

Barbara A. Shailor
M-90: Advanced Seminar: Medieval Manuscript Studies
28 July–1 August 2014

Detailed Course Evaluation

- 1) *How useful were the pre-course readings? Did you do any additional preparations in advance of the course?*
 1. The pre-course readings were helpful. The prepared transcription exercises were, at times, intimidating, but useful practice for those we worked on in class.
 2. Yes, they were extremely useful; I also did the assigned homework.
 3. Very useful.
 4. Very useful. My sense is that the Derolez readings were most important.
 5. Very useful. The course required significant preparation, but it was all valuable.
 6. Very useful. Yes, we had homework!
 7. The pre-course readings were very useful, especially the Derolez. In terms of additional preparations, I was particularly happy that BAS sent us the paleography transcriptions well in advance of the course so that we had time to puzzle over them.
 8. The pre-course readings were very helpful and necessary for the course. A strong background in paleography made the course more rewarding.
 9. The pre-course readings were not used often in the course, and seemed unnecessary if you had enough experience.
 10. In retrospect, I'm not sure I needed to read the pre-course readings from cover to cover; they were more useful as references when trying to identify a particular hand. I think the general knowledge that they provided probably did help us to grasp some of the concepts we discussed, though, so in that sense they were fairly useful. We also did pre-course transcription exercises, which I found very useful (in that they were good practice for trying to read some of the manuscripts we encountered in class).

- 2) *Were the course workbook and other materials distributed in class appropriate and useful (or will they be so in the future, after you return home)?*
 1. Very professionally constructed; they are already shelved with my reference material at home.
 2. Yes, very useful. I am planning to use them for my presentations, and probably for a course I am designing.
 3. Absolutely. The booklets on pigments/inks and on papers and bindings will be on my reference shelf from now on.
 4. Yes, I anticipate using the course booklets on inks, pigments, and bindings both for personal reference and as teaching aids. These were absolutely first rate!
 5. Very useful, and will continue to be.
 6. Yes.
 7. The materials distributed in class were also very useful. They will certainly be useful in the future, especially the booklets on bindings and pigments, which I imagine I'll consult during future research.

8. The packets on pigments and bindings were very useful, and I plan to use them for future research.
9. The course workbooks were very good, and make for great resources for further study. I will certainly make use of them in future classes on the history of the book.
10. I really liked the materials distributed in class, which covered such topics as inks, parchment, and binding, and were very attractive and well put together. I also think that they will be useful as quick reviews or references for the these topics the next time I have to talk about them in another setting.

3) *Have you taken one or more RBS courses before? If so, how did this course compare with your previous coursework?*

1. Yes. This advanced seminar was very different from the Derolez class I had taken previously. This course was less lecture based, as its title suggests, and really fostered a sense of intellectual community and productivity.
2. Yes. This course was more about the participants and the instructor forming a group of colleagues to learn from each other, whereas in my previous courses the sessions were based on the lecture model.
3. Yes. Like my other four RBS courses, it was great. There was a collegial atmosphere that benefitted everyone, and the group gelled very well.
4. No, this is my first course.
5. No, this is my first course.
6. Yes. I have taken “Paleography” and “Codicology,” both of which were excellent.
7. No, this is my first course.
8. No, this is my first course.
9. No, this is my first course.
10. No, this is my first course.

4) *What aspects of the course content were of the greatest interest or relevance for your purposes?*

1. It was extremely rewarding to have ready access to so many different types of materials, to examine and handle each object closely and individually, and to have BAS’s vast, expert knowledge and intuition available. Our unprecedented access to the Yale collection—and especially, to the Takamiya Middle English deposit—was useful beyond measure. The “project” format of the course was also very rewarding.
2. The hands-on exercises, and the privilege to see so many different manuscripts in such a short span of time.
3. Every minute was interesting and relevant. Access to the Beinecke’s collections was amazing, but so was learning under BAS’s direction.
4. The “final project” on a manuscript of my choosing was a wonderful feature of the course. I also wanted to exercise my paleography skills, and the course exceeded my expectations in that respect as well.
5. Manuscript identification.
6. It was wonderful to witness the depth of Yale’s collection of medieval manuscripts.
7. For my own purposes, being able to look at an edition of a text that will be part of my dissertation, in conjunction with BAS’s expertise in manuscripts, was especially useful.

8. The access we were given to the manuscripts, with BAS's expert advice, was absolutely incredible. Though there was a great deal of information to assimilate, the staff and instructor's guidance made it worthwhile.
9. I was most interested in the discussions on materials used to make the manuscripts (parchment, bindings, inks).
10. The practice transcribing and reading manuscripts will, I hope, be helpful to me in the future, as I anticipate that working with manuscripts of original texts will play some part in my future studies. Also, the exposure to many different kinds of manuscripts was very interesting, and taught me about which aspects of a manuscript to look for for information about its origins and its use over time.

5) *Did the instructor successfully help you to acquire the information, knowledge, and skills that the course was intended to convey? Was the intellectual level of the course appropriate?*

1. Yes, and yes. I find it so incredibly intellectually stimulating to have such a mixed group of bibliophiles—seasoned academics and librarians, early career researchers and research students—together in a seminar. I learned a great deal from my colleagues in the course, and BAS mentioned that, in many ways, that is the point of the seminar.
2. Yes, she was always helpful, sharing her knowledge and guiding us on the right path. The intellectual level was adequate.
3. Yes, and yes. BAS was wonderful. I especially like the fact that she chose materials for us to work with in each session that related to our special project. Katherine Hindley, BAS's assistant, was also very knowledgeable, and provided domain assistance as well as logistical help.
4. Yes! I found the level just right.
5. Very much so.
6. Yes. She was terrific.
7. Absolutely. My paleography and codicology skills have been vastly improved after this week. The intellectual level was appropriate.
8. Absolutely. I have nothing but glowing things to say about BAS's instruction; she was both rigorous and personable in a way that made the course challenging but approachable.
9. The intellectual level of the course could have been a little higher, given the assumed knowledge of attendees when they arrived, especially after the assigned pre-course readings.
10. BAS was very helpful and very knowledgeable, and I did think that the intellectual level of the course was appropriate (or at least I didn't feel out of place).

6) *What did you like best about the course?*

1. The best parts of the course, in my opinion, were two: 1) our unprecedented access to Yale—from regular library materials to manuscript collections and faculty/staff, we were granted everything we might have needed. 2) BAS is a fantastic teacher, and between her and Katherine Hindley, their knowledge of the Yale collections and library services was impressive. The very best part, for me, was the way in which BAS sought to curate our personal experiences in the course by selecting manuscripts that suited our individual interests.

2. The seminar-like setting for handling many manuscripts, and the opportunity to produce meaningful comments and discussions on them.
3. Being able to see/handle/work with a large variety of manuscripts. My favorite sessions were the ones that focused on geographic characteristics.
4. The instructor was superb. I particularly appreciated her willingness to let us “see as much as possible.” The sheer diversity and breadth of the Beinecke’s collections were on display throughout the week.
5. The variety of lessons, and the access to so many manuscripts
6. Looking at all the manuscripts and seeing how they can be analyzed and understood.
7. I particularly liked that all the participants in the course came with different areas of expertise and interest. I was able to learn a great deal, not only from BAS, but also from my classmates.
8. The number of books we were able to see was absolutely indispensable to my education in manuscripts.
9. The inks and pens demonstration was very informative and encouraged further study.
10. Again, the chance to look at many different types of manuscripts was a very eye-opening experience for me. The Beinecke really has a fantastic collection that let us examine such different areas as binding, script, watermarks, decorations, and materials, and discuss how these different aspects of a manuscript’s production can be relevant to scholars.

7) *How could the course have been improved?*

1. Although this has very little to do with the course, it would be nice if the dining halls might serve beyond 7:00 p.m.! The nature of the course encouraged us to spend time in the library or the reading room after the conclusion of formal classroom time, and it was always a struggle to make it from the Beinecke to the dining halls for dinner! A very small gripe, however.
2. It’s difficult to say....
3. I can’t think of any way to improve it, except for one tiny comment: it would be nice to provide guidance about which books you would need to bring to New Haven (I guessed wrong).
4. There is very little I would change.
5. Yale’s Guest Wi-Fi was very limiting. Full internet access and easier access to other Yale libraries would have been helpful.
6. Can’t imagine anything.
7. I’d ask that beverages besides coffee be provided at the breaks. Otherwise, I honestly can’t think of anything.
8. The course itself was perfect. It will be remembered as one of the best courses I’ve taken in any setting.
9. I would have liked more time spent on transcription.
10. I think we could have kept a bit more strictly to the schedule that was distributed at the beginning, if only because time was limited. I personally would have preferred a chance to talk about everything on the syllabus, and to go more in depth with particular exercises, since I felt that we were already going in depth with our individual projects. On the other hand, some things do necessarily take longer than anticipated, so this is really less of a criticism than an observation.

8) *Did you learn what the course description/advertisement indicated you would learn?*

1. Yes, and it exceeded my expectations.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. Yes.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.
7. Yes.
8. Yes.
9. Yes, and much more.
10. I think so.

9) *How do you intend to use or apply the knowledge or skills learned in this course?*

1. I hope that my research for the course, the results of which we presented in front of the group in the final sessions, will directly contribute to my dissertation. Further, there is something immeasurably important about handling as many different kinds of medieval materials as possible, especially as a graduate student.
2. I am planning to improve the catalog descriptions of our collection of medieval and renaissance manuscripts, and will be offering an introductory workshop on Latin paleography.
3. My volunteer work identifying and cataloguing my university's manuscript collection will benefit from the things I learned in this class.
4. The skills and knowledge I acquired will be helpful as I write (and rewrite) portions of my dissertation that deal directly with material texts. My "final project" also helped me think in greater detail about topics that are directly relevant to my research.
5. Course provided essential content to help in my daily job activities.
6. Since I work with manuscripts, my consciousness of technical aspects has definitely been raised.
7. I plan to integrate analysis of manuscripts into my dissertation.
8. I intend to use the knowledge in a publication I'm currently working on, and will undoubtedly use it in future coursework and academic writing.
9. I came out of the course with an idea for a new book.
10. One of my interests is in how texts were read and understood by medieval authors and readers, and the work I did with manuscripts in class will hopefully be helpful to me in using contemporary sources to draw conclusions about texts' receptions.

10) *If your course made any trips outside the classroom, was the time devoted to this purpose well spent?*

1. The lectures on binding and pigments were well put together and enlightening. Thanks to the Yale faculty/staff for their thoughtful contributions.
2. Yes, very well spent: a workshop on ink and pigments offered just next door.
3. N/A.
4. Again, the session on inks and pigments was great.
5. Yes.
6. {No response—RBS staff}

7. The session on pigments in another classroom was wonderful, one of my favorite during the week.
 8. Absolutely. Our visit to another room for a hands-on lesson in pigments was helpful.
 9. {No response—RBS staff}
 10. Yes! The sessions we spent learning about inks and practicing writing with quills offered a more scientific look at the materials we were working with, and the hands-on practice was not only a nice change of pace from the rest of the course's activities, but also gave me a greater appreciation for the craft of the scribes whose work we looked at throughout the class.
- 11) *If you attended the optional events (e.g., RBS Lecture, Bibliographical Press tour, Beinecke Library tour, or receptions), were they worth attending? Please specify.*
1. Yes, the lecture and the receptions were excellent bonding moments for students, many of whom will be in the same profession for the rest of their careers.
 2. Yes, I enjoyed Tanselle's lecture very much.
 3. The RBS Lecture was neither useful nor interesting to me. The lecturer, who clearly has a wealth of knowledge, read a recently published paper aloud. The content could have been interesting with a different delivery. It also assumed an audience of bibliographers, and provided no entry point for people in different disciplines.
 4. Yes, I was very happy that I attended the RBS Lecture and the receptions.
 5. The trip to William Reese Company was very valuable, but Monday night's lecture was too narrow.
 6. I attended the lecture and found it interesting.
 7. The RBS Lecture was fine. The receptions were very enjoyable.
 8. The reception at William Reese Company was lovely, and a great time to mingle in a comfortable setting. The RBS Lecture was pleasant. The orientation meeting on Sunday evening could have been held in a nicer venue.
 9. {No response—RBS staff}
 10. I didn't go to as many as I would have liked, since I was using a lot of time out of class to work on my individual project. I did go to the lecture the first night, though, which was worth going to, both because it gave me ideas on books from a perspective that was entirely new to me and because it gave me something to talk about with my classmates outside of class.
- 12) *We are always concerned about the physical well-being of the collections used during RBS courses. If relevant, what suggestions do you have for the improved classroom handling of such materials used in your course this week?*
1. None. With very few exceptions, we were given the opportunity and freedom to handle the collections as we pleased, but the sense of responsibility that comes with the preservation and maintenance of these materials meant that they were in good hands. Yale did well to provide us with all the necessary paraphernalia for carefully handling the materials.
 2. N/A.
 3. There was no problem.
 4. {No response—RBS staff}

5. None. This was orchestrated masterfully.
6. The classroom was a little crowded when all of us were working on separate manuscripts.
7. BAS was careful to keep us from over-handling materials that were especially delicate. However, having never had formal training in how to handle rare materials, I would have appreciated a brief lecture on how to physically deal with them.
8. BAS was careful to limit access to certain books that were brittle (the bat book, as well as a few others).
9. {No response—RBS staff}
10. I don't know. I think we were all as careful as we could be, though perhaps the nature of the in-depth work we were doing with some of the materials put more strain on them than they usually endure. On the other hand, I was grateful for the opportunity to handle these materials, so I don't know the best way to resolve that particular tension.

13) *Did you (or your institution) get your money's worth? Would you recommend this course to others?*

1. Yes. Absolutely.
2. Yes, I would recommend it!
3. Yes, and yes.
4. Yes, yes!
5. Absolutely.
6. Yes.
7. Yes, absolutely. I would recommend this course to others in a heartbeat.
8. Yes. Many times over! I would recommend this course to anyone interested in manuscripts, and would absolutely do it over again.
9. I will recommend RBS to any student of codicology.
10. Yes, to both questions. They certainly squeezed a lot into one short week.

14) *Any final or summary thoughts, or advice for other persons considering taking this course in a future year?*

1. This course was simply excellent. We had the opportunity to work with a virtually unstudied collection, to handle and individually examine between one hundred and two hundred individual medieval objects, to make original discoveries and contribute entries to the catalogue, and to build skills and methods in a classroom environment that stimulated and fostered intellectual growth. It was a fantastic week.
2. I think that this course is very relevant—essential, in fact—for a very wide constituency, including curators, faculty, and graduate students.
3. This was the best so far of my RBS experiences. The diversity of the group ensured that we learned from each other as well as from BAS. I felt fortunate to have exposure to a music manuscript expert and a map manuscript expert, as well as to Ph.D. candidates with a deep knowledge of medieval literature.
4. I had a wonderful experience, and would heartily recommend this class.
5. This was a rigorous course, but well worth all the work.

6. BAS is a fantastic teacher. She brought so many resources into the classroom, and her knowledge of the collection is very deep.
7. A fantastic week. I couldn't have asked for a better professor, classmates, or course material.
8. Overall, the course was excellent, and I would recommend it to anyone interested in manuscripts. I doubt there is any other course that gives you so much exposure to such an array of manuscripts anywhere else.
9. {No response—RBS staff}
10. I'm not sure that I have anything new to add, but I would certainly take another RBS course if I found one that fit with my study plans. For people taking this course in a future year, I cannot sing the praises of Google highly enough when it comes to trying to identify the texts you encounter. As long as you can transcribe three or four words together, you can do an internet search.... This came in handy, not only in trying to figure out what the text said, but also in identifying its origins or working out its arrangement.

Aggregate Statistics

Number of respondents: 10

Leave

Institution gave me leave: 3 (30%)

N/A: self-employed, retired, or had summers off: 7 (70%)

Tuition

Institution paid tuition: 2 (20%)

Student paid tuition: 5 (50%)

Institution and student shared tuition cost: 1 (10%)

Fellowship from RBS (Mellon): 1 (10%)

Scholarship from RBS (Director's): 1 (10%)

Housing

Institution paid housing: 3 (30%)

I paid for my own housing: 6 (60%)

Fellowship from RBS (Mellon): 1 (10%)

Travel

Institution paid travel: 3 (30%)

I paid my own travel: 6 (60%)

Fellowship from RBS (Mellon): 1 (10%)

Which one category most closely defines what you do for a living, or why you are at RBS?

M.A. student (humanities): 1 (10%)

Ph.D. student (humanities): 4 (40%)

Rare book librarian: 1 (10%)

Teacher or professor: College: assistant professor: 1 (10%)

Other: Researcher and writer in the field: 1 (10%)

Other: Manuscript Curator: 1 (10%); Volunteer: (10%)