

Scott E. Casper & Jeffrey D. Groves
H-15: The History of the Book in America: A Survey from Colonial to Modern
31 July – 5 August in 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. Very useful readings.
2. I think the readings were incredibly useful because we often referenced and discussed them in class. That being said, you can skim or miss a couple of readings and still follow the discussion just fine.
3. Yes!
4. Yes, and I really appreciated having the workbook in advance to be able to schedule my pre-course reading in a useful way.
5. The readings were very useful. Maybe more reading on illustrative "case studies" (Senchyne, Sopak-Joseph, West, Matthews), fewer vs. broad overviews.
6. I loved the readings this year! It was a lot of content to get through but JG and SC did a great job on focusing on big picture aspects.
7. I found the readings useful and will use them in the future.
8. They were extremely useful. I wish I had more time to get to know them before/during RBS. In particular, the Monaghan article is one I seek to infuse into my syllabus.
9. The readings were terrific. They add up to a good deal of work, but it was worth doing. The YouTube videos, which I missed until shortly before the class, were wonderful as well.
10. The readings were helpful.
11. There were a lot of readings but overall I found them all useful as a base for this course and I look forward to revisiting some as I continue my own work.
12. Yes, the readings were quite helpful and the instructors often discussed the readings through discussion or lecture, so it was never a waste of time to have read them.

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. Workbook was very useful.
2. The workbook is amazing, especially because it has space for note-taking so you can keep everything you learn together. I will definitely continue using it in the future!
3. Yes! The instructors had a wonderful teaching library. And yes, I think I've gained new perspectives on learning from material objects.
4. Fabulous! I especially appreciate the bibliography and links to videos—I didn't have time to watch any before or during this week, so I am glad to have them collected in one place.

5. Workbook very useful, loved getting an electronic copy, too–will use it in teaching. Also, all the videos!
6. Yes! I especially appreciated the questions for the hands-on exercises.
7. The workbook was extremely useful. I will continue to use the workbook in the future.
8. It was amazing to get a printed out workbook. I now have all my notes, suggested lesson plans, and a bibliography all in one space. I know I will keep this workbook in my office for reference and inspiration.
9. The course materials were so exciting! JG and SC created a series of effective, stimulating hands-on exercises.
10. The course workbook was useful, though I would have liked to have had the PowerPoint slides with some of that data/info.
11. The hands-on exercises were very useful and made each class session exciting.
12. Excellent and well organized. I will be referring to it to remind myself of activities I can use in my own instruction.

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. {no response}
2. As an undergraduate assisting in special collections, I will absolutely use the information I gained this week to further direct how I interact with materials! My "aha!" moment was realizing just how frequently history and literature overlap.
3. I can't think of an immediate project just yet, but I think in the future I'll be able to give more attention to relevant areas that wouldn't have suggested themselves to me as sites of investigation. Yes, the session on the future of the book gave me some such "aha!" moments, for example.
4. TONS of "aha!" moments–some things that were probably quite basic, but not to someone with little background in the topic. And most importantly, I never felt that SC, JG, or my classmates were irritated by my beginner's questions.
5. Complementary sessions on books in colleagues' courses and creating a course of my own. Lots of "aha!" moments!
6. Oh yes! I plan on using some of the content and teachings for instruction and exhibits. I already have a list of formats, authors, and/or topics I'd like to highlight.
7. I have many new ideas for courses and activities to add to my current courses.
8. I do. I am a firm believer in hands-on pedagogy, and this sealed the deal. I really enjoyed looking at the evolution of newspapers over time. I also appreciated classroom space to talk, ask questions, and learn from others.
9. So many! I plan to develop at least one course heavily influenced by RBS.
10. I walked away with plans to compile a teaching collection and desire to put together my own teaching plan.
11. I will be using my newfound knowledge to develop a new collecting plan and work on new publishable content with my home institution.

12. So very many "aha!" moments, mainly that I can teach a course like this (specialized and adapted and small scale) at my own institution. I'd never have imagined that before this course.

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. {no response}
2. Yes and yes!
3. Yes and yes.
4. Yes, and LOTS more!
5. Yes—absolutely.
6. I did learn what I had hoped to learn and much more!
7. Yes, the instructors were well-versed, thoughtful, caring, and overall wonderful.
8. I really wanted to learn about trends of U.S. publishing over time, and I came away with both a contextualized and mechanized understanding. I also loved our two sessions dedicated to trying to get at a definition of book history.
9. Yes, and more.
10. Yes, though the topic was very extensive.
11. Yes, and more.
12. Absolutely, the course left no promised stone unturned and it delivered and surpassed my expectations.

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

1. {no response}
2. Incorporating more texts and readings by and about marginalized groups. Though the course introduced these topics incredibly well, it still did not feel as though they were thoroughly incorporated.
3. I like how the lectures and discussions went beyond/complement what was covered in the readings, but sometimes I wished that we pointed back to the readings more.
4. I believe we needed the chronological framing to better understand technological developments, but it really maintained the center of white male colonizer perspectives. Perhaps a brief exercise at the beginning to decenter that would be useful. If RBS's collections permit, it would be great to begin with some Indigenous materials as a way to reframe. I did appreciate that SC and JG chose quite a bit of material by/about women.
5. HAHA—more time!
6. I really don't have any suggestions. I think this may be one of my favorite courses I've taken.
7. None.
8. 1) I would have appreciated a more transnational lens at times. It felt very rooted in the U.S., but I wanted to learn more about how other nations were influencing U.S. printing. 2) Incorporate more non-white publishing in all session as opposed to having a few dedicated sessions that highlight a number of minority identities.
9. No.

10. I would love even more hands-on experiences, though there were already a lot.
11. {no response}
12. N/A

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

1. {no response}
2. Anyone interested in learning about how the book has developed in America over time and across multiple communities!
3. People who come with some experience and maybe existing research interests. The instructors were very knowledgeable and would be able to offer great help.
4. I would recommend it to ANYONE who studies an American topic, especially anyone in the humanities or social sciences who even finds themselves in an archive. I wish I had had this course as a graduate student in musicology!
5. Anyone with access to or charged with caring for a collection of American books; anyone who wants to teach with such a collection.
6. Anyone! Undergraduates, graduate students, professionals, faculty—I really loved how my class was so diverse in perspectives and positions.
7. Instructors, librarians, archivists, really anyone with a love for history, printing, and/or books.
8. Everyone—as a graduate student, I gained so much knowledge and look forward to sharing what I learned with my home institution.
9. {no response}
10. Those wanting a survey of U.S. book history, including graduate students, professors, and librarians/archivists.
11. Graduate students, librarians, professors, and anyone interested in book history.
12. Anyone interested in book history broadly—it is a foundational course.

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

1. {no response}
2. Absolutely and absolutely!
3. Yes and yes.
4. Absolutely—but if my tuition had not been covered, I could not have afforded to attend.
5. Yes, absolutely.
6. Yes, I plan on suggesting RBS and the courses.
7. Absolutely. I plan to apply for additional courses.
8. Yes and yes—while fast paced, the course was enriching and engaging.
9. Yes, yes.
10. Yes and yes.
11. Yes. 100%.
12. A thousand times, yes!

8) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*

1. Yes.
2. Yes, I had so much fun getting to operate an actual printing press! Hands-on experience made classroom learning easier as I was able to create real-life connections.
3. Yes.
4. The printing demo with Josef Beery and LP was vital. Loved it!
5. I loved going to see/use the presses in SC—so useful.
6. Yes. I'd recommend returning to the common and rolling presses.
7. Yes, I really found the session on printing educational and time well spent.
8. Yes, and I wanted more. It would have been great to get more experiences with printing presses to see the mechanics. I also wanted to explore UVA collections—I loved our printing press experience and wanted more!
9. Printing day! It was amazing.
10. Yes. The printing demonstration was invaluable.
11. The trip to see and operate the printing press was very informative and well timed in the structure of the course.
12. Working with the presses was so great, really gave me the concrete sense of the history of printing and highlighted just how labor intensive that process is—definitely worth it!

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

1. Yes.
2. Take good notes, they will be useful in the future!
3. No.
4. Do the reading before the week begins to maximize socializing and sleep. Hydrate thoroughly during breaks.
5. Come prepared to think about lots of nooks and crannies or American book history—more than you might expect were there.
6. {no response}
7. Read the assignments ahead of time. Don't wait till the week of, the days are long and reading at night is hard.
8. SC and JG are FANTASTIC! I feel so grateful to have learned from them.
9. {no response}
10. No.
11. Do the readings, enjoy the mix of minds in the classroom!
12. Take it, you won't regret it.

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

1. {no response}
2. It is definitely summer camp for book nerds but also so much more!
3. {private response}

4. Now I get why people love RBS so much.
5. I'm very excited to share what I've learned here with students and colleagues.
6. One of the most helpful, engaging, and well-organized courses I've taken.
7. Motivating.
8. Life-changing. I truly think I cannot look at my discipline in the same way due to how much I learned.
9. Books: not just vessels / But jobs, work, trade, resistance, / Networks—all of life.
10. Great experience!
11. What a fun and informative way to spend part of the summer.
12. Time well spent with a great group of people—these instructors set the tone.