

Karen Limper-Herz
B-10: Introduction to the History of Bookbinding
30 July–4 August, Charlottesville, Virginia

Narrative Course Evaluations

1) *Were the pre-course reading assignments useful? Are there any readings that you would like to see added or removed in future years?*

1. I loved that the readings were optional and that there was no expectation of prior knowledge: we're all busy, and taking a week out of our work schedules is quite plenty in terms of a time commitment.
2. I did as much of the reading as I could and found it useful to re-read some bits as the week went on. I look forward to doing the rest of the readings when I get home as I still think I'll get a lot out of them.
3. The readings were very useful and not too specialized. I would like to have a bibliography for all reference works mentioned in the class (see my answer to Q2).
4. I did a few of the pre-course reading assignments. I found them interesting and helpful, though I think I would've still had an effective class experience even if I hadn't done them.
5. The readings were helpful. I appreciated that we could pick among the list because certain books were more useful to me and the materials I work with.
6. The readings I was able to get skewed heavily toward English bookbinding, which made me think the course would focus more on that, but it's actually a broad overview of several European traditions. The readings were enjoyable, but none were crucial.
7. Yes, I found them useful and indicative of what to expect from the course during the week.
8. {private response}
9. Had access to most resources through my institution, but reading them wasn't required prior to class. Sources mentioned in class seem useful and I plan to use them in my future work/research.
10. Yes.
11. The ones I was able to access were helpful, but I had to wait for some of the older materials.
12. {private response}
13. Yes, but they were very hard to access and I struggled to get many of them since they're out of print. PDFs would have been incredibly helpful.
14. {no response}

2) *What are your thoughts on the course workbook and/or other teaching materials distributed*

during class? Was the content appropriate and useful? Will it continue to be useful for you after the course?

1. I would have liked a handout (digital or physical) with key terms for each day.
2. The mixture of slideshow and hands-on worked well for me. My appreciation of bookbinding will be enhanced with literally every item I work with back at my home institution.
3. Perhaps paper and online copies of reference lists and information provided on the slides to refer back to in the future.
4. I think it would've been helpful to have had a few informational handouts with the most important points. I think the handouts we did receive were helpful.
5. The formulas for description are helpful. I also think the summaries that will be sent will be incredibly helpful.
6. We were given templates for describing bindings. Not useful for my line of work, but helpful for class engagement/working with the materials.
7. Yes, the course was very comprehensive and I feel like I finished this course with a great understanding of bookbinding history.
8. {private response}
9. No materials provided (only PowerPoint slides and note taking), although a helpful checklist for binding descriptions was made available.
10. It would be nice if shelf-marks could be included with the manuscripts shown in the PowerPoint presentations in class.
11. It would be helpful to get a printout of the main topics and reference materials.
12. I hope the PowerPoint slides get shared for personal use after as the images are so important to jog memory that notes cannot.
13. Super helpful! We didn't receive many handouts during class. but were introduced to numerous reference books and websites and KLH had promised to send along a written list of resources and key prints after the class.
14. {no response}

3) Which aspects of the course were most intriguing and relevant for you as an individual? Did you walk away with any new insights, ideas, or project plans?

1. Prior to taking the course, I hardly gave a moment's thought to bindings unless they were pre-modern and potentially disclosed information about original ownership. Now I see so much more and understand the value of attending closely to features of construction and ornamentation.
2. It was interesting to sense which aspects were easier/harder to identify (time period, place, skins, &c.) and to try to improve the areas I was having trouble with.
3. I particularly enjoyed describing the bindings and learning the standards of description.

4. Learning about terminology was most helpful for me.
5. Identifying material and time period are crucial for me in my description work. I will feel much more confident determining whether something is in a contemporary binding.
6. The individual examples and the sources of those examples made me want to do more research on particular binderies. I have several artist book ideas inspired by the course.
7. I loved when KLH taught us about eighteenth-century bindings and even incorporated rococo art into her lecture to discuss bindings in popular culture of that time. I knew next to nothing about eighteenth-century bindings but I feel I am leaving the course with a solid foundation.
8. {private response}
9. Loved all of the examples (PowerPoint slides, RBS, UVA SC). Enjoyed describing the examples (individually or with a partner).
10. The ability to identify and date bindings.
11. The nineteenth- and twentieth-century binding information was most helpful in my current work as a cataloger. I'm very excited to use this information in my work.
12. This course was exactly what I hoped it'd be and had a great mix of lectures and experiences ...
13. Absolutely—I cannot wait to try out all of the new and exciting bookbinding techniques I have encountered this week. I also now have a very helpful overview of bookbinding history which will help me analyze books every time I work in an archive.
14. {no response}

4) *Did the instructors help you to acquire all the skills and information promised in the course description? Did you learn what you had hoped to learn?*

1. Absolutely. I learned a tremendous amount and feel like my eyes have been newly educated.
2. As advertised. I literally could not have asked for more.
3. Yes!
4. I learned a lot this week and enjoyed the course. I had hoped to be able to identify materials and time periods, and we did learn that. It would've also been great to spend more time on decorative endpapers.
5. I felt that we covered everything I hoped we would and I am coming out of the class satisfied.
6. Yes. Yes.
7. YES! KLH was extremely knowledgeable and the course was entirely comprehensive of the subject. I left knowing enough about the subject to feel confident to educate others about it.
8. Yes!
9. Yes, and yes!

10. Yes, a lot of materials to take in and remember.
11. I believe so.
12. Yes, absolutely feel more confident with identifying styles, structures, and materials. Precisely what I'd hoped and more!
13. Yes, definitely! We covered a ton of material very quickly, which was unavoidable, but KLH was very patient with answering our questions and adjusting plans based on our interests. I got everything I hoped to out of this course, and more!
14. {no response}

5) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*

1. My research will benefit enormously as will my teaching. I am ready to return to my university's special collections and teach my own students something about the bindings on our books, which I couldn't do before.
2. I'm going to linger a bit over the items I'm retrieving or re-shelving at the special collections department where I work. I want to test myself when I get back to my home institution.
3. I plan to use these skills when describing manuscript/early prints for our catalog records.
4. Evaluating dealer descriptions compared to new acquisitions.
5. I plan to use them in both the descriptions I write and in evaluating future purchases.
6. I plan to use the skills to bridge communications between myself (an artist) and historians/librarians. It was helpful to learn from a historians' perspective.
7. I plan to use the knowledge for my fellowship and within my personal research.
8. {private response}
9. More accurate and thorough catalog descriptions (using correct terms, identifying materials, identifying time periods & styles, &c.).
10. In cataloging rare books and describing the binding more accurately.
11. While describing bindings in my catalog records.
12. I'm not sure how often I'll use the info practically in my current role but it's very useful for my research as foundational knowledge I felt I was sorely lacking.
13. I will use them to expand my own practice of bookbinding but also to inform my scholarly work with medieval and early modern literature. Additionally, I will incorporate lessons on the history of the book and special collections visits into my undergraduate teaching.
14. {no response}

6) *Who might benefit the most from taking this RBS course?*

1. Cataloguers, collectors, researchers, dealers, curators.
2. Anyone who handles fine/art bindings—the range of people in our course (students,

- dealers, book artists) only goes to show its broad appeal and applicability.
3. I think everyone with an interest in rare books could benefit/enjoy this class. Though, it may be particularly useful for bookbinders and people who regularly describe bindings.
 4. I think scholars interested in bookbinding and librarians who work with artists' books or book binding collections would benefit the most from this course.
 5. Anyone who has to do any sort of identification and description work.
 6. Cataloguers, collectors, book sellers.
 7. In my opinion, scholars and individuals within library sciences, specifically cataloging, benefit the most from this course.
 8. Librarians, curators, archivists—anyone handling historic books.
 9. Catalogers, curators, booksellers, anyone with a genuine interest in the subject.
 10. Curators, librarians, students interested in book history.
 11. Anyone interested in book history, catalogers and book dealers.
 12. Rare book librarians, catalogers, historians, students, craftspeople, and those wishing to enter these fields.
 13. I would encourage anyone encountering historical books on a regular basis to take this course, as it will broaden and contextualize their understanding of book history.
 14. {no response}

7) *If applicable, what were the most powerful, or otherwise noteworthy educational moments in the course? Were there any “aha!” moments you’d like to share?*

1. Combining technical information with historical information gave me a 360 degree understanding of bindings, which was extremely valuable.
2. I am working on a project about the history of toilet paper—and now I know why tests are run on pigskin during product development.
3. Trying to use the binding tooling methods ourselves gave me a new appreciation for how difficult it would be to create intricate and detailed designs.
4. I think Amanda Nelsen's demonstrations and looking at bindings in SC with a partner were the best educational moments for me.
5. Going to SC and seeing bindings from all different time periods and talking through what we see made me feel more confident and also helped fill in some questions I had.
6. {no response}
7. Explanations of where certain inspirations for bookbindings came from—inspired by nature, cathedrals, fountains, &c.
8. The intricacies involved in gold tooling—amazing. The most useful skills will be in being able to decipher between different types of binding material (calf, goat, sheep).
9. {no response}
10. Looking at different styles of bookbindings. Practical demonstration of the binding process.

11. All of the hands-on activities were great!
12. {private response}
13. All of the practical demos were amazing!
14. {no response}

8) *Are there any other ways in which the course could have been improved?*

1. I would have liked a "mini-lesson" or case study on how knowledge drawn from bindings can be used to build or drive a historical argument. Arguably, this might only be relevant to curators and academics, though.
2. {no response}
3. None!
4. {no response}
5. I think it would be interesting to be given a group of bindings and on the first day be given a time period and place without having the lectures and then doing it again on the last day with the same bindings to see how far we have come.
6. I would be interested in more info on Danish/Scandinavian binding.
7. I would have learned better from something other than a PowerPoint presentation to deliver the information but I understand it is impossible to have examples of every object for hands-on use.
8. A lot of focus, rightly, was on the binding of high end books, but we might have used a section on "ordering" (I know there's no such thing) book binding.
9. Maybe an outline or some handouts to accompany slides?
10. {no response}
11. More hot plates to warm the tools. We could have used at least one more with all the students.
12. Honestly no, I loved every moment.
13. N/A
14. {no response}

9) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? How likely are you to recommend this course to others? **On a 1–10 scale**, 1 would indicate that you disagree that you got your money's worth, 5 would indicate a neutral response, and 10 would indicate that you agree that you got your money's worth.*

1. 9
2. 10
3. 10
4. 8
5. 10
6. 10

7. 10
8. 10
9. 10
10. 10
11. 10
12. 8
13. 10
14. {no response}

10) *If your course made any (virtual) field trips outside of the classroom or had guest speakers, do you feel that they enhance the course experience?*

1. The SC visit was alright; however, it lacked some breadth. It was mostly England and France from the eighteenth century on.
2. The visit to SC worked nicely where it fell within the week. The two bookbinding demos/activities were perfect as bookends on the first and last days.
3. We went to SC; it was really informative to see so many rare books from different times and places together/next to each other.
4. Yes, the trip to SC and Amanda Nelsen's demonstrations were among the most memorable parts of the course.
5. Yes! I love the binding and tooling demos. I felt like it helped me understand what I had read about the process much better.
6. The demos were on bookbinding, so as a book worker they were less interesting for me, but definitely valuable overall.
7. Our course took a trip to SC which was especially informative.
8. N/A
9. Yes—UVA SC visit was great! Amanda Nelsen was excellent!
10. {no response}
11. Amanda Nelsen was awesome. SC staff were great as usual!
12. SC visit was fun.
13. Amanda Nelsen's bookbinding demos were amazing!
14. {no response}

11) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*

1. I would simply say, "take this course!"
2. When I was looking through course descriptions I didn't pay enough attention to fine bindings versus publishers' bindings in terms of what the different classes focus on.
3. {no response}
4. The course was more focused on design styles than I had anticipated. I think anyone

considering taking this course should be aware of the visual arts sort of focus.

5. To come ready to see some beautiful things.
6. No.
7. To drink caffeine in order to stay energized and focused during the entire day of learning.
8. {no response}
9. Take it!
10. This course will benefit students who have some background on bookbinding history.
11. Maybe less readings? The list was long and some were difficult to get a hold of.
12. {no response}
13. N/A
14. {no response}

12) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or a haiku, what would you say?*

1. KLH is a magnificent educator, and I'm thrilled to have had the opportunity to benefit from her knowledge!
2. Stunning—an absolute feast—and humbling in the best way.
3. Incredible course; a great and informative overview of the history of bookbinding designs and the uses of different binding materials.
4. Visual, tactile, mostly beautiful, sometimes not.
5. Book nerd summer camp.
6. {no response}
7. In one week, I explored the history and production of bookbinding from listening to lectures to hands-on activities with rare and unique books that allowed me to confidently say after the end of the course that I have a comprehensive understanding of bookbinding.
8. A fantastic way to specialize your knowledge of the hand-press book.
9. Awesome!
10. So many book covers in a week!
11. Fabulously exhausting!
12. NERD HEAVEN.
13. Amazing!
14. {no response}