDANCE: Weekly online attendance is required for all participants. Students are allowed to miss a class or two, but if multiple weeks are missed by a student, it may impact the student's chance of certification. Because the course is only 10 consecutive weeks, missing any number of classes will impact your ability to succeed and comprehend the material. Please try to be on time to each class. Please reach out to the Dean of the course if any issues arise throughout the class and we will address them individually. All units and webinars will be recorded for later review, if necessary.

COMMUNICATION: Information and announcements will be shared during each class, through Discord, and via email. Students may ask questions during the specified Q&A sections of each unit, schedule one-on-one conversations with the Dean, or ask questions in Discord. We ask that conversation in the Zoom chatbox be limited specifically to the course material and that side conversations happen in private or on Discord.

HOMEWORK: Each week students will be assigned homework specific to each class. In addition, students are expected to complete a shelftalker or brief review of a book each week. These do not need to be about books you've recently read, though they can be. The reviews should be succinct and should demonstrate an understanding of handselling, and awareness of key ideas and themes. As you write these, think about what a prospective customer would want to hear about the book. This exercise is fundamental to the course and will raise the confidence of students to sell the books to customers.

Homework will be uploaded into Discord - each student will have their own homework channel, visible only to that student and the instructors, who will give feedback in the channel.

GRADING: Weekly assignments and the final project are Pass/Fail. Any failing grade will be provided feedback on how to bring the assignment up to the standard that instructors are seeking. The final project is required in order to receive certification. No work will be accepted after the final date announced in class.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Class 1 – March 13th, 2023: Syllabus Day – All Instructors

Class 2 – March 20th, 2023: Bookseller Tools & Services - **Gary Lovely**

Class 3 - March 27th, 2023: Makings of a Bookseller – **Gary Lovely & Gabriel Moushabeck**

Class 4 – April 3rd, 2023: Inside the Store and Merchandising – **Susan Kehoe**

Class 5 – April 10th, 2023 – Inventory & Curation – **Gary Lovely & Susan Kehoe**

Class 6 – April 17th, 2023 – Customer Service and Engagement – **Sarah Bagby**

Class 7 – April 24th, 2023 – Sales – **John Evans & Matt Keliher**

Class 8 – May 1st, 2023 – Handselling: Children's Books & More – **Heather Herbert**

Class 9 – May 8th, 2023– Finances of Bookselling – **Gabriel Moushabeck**

Class 10 – May 15th, 2023 – Final Projects – All Instructors

APPENDIX: To Learn more, we recommend reading (not required):

Literary Publishing in the Twenty-First Century edited by Travis Kurowski, Wayne Miller, and Kevin Prufer (Milkweed Editions)

Bringing together a wide range of perspectives—industry veterans and provocateurs, writers, editors, and digital mavericks—this collection reflects on the current situation of literary publishing, and provides a road map for the shifting geography of its future: How do editors and publishers adapt to this rapidly changing world? How are vibrant public communities in the Digital Age created and engaged? How can an industry traditionally dominated by white men become more diverse and inclusive?

Diary of a Bookseller, by Shaun Bythell, Melville House, 2017

The Diary of a Bookseller is Shaun Bythell's funny and fascinating memoir of a year in the life at the helm of The Bookshop, in the small village of Wigtown, Scotland—and of the delightfully odd locals, unusual staff, eccentric customers, and surreal buying trips that make up his life there as he struggles to build his business...and be polite.

Rebel Bookseller, by Andrew Laties, Seven Stories Press, 2011

Laties's book can be a rallying cry for everyone who wants to better understand how the rise of the big bookstore chains led irrevocably to their decline, and how even in the face of electronic readers from three of America's largest and most successful companies—Apple, Amazon, and Google—the movement to support locally owned independent stores, especially bookstores, is on the rise.

The Radical Bookstore, by Kimberley Kinder, University of Minnesota Press, 2021
Examines how radical bookstores and similar spaces serve as launching pads for social movements.

In Praise of Good Bookstores by Jeff Deutsch, Princeton University Press, 2022
From a devoted reader and lifelong bookseller, an eloquent and charming reflection on the singular importance of good bookstores.

The Book: An Homage, by Burkhard Spinnen, David Godine, 2018
Burkhard Spinnen revisits moments of bibliophilia combined with anguish through a personal and historical journey of the books we encounter and the places we meet them.

How to Resist Amazon and Why, by Danny Caine, Microcosm, 2019

Danny Caine, owner of Raven Book Store in Lawrence, Kansas has been an outspoken critic of the seemingly unstoppable Goliath of the bookselling world: Amazon. In this book, he lays out the case for shifting our personal money and civic investment away from global corporate behemoths and to small, local, independent businesses.

Professional Booksellers School, Inc.'s Code of Conduct

The Professional Booksellers School, Inc. (PBS) values the dignity of everyone with whom we interact. Our safety and anti-harassment policies are critical to ensuring that this core value guides how we speak and how we act. All participants in PBS courses and events are required to adhere to PBS's code of conduct, as described below. This includes booksellers, PBS staff, instructors, speakers/presenters, guests, donors, volunteers, and all affiliated students.

PBS is committed to a broad vision of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This includes providing a harassment-free experience for everyone, regardless of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), ability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in all of its activities or operations. We do not tolerate harassment, discrimination, or other disrespectful or unlawful behavior based on any of these characteristics. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for our students, staff, volunteers, instructors, donors, subcontractors, vendors, and clients.

Behaviors that violate this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Offensive verbal comments related to any protected category above
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Unwelcome propositions, attention, words, or conduct of a sexual nature
- Unwelcome virtual contact inside or outside of PBS settings
- Inappropriate or obscene jokes, remarks, or gestures
- Intimidation, stalking, or trolling
- Disrespect towards difference of opinion
- Sustained disruption of speakers, conversations, classes, or events
- Unauthorized screenshots, photography, or audio or video recording

PBS expects all participants in its programs to follow established rules throughout official classes, office hours, virtual platforms, and related social gatherings.

PBS takes any violation of this policy seriously. Accordingly, participants who violate this policy may, in the judgment and discretion of PBS, be asked to stop; may be expelled from a PBS class or event, without refund if applicable; may be prevented from attending future PBS classes or events; may be banned from virtual platforms; and may have future PBS participation privileges revoked.

If you are being harassed, observe someone else being harassed, or have concerns about potential violations of this policy, please notify PBS staff immediately. PBS will take all appropriate action in response to protect anyone affected by violations of this policy.

Privacy Statement

For Stores

PBS asks for both public (address, etc) and private (square footage, POS, sales levels) information from stores who are members. We ask for this private information to help us understand and support students. The only public-facing information, in our website directory, is the store's name, address, contact information, and regional trade association. PBS uses both private and public information to analyze the effectiveness of our courses and our school, but reports only aggregate data. All other store information is protected and available only to PBS staff.

For Individuals

PBS asks for both public (bookstore, job title) and private (home address, demographic, years of experience) information from individuals who are members. The only public-facing information is the student's name, bookstore, job title, and earned certifications. PBS uses both private and public information to analyze the effectiveness of our courses and our school, but reports only aggregate data. All other information is protected and available only to PBS.

For Homework

We recognize that homework can contain personal or sensitive information. Student homework assignments are uploaded into formats available only to the individual student, PBS staff, and instructors, with the exception of projects delivered live in class. These projects are announced well in advance and student presentations are never recorded. All student homework for PBS is owned by the student, not PBS or the student's employer, and is confidential and protected. All shared, spoken, shown, submitted, and typed information is protected and confidential and not to be discussed, saved, or shared outside of applicable PBS classes, platforms, or events without express permission.