

Instructor: David Whitesell  
Course Number and Title: G-20 Printed Books to 1800: Description & Analysis  
Course dates: 5–10 June, Charlottesville, VA

### **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. Yes, I am very glad I did all the required readings. It was helpful to have that foundational terminology as the class began, and many things in the readings that were not clear were made obvious when handling books/objects. I think requiring Pearson's bookbinding book instead of just a recommendation is helpful.
2. Yes, readings were helpful. However, DW provided repetition of most of the material in Gaskell so a student might have skated.
3. Yes, very useful. Gaskell was mostly covered in class, but I got a lot more out of it having read it prior. Carter was never referenced; if one was short on time I suppose it could be skipped but I think I liked having had at least a one-time, passing familiarity with all the terms prior to class. Required videos were useful too.
4. What I read turned out to be useful, but the second reading will prove to be the thing that solidifies the information.
5. Yes, they were essential. {private response}
6. They were very useful!
7. The readings were very useful! I tried to read all the readings, even the recommended ones. I probably should have focused more closely on the required. But I am grateful for the list!
8. Yes, the readings and videos were great. Provided a good foundation for the course in an efficient amount of time.
9. Yes, the pre-course reading assignments were extremely useful. I also appreciated DW's printing a detailed schedule of which readings would be reviewed and supplemented each day at the course's outset.
10. Yes, very helpful.

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 will be referring to the course workbook and my copious notes after the course, I have no doubt. The examples and definitions were extremely helpful.
2. Incredibly helpful and useful materials. They will become standard for me to use as

reference.

3. I think the workbook will be the single most useful takeaway from this course. It is wonderfully organized and thorough. I envision using it often in teaching.
4. I am so grateful for the workbook and that we were pointed to the appropriate pages as needed.
5. Yes, the workbook was/is helpful.
6. I was very grateful for the course workbook and will continue to use it and my notes after this class.
7. Absolutely! I will refer to the workbook often moving forward.
8. Very helpful. I will keep the course workbook as reference material for my job and expect to use it regularly.
9. The workbook is an invaluable resource. I am grateful both for its well-chosen examples and its guidance, not least to navigate Bowers more broadly. (DW also repeated it directly throughout the course, which was extremely helpful).
10. Absolutely. The workbook has been a huge help with understanding the content of class throughout the week and will remain an invaluable reference resource after the course.

3) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your RBS course? Did you walk away with any “aha!” moments, new ideas, or project plans?*

1. I thought the course was a perfect balance of “Yes, I know that” and “Oh my god I get so many questions from students about this and now I know the answer.” I will be using my newfound knowledge mostly with teaching. But a better understanding of collational formulas will help with acquisitions too.
2. I will use all information to improve teaching, seminars, and administration of rare books at my institution. I had too many “aha” moments to name. Among them, the hands-on printing, the discussion of binding, and the elucidation of collation.
3. I feel much more comfortable talking about these issues in classes. I am inspired to teach units or a course on historical bibliography with a dash of descriptive too. Some smaller aspects of the class offered useful, if minor, assistance to my particular research.
4. It will help to really see the books in our collection in a new light. I have plans to create exhibits but might need another course to give good details.
5. One of the most important realizations this class gave me was the importance of going through a book systematically and spotting patterns. I will use this and other techniques learned here when selecting books for teaching, as well as when I evaluate books for purchase.
6. I feel inspired to work more closely with the rare materials in my collection and be able to confidently discuss them in ways I could not before. Particularly when it comes to cataloging!
7. This course set a foundation for the work I want to do with our collection. I now feel

that I can analyze our books, share interesting things with my students, and look for additions to complement our collection.

8. This course will help me become a better curator and steward of our collection, and I came away from the course with new knowledge and excitement about teaching rare books.
9. I am becoming increasingly convinced that my students may appreciate a “speed provenance” such as the one we completed. (I plan to test this theory in the fall semester.)
10. I learned so much about bibliography that would be a tremendous help with my work with bibliographical description of rare books at my institution. I have had countless “aha” moments as DW helped clear up many previously obscure concepts in my mind. Project plan: more accurate and extensive bibliographical description and analysis!

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. Yes, definitely. DW's great.
2. Yes, DW's class was marvelous with much hands-on and kind correction when needed. Also made me want more.
3. Yes, and much more. Biggest thing: practical, useful, clearly presented knowledge with real takeaways.
4. Yes, the primary information.
5. Yes, I think so. And like all good classes, I leave with altered and expanded perspectives on what I thought bibliography is and on how it informs not just the library field, but also material and cultural history of the early modern period.
6. Absolutely. DW covered more topics than I could ever hope and did not make it feel overwhelming. The more challenging topics were thoughtfully spread out which helped me digest the content.
7. Yes! I was not totally sure what I expected going into the course, but I got everything I would have hoped for and more.
8. Yes, I learned much more than I thought I would. I am pleasantly surprised by how I feel like I have really learned and internalized this information. The delivery of the information was so clear and so well thought out.
9. The course both met and far exceeded my expectations. This has been one of the most valuable—and joyful—weeks of my teaching career.
10. Absolutely. DW is a wonderful instructor. Very knowledgeable, and always patient with questions.

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

1. I would have appreciated more practice bibliographical workshops, even though I

won't need to create collational formulas for my job. It was fun though!

2. Cannot imagine improving such a fine course.
3. Your mileage may vary but I found some of the very granular descriptive bibliography material a bit much—just far afield from my interests/pursuits to get that far into, for example, pagination statements.
4. Longer—there is so much more to learn.
5. In places I felt the course was a little repetitive with the readings, but in others, I needed the repetition. So it had a good pacing overall.
6. I honestly cannot think of any suggestions at the moment. DW is a treasure of knowledge and a very effective instructor.
7. No.
8. {no response}
9. This course is a marvel. I feel deeply privileged to have had the opportunity to benefit from it.
10. {no response}

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

1. Special collections librarians who teach and need foundational knowledge and library students looking for hands-on experience.
2. Anyone who would like to learn the basic features of books of the hand-press period could not do better than to take this course and revel in the materials for a week.
3. I think most everyone interested in learning about the material book prior to 1800 would benefit, from those with? no knowledge or training to those with an intermediate facility.
4. Who wouldn't?!
5. {no response}
6. So many people. Librarians, archivists, book enthusiasts, educators, artists...
7. People who have been tasked with curating rare book collections without prior training and those who want to take a deeper dive into better understanding or expanding their collections.
8. Special collections librarians.
9. See Q9.
10. Rare book and special collections librarians, catalogers, educators, or anyone who is interested in bibliography.

7) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? Would you recommend the course to others?*

1. Yes, definitely.
2. Yes! Emphatically. I would recommend this course in a heartbeat.
3. I had a scholarship, but if I had paid, I do feel I would have got my money's worth. I

- would wholeheartedly recommend to others.
4. Yes, I am so grateful to have had this opportunity.
  5. Yes and yes.
  6. Yes and yes.
  7. Yes and yes!
  8. Yes and yes.
  9. Deeply. While I have appreciated every RBS course I have taken, it is this course that will make me return.
  10. Yes. Will highly recommend this course.
- 8) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*
1. I loved experiencing the printing press. Amanda Nelson and LP were so helpful, and having that experiential learning was great.
  2. Loved the trip to get hands-on printing experience. I would have liked to have used a composing stick and set a little type, just enough for the feel of it.
  3. Visit to the common press and roller press helped to cement a lot of learning about the printing process. Excellent.
  4. Yes, I loved the presswork in real time on a working replica.
  5. The session at the printing press was very valuable.
  6. I was so grateful to work on the printing presses. As a hands-on learner, it helped solidify the processes we discussed in class.
  7. We went to SC to do hands-on practice with the hand-press and rolling press. It was one of the highlights of the class! It helped me to better understand what we had been talking about.
  8. Our trip to the printing press was well-timed and was helpful in solidifying what we learned in class.
  9. Yes, the visit to the printing presses was one of many highlights. (Never having had the opportunity to work previously with a rolling press, I appreciated particularly the chance to experience the two technologies in tandem.)
  10. Yes. The printing workshop was great.
- 9) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*
1. {no response}
  2. {no response}
  3. If you want a real mix of historical and descriptive bibliography in Western books to 1800 and need not lose yourself in fine-grained descriptive bibliographical niceties, this is definitely for you.
  4. You do not need to bring your books and it helps to read in advance. {private

response}

5. Do the reading, and at least skim the recommended readings!
  6. This is a fantastic foundational course in book history. As someone coming in at a very low level of knowledge on the subjects this course was a fantastic introduction.
  7. No.
  8. Take this course! The content, and its thoughtful delivery, are first-rate.
  9. Take it. Each day was filled to the utmost with information central not only to understanding books as printed objects, but also to developing perspectives that allowed us to register the multiple ways in which such information might prove significant. By extension, it is the perfect course for almost anyone whose work or interests intersect with the topic.
  10. Just take it. You will not regret it.
- 10) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or haiku, what would you say?*
1. Inspiring.
  2. Enriching happy times.
  3. I am no poet / But when I see a book now / I damn well know it
  4. Fantastic.
  5. Systematic, light-hearted, thorough, and collegial.
  6. As my colleague has once described it: RBS is Rare Book Disney World!
  7. I found my people!
  8. Deeply gratified to be in a classroom with similarly interested and similarly positioned peers learning material that we all see will be directly applicable to our jobs.
  9. This course made me want to learn again.
  10. It was such an amazing experience that I will benefit from for the rest of my career.