

Kathryn James & Mike Widener
C-85 Law Books: History & Connoisseurship
4–8, June, New Haven, Connecticut

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. All of the readings were useful, but I was a little unclear about what I needed to read in order to be prepared.
2. Reading assignments were very useful. The assignments tended towards over rather than under inclusion, which was a good thing.
3. Yes but the list on the RBS website was different than the list in the google drive, this was very confusing. Also, so much advance reading that I wasn't able to complete in time and was unsure of what to prioritize.
4. {private response}
5. The reading assignments were quite useful and set a tone for the course. While the full list of readings is overwhelming, it is good that the instructors sectioned out “essential” readings, as well as highlighting particularly key readings within each of the subject areas. That bibliography, though maybe not of immediate use for the course, is invaluable going forward.
6. The readings were useful, but it felt like a lot of material to cover. Fortunately, the instructors do provide some methods for prioritizing, so it was not overwhelming.
7. The course reading was highly informative—I appreciated the distinction between the required and optional readings. I did not finish all of it and will be going back to both the required and optional readings in the future as I have time.
8. {private response}
9. Yes. However, before class we really had access to two differing lists of materials. Resulting confusion was undesirable.
10. {private response}
11. They were not often referred to in class, but interesting. MW created a small library of potential future resources in the Google Group for the course.
12. Pre-course readings were extremely useful.

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. The course workbook and materials were very helpful, and I plan to keep mine for the

rest of my career.

2. The materials and workbook were great. I will be retaining the workbook as a reference guide.
3. Yes, will definitely use the handouts and course workbook for reference in the future, very valuable.
4. {private response}
5. In many instances, the course workbook and other materials acted as a continuation of the list of readings on the website. I didn't check to see how many were repeats, but certainly the workbook more fully fleshed out an already meaty set of resources. The other elements of the workbook seemed a bit less necessary or helpful.
6. The workbook was very good to have in print to refer to in class. Some course materials were only made available electronically which was a bit more difficult to refer to during class but having continued access to those will be useful for the future.
7. The content was both appropriate and useful and I anticipate referring to the copious resources listed in the workbook.
8. {private response}
9. Appreciate the workbook greatly. Yes. Yes.
10. {private response}
11. Very valuable resource now and in the future. Having MW and KJ's expertise was great, especially since the class was so fast.
12. The workbook was very helpful, I will be using it in the future as a reference.

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. The biblioramas were my favorite part of the course, but I also appreciated the exercises that challenged me to grow as a bibliographer and librarian.
2. As someone with little to no rare books experience previously, I learned an incredible amount this week. I think this is the first step on a longer journey of learning about rare legal texts. I have one idea for a potential law review article.
3. It was all intriguing and relevant, a great overview but wish we'd had more time.
4. {private response}
5. {no response}
6. The whole course was fantastic and I will certainly apply many of the things I learned in my work. It did cover a lot of information in a short period so there will probably be things I missed.
7. I really enjoyed working with the collections—Kathryn, Mike and Rob's enthusiasm for the material was infectious and inspiring.
8. Addressing the gaps in the literature on print legal culture and manuscript legal culture was most interesting to me.
9. Hard to pick. All material had relevance and usefulness.

10. {private response}
11. Yes; potentially integrating rare texts into instruction.
12. Yes, I found all of it intriguing and relevant. I have lots of new insights, zillions of ideas, and many project plans.

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. I learned all the I hoped and more.
2. Yes. What could be better than learning from two of the most renowned legal rare books experts at Yale?
3. My expectations were definitely met.
4. {private response}
5. I believe so. It's hard to say for certain without returning to "the real world" and seeking to apply those skills. Each of the RBS courses I've taken has been of a "fire hose" nature, and it's hard to tell in the moment which parts will be useful, short- or long-term, and which may be less so.
6. I learned a lot! The instructors did an excellent job of facilitating discussion and ensuring all were able to understand the material.
7. I feel like I acquired more information than practical skills, but I certainly feel like I learned everything I hoped for and more.
8. KJ is brilliant and I learned more from her than I hoped to prior to matriculating.
9. Yes.
10. {no response}
11. Yes, both were highly effective.
12. Yes and yes. I learned more than I had hoped to learn. I now have skills and areas that I am excited to develop more.

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

1. I plan to use the skills I learn to continue studying and teaching with rare law books and legal material.
2. I have been tasked by my home institution with organizing and better utilizing our existing collection. I am also planning on writing a law review article drawing on some of what I learned this week.
3. It's too soon to tell but I come away with an enriched and enhanced view of law books and book collecting and the field in general.
4. {private response}
5. {private response}
6. I will apply it to learning about my collection and the ways that I can build an audience for it.

7. I definitely have a fresh perspective on my work and I look forward to doing it with more confidence and greater resources.
8. Post it online to work towards ameliorating the lingering realities of European-based lawfare.
9. Will utilize knowledge in professional capacity & as an individual collector.
10. {private response}
11. Begin collecting rare books for personal collection.
12. Yes absolutely.

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

1. Academic law librarians and special collections librarians who work in law libraries.
2. Anyone with an interest in rare legal texts. I am a reference librarian at a law school, and think that even reference librarians whose day to day work does not involve these materials can benefit from the broader perspective on sources that this course imparts.
3. {no response}
4. {private response}
5. Anyone involved in the world of rare law books should easily benefit from this course. By the nature of that world, this will mostly be academic librarians or those involved in the book trade itself. I don't see it being quite as useful for private collectors, who may only find a much smaller portion of the course as aligning with their own personal interest. Contrariwise, the former two demographics are more likely to encounter the broad swath of needs that this course enables students to be able to address more skillfully.
6. Anyone who has any connection to managing rare legal books or manuscripts would benefit from this course.
7. The course seemed to be geared towards librarians—I am not a librarian and still felt I benefited.
8. Anyone subjected to the jurisdiction of the American legal regime.
9. Due to need for varied views in class, anyone.
10. {private response}
11. Rare book librarians/special collections/historians of books.
12. Anyone.

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. Going through the history of the law book helped me to get a better handle on subfields I hadn't worked with or studied previously.
2. I was really fascinated to learn that what marks a book as desirable has changed with time. There was an era where books in the best possible condition, including those

that had been rebound or otherwise altered, were the most prized. Today, original condition, which can include imperfections and marginalia, is highly valued.

3. {no response}
4. {private response}
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. Working with the collections was an amazing opportunity.
8. {no response}
9. Speaking with professionals outside my specific field.
10. {private response}
11. {no response}
12. The book as an object, not just a text.

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

1. No, I think this course was incredible as is.
2. No, this was a stellar experience.
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. Both of the instructors and the assistant all come at the topic from a more humanities-oriented perspective. While law special collections do tilt more in the direction of humanities than the rest of a law library's collection, I think it would be helpful to have an instructor/speaker who can speak more to the law angle: how can a law library's special collections serve research needs which are more at the center of a law school's mission as a professional school? Stated otherwise, if the primary way we approach rare law books is with a humanities focus, why are those collections not in the main university library? I would have liked to have heard more, and for there to have been more discussion, about law special collections qua legal education, whereas the course seemed to more often be looking outward to the broader campus.
6. I would say more time, but it would be difficult to be away from work for longer.
7. {no response}
8. {private response}
9. More margin for discussion/less jam-packed sessions.
10. {no response}
11. Better structure of breaks—too much down time and people standing around.
12. Only that having more time to hear what everyone's institutions were doing too would have been interesting.

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. 10
2. 10
3. 10
4. 8
5. 10
6. 10
7. 10
8. {no response}
9. 9
10. 9
11. 10
12. 10

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. {no response}
2. The visits to the two quite different rare books dealers were interesting. They showed the diversity of the field. I am hoping to learn more about the business of rare books in the future.
3. Yes, very much so. Particularly enjoyed hearing from the rare books Cataloger.
4. {private response}
5. The guest speakers, absolutely. The field trips, see my comments earlier on the open houses/receptions.
6. One of our course instructors ended up presenting virtually but it did not detract from the experience.
7. Yes to both!
8. {no response}
9. Yes—integral to the experience.
10. {private response}
11. Yes, both Nick and David were great speakers and very helpful.
12. Yes, they absolutely did.

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

1. I would encourage them to jump in and do it, and be willing to try new things and ask questions.
2. I intend on recommending this course to other law librarians with an interest in this

area.

3. There is a lot of socializing which can be pretty exhausting.
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. Be aware of accommodations. Also, can be a marathon and quite exhausting. Worth it, but be prepared.
10. {no response}
11. Don't be afraid of networking—many students are shy or not conversationalist. Go chat with people.
12. {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. I just want to say how wonderful Kathryn, Mike, and Rob were to learn from; they really made the RBS experience.
2. Stellar!
3. Fascinating, exhausting and very rewarding.
4. {private response}
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. Firehose of knowledge!
8. The Law is made up / Paper is what we write on / Words too are made up
9. Valuable. Would take again. But arrange for a hotel next time.
10. {no response}
11. MW and KJ are both learned and enthusiastic teachers.
12. Wonderful experience, will miss everyone.