

Raymond Clemens
The Book in the Manuscript Era
13–18 June 2021

Narrative Evaluations

- 1) *Do you have any practical suggestions for improvements to RBS's online logistics?*
 1. It was superb! But I feel we didn't take enough advantage of gather.town, I think stronger encouragement from the organization would help (maybe the professors dropping by...).
 2. Gathertown was not available for iPads.
 3. It was quite clear and easy to use.
 4. I do not have any suggestions for technical improvement. Regarding organizational improvements, the only thing I can think of is that it would be helpful for the links to any readings and activities that should be done before the courses begin to be shared at least a week or two in advance (we received some links and instructions for activities only a few days in advance).
 5. This online technology for this week's class was truly excellent, I have no issues or suggestions for improvements.
 6. {no response}
 7. Everything worked very smoothly. I did have a few issues with zoom while my screen video was on towards the end of the class, but was able to join without video whenever this happened.
 8. We did not get access to readings until just before the course began. This was unfortunate because we were mailed ink making kits and needed to make ink in advance but were unable to.
 9. No, I felt like the course was run well in the online environment. I would have much preferred to take this course in person as it would've allowed me to handle physical books and interact with my peers, but considering the circumstances, it was run just about perfectly! There was a small mix up in that my class did not receive our reading materials until a few days before the class had started, but that did not disrupt too much.
 10. The main suggestion I have is not to use DropBox, which has a tight space limit because of their profit model. I had to open a new DropBox to even access the course readings and when they were updated during the week, I was told DropBox was full and that I needed to pay to access all files. Using DropBox decreases the lasting value that a RBS course has, in my opinion, because it is difficult to access the files both during and after the course. I understand that there may be copyright reasons for not allowing us to download the files, but I think that Google Drive or Classroom might provide a much more accessible platform for access (on view only) than DropBox. In addition, due to a miscommunication I don't fully understand, we were only given access to these files two days ahead of the class rather than two weeks, meaning we did not have time to complete all readings and activities (such as making Iron Gall ink and a commonplace book) in advance. I think that Google drive or classroom could

streamline communication with students in future to ensure that this does not happen again. My recommendation to switch from DropBox to Google drive or classroom is regardless of whether RBS offers online or in person courses in future.

11. It's a bit difficult to pay attention to a Zoom meeting that's almost six hours, but I think that's just an unavoidable hazard of online classes.
12. The length of the Zoom day is a bit exhausting. The social opportunities offered by RBS via Zoom and Gather.Town were great ideas, but it was hard to summon the energy to be back on camera after a day of Zoom. I'm not sure if there's a way around this in the digital environment, though.

2) *How would you describe your encounters with RBS staff?*

1. Ok
2. Kristen Herdman was outstanding. She was thoroughly engaged with Dr. Clemens and the class. Kristen constantly provided links and pictures pertinent to the student discussions and questions. Her range of knowledge was impressive. I would hire her in a moment. She was always cheerful, upbeat, very well organized, as well as having a broad range of knowledge. Kirsten and Dr.Clemens worked as a team and the lecture flowed. Her presentation was interesting. I would have preferred if the material was prior to 1450.
3. They were quite minimal, but whatever emails I received were informative and easy to navigate.
4. Very positive - I have found RBS staff to be friendly, approachable, understanding, patient, and very helpful in answering any and all questions I have had!
5. All my encounters with RBS staff and faculty have been top notch!
6. Very lovely! Everyone was enthusiastic and willing to talk.
7. Very friendly, excited about their work, and eager to talk.
8. Positive, infrequent.
9. Everyone who works with RBS seems pleasant and highly competent. I would love to have opportunities to interact with RBS staff in person in the future.
10. Pleasant, Laura Eidam (with whom I have been communicating since Fall 2019) has been exceptionally professional and helpful.
11. Everyone seemed friendly and helpful.
12. Pleasant and helpful.

3) *If you attended any of our optional evening events, do you feel that they were a good use of your time? Were there any that were particularly important to your RBS experience?*

1. I did not have time.
2. N/A
3. I didn't attend many because of the virtual nature of the program. I only used Gather.town a little bit to mingle with my fellow classmates, but I have felt immense Zoom fatigue and attempted to limit my use of Zoom to what was necessary. I am sure this would have been very different in another time.

4. Yes, I do feel that the optional evening event (lecture on the book as an archive) was a good use of my time because it was generally related to at least some aspects of the course I was taking and it was applicable to my work as a librarian.
5. Sadly, my work/teaching schedule did not allow me to participate, though I plan to watch the recording of the "Book as an Archive" lecture and I hopefully will participate in evening events in future courses.
6. I attended an evening lecture and it was useful to me (as an undergraduate) to see what a graduate or postgraduate level of study on an art object would look like.
7. Not many people participated in the last event, but it was nice to chat with fellow students.
8. Yes, I enjoyed the welcome talk on Sunday. It helped frame the online experience.
9. I do wish that I had visited Gather.Town more often (I attended the orientation and the final reception on Friday), but I was so drained at the end of each day, it was hard to feel motivated enough to log in to Gather.Town and mingle with strangers. I did also attend the evening lecture on Tuesday, and I found the topic discussed really interesting.
10. I liked Alex Hidalgo's Zoom lecture, "The Book as Archive," and enjoyed the interactions I had with fellow students over Gathertown. In future online classes, it might be easier to just stick to the Zoom platform, but have a pan RBS meeting where participants can choose their own breakout rooms (labeled by course).
11. n/a
12. {no response}

4) *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, it pretty much covered the whole theoretical content of the course. Regrettably, we only received it two days before starting.
2. Dr. Clemens' book was one of the best written books I have ever read. He took what could have been a dry subject and made it interesting by his clear, concise writing and illustrations. He was thorough and answered anticipated questions. Really a joy to read. There was a lot of reading material from other scholars, interesting, but not always succinct. There was a glitch, seemingly from the RBS staff side rather than the Yale side, and we received the extensive list just a few days before class started. This, of course, impacted the class.
3. The pre-course reading from RC's book (Intro to Manuscript Studies) was phenomenal! It was well-written prose, the information was extremely detailed, and I am sure that I will use it as a resource for many years to come, in both my research and my teaching.
4. Many of the readings were not available until just a few days before the course, but they were very useful to be able to refer to. The reading assignment that we did receive well in advance, from the book Introduction to Manuscript Studies, was very helpful especially for beginners on this subject. I know I will continue to read this book!
5. The pre-course reading assignments were very useful. This was my second time reading Dr. Clemens, and the course greatly helped me to firmly grasp its

content. I read the other readings throughout the week, and I made the experience a near immersion into the materials.

6. I had read the textbook for another class but I still found it very useful as well as all the supplementary readings, which I have saved to look at later.
 7. {no response}
 8. The pre-course reading assignments that we did know about were helpful and appropriate length.
 9. The pre-course readings provided an excellent overview of the topics discussed in the course. These readings gave me a level of familiarity with the material that made me feel comfortable participating actively in the course. There were times though that the content of the course lectures was somewhat repetitive especially when lectures repeated content we'd already read prior to class.
 10. The pre-course reading assignments were very useful. Having now read most of it and heard from one of its authors at length, I would recommend Raymond Clemens & Timothy Graham's Introduction to Manuscript Studies to anyone looking for an excellent introduction to the field.
 11. The pre-course readings were helpful for providing background information and for brushing up on things.
 12. The pre-course reading assignments were very useful, although more time to do the reading would have been helpful. I think this was just a logistical miscommunication, though, and not the usual practice.
- 5) *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. {no response}
 2. If we had received the required reading and supplemental readings well in advance of the class the class would have had more participation and of course be more dynamic. Dr. Clemens did the best in a less than optimal situation. Everything on the reading list was apropos and will be read and used even though the class is finished.
 3. We made ink using a medieval recipe and ingredients, and it was so much fun! Getting to experience the act of making ink, writing with it using a quill and parchment, as well as learning about all the different kinds of ink was an experience I will remember for a long time. I will definitely return to many of the supplementary readings, handbooks, and other materials available on the DropBox.
 4. Yes, the course materials were very useful and I will definitely continue to refer to them as I continue to learn more about the subject.
 5. All of the content and materials were both appropriate and useful. I will certainly be using (and studying) them after the course. I took nearly 30 pages of notes during the course and I will be transcribing them for further study and exploration on the subject.
 6. Although there was a miscommunication about the distribution of the course activity, I still had time to prepare it before class and found it very useful. I think

it's easy in an online class to feel very disconnected from the material, but this activity helped to remedy that.

7. Unfortunately, additional readings were not distributed two weeks in advance, so most students (including myself) were not able to get everything read before or during the class week. I plan to read them afterwards, though.
 8. {no response}
 9. Highly useful! I feel like this course gave me a much greater understanding of the state of the archive of medieval books in general, which is not something I was necessarily expecting from the course. The professor and the teaching assistant both shared a wealth of digitized objects from various archives with us throughout the course, and these specific examples helped to illustrate key points as well as broaden our sense of the extant books/objects yet to be exhaustively researched.
 10. Given its space constraints, the use of DropBox to disseminate readings was a bit clunky. (By way of explanation, DropBox kept messaging me that I needed to upgrade in order to have access to the readings as they were added and updated during the course; for this reason I am concerned that the workbook and teaching materials will be of limited use to me after the course.)
 11. The various readings and exercises were interesting and seem like things I will look at again even though the class is over.
 12. The content distributed during class was very useful. I particularly look forward to revisiting some of the calligraphy videos a guest lecturer shared with us so that we could practice some common medieval scribal hands on our own.
- 6) *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 believe I will use some knowledge in my classes. Doing the hands-on experience with ink and parchment would have been nice, we couldn't because the instructions arrived late, but I will try to do it with my students. "Aha!" moment would be the idea of doing it, I guess.
 2. The course gave me a new way of looking at manuscripts, beyond the text. I'm retired so not any grand plans.
 3. I came away with a newfound love for ink (and perhaps a new hobby...?) I think I will use the information from the lectures as a base with which I can build off my research and (hopefully down the line) build up syllabi. The guest lectures were all amazing and full of really important information -- the one by KH on global manuscripts was particularly illuminating (pun intended) and helped me draw some interesting connections with traditions outside my area of specialty.
 4. Yes, I definitely walked away with "aha!" moments, ideas, and plans! As a cataloging librarian in a special collections setting, it is really good for me to hear the researcher perspective so that I can think of ways to improve and to better serve the research community. On a personal level, I am so glad that I have a better general understanding of this subject, because I am genuinely interested in it and I plan to continue learning more about it. I also have ideas about how to try to incorporate what I've learned so far in my own personal projects, like

attempting medieval bookbinding. The course has also inspired me to think of related topics to read and to write about.

5. This course was nearly all "aha" moments, and I can say that I gained an amazing amount of information that I plan to synthesize into my personal work and a new project. I have been inspired to follow my career dreams of working in special collections and I have already embarked on constructing a new project with a collection of 15th century Spanish music manuscripts (on vellum and paper) I have recently acquired.
 6. I took about forty pages of notes and feel more confident going into my thesis, in which I hope to animate manuscript production.
 7. Very useful, and I see it as an intro course which will be built upon next summer.
 8. There were lots of oblique connections and ideas inspired.
 9. No "aha" moments exactly, but I do feel much more confident in my ability to consider manuscript objects as sources for my research rather than only focusing on the texts written on manuscripts. I'm currently researching a text that appears across eight manuscripts, and I plan to examine the digitized manuscript objects much more carefully now.
 10. The skills and knowledge acquired during my RBS course will be incredibly useful to my fall teaching, which involves a visit to our special collections library and work with both a manuscript and an incunabulum.
 11. I am working towards becoming a special collections librarian, and I hope to use what I learned in this class to help me find employment.
 12. Many "aha!" moments! I learned some things that will immediately help with work projects, and the instructor also pointed me towards some further reading to help with said project.
- 7) *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. Overall it was ok, but I would have liked more complete information and a better structured delivery of the information. I understand that the idea is to exploit the collection, but not being on site, it became a bit anecdotic to choose those specific items instead of a complete survey.
 2. Yes, and more.
 3. Definitely, it was very accurately described in the course description on RBS and we covered all the material very thoroughly.
 4. Yes, the instructor and course assistant were so helpful, knowledgeable, and approachable! I feel very lucky that I was able to experience this level of expertise. I learned what I had hoped to learn and so much more, and this was only the virtual format! If this instructor and course assistant collaborate in another future course, I would definitely be interested. Really, I walked away inspired and with a renewed sense of excitement about the field of rare books and special collections.
 5. I learned more than I could have hoped and this course opened my eyes up to the possibility to actually succeed in my career path, and I have a better idea of what skills I need to acquire to do so.

6. Yes, very much so!
7. Yes.
8. Yes!
9. Definitely! Ray absolutely delivered all that was promised in the course description and more. Occasionally, his lectures would take little tangents into other fascinating related topics, and these were a real treat if not the best part!
10. Yes, absolutely, and more!
11. Yes, we covered many different aspects of manuscripts and got a good overview.
12. Yes, absolutely.

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

1. {no response}
2. Dr. Clemens and Kristen Herdman obviously put a lot of thought and effort into the class.
3. Of course, it would have been 1000x better in person, but that is a given with everything. I honestly loved the course and it was very well adapted to the online format!
4. Perhaps incorporate a couple of hands-on lab activities that we could do as a class, but I understand the limitations of this in a virtual environment. Also, as I mentioned in a separate answer, making available any activities and readings to be done before the course begins at least a week or two in advance.
5. I loved every minute and I would ask for no improvements.
6. It was already recognized in the class, but I think it would be good to incorporate more books from other cultures into the course!
7. {no response}
8. Online is extremely difficult for 22 hours for both students and the instructor. I struggle to have my camera on the whole time, even though I know it makes the instructor's job easier.
9. Nothing that could have been done about this, but I do think the course would have been much much better if it were given in person. This course was well organized, and they did an excellent job of showing us loads of rare books at the Beinecke, but I would have loved to interact with both these manuscripts and my peers in person.
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. N/A

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

1. General public, non experts.
2. Anyone interested in book history.
3. Anyone who is looking to deal with, read, or otherwise interact with manuscripts (particularly medieval) in their work/research/teaching/etc.
4. Anyone genuinely interested in the topics offered.

5. Anyone interested in early manuscripts/special collections, or those who may have to work with them in their collections would greatly benefit from this course.
6. I think this class has something for everyone - as an undergraduate, this was a really good introduction, and the more advanced students seemed to get a lot out of it, too.
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. Anyone seeking a foundational understanding of books in the manuscript era would benefit from this course. I felt that it was a perfect entry-level survey of the topic. It both provided a foundation and inspired new avenues of research for me.
10. I think librarians interested in working with special collections and undergraduates interested in doing research on such collections would benefit the most from this course.
11. {no response}
12. This course seemed especially useful for graduate students working in medieval studies and for curators and librarians working with medieval manuscript materials.

10) Do you feel that you got your money's worth?

1. Yes.
2. Yes. The course was thorough and fun.
3. It was paid for by my institution, but I definitely learned a lot and will be using the knowledge gained for many years to come.
4. {deleted response}
5. 100%
6. I had a scholarship but yes!
7. Yes, though I would have loved to take it in person.
8. {no response}
9. Absolutely! Perhaps easier for me to say this since my tuition was totally paid for by the RBS UVA Fellowship, but I can absolutely say it was worth the effort, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity.
10. I am very grateful to have received a Director's Scholarship from RBS.
11. Yes, there was a lot of information given in only a few short days. I would have loved to take the class in person, and will probably apply again whenever it is offered on-site.
12. Absolutely!

11) On a scale of 1–10 with 10 being most likely, how likely are you to recommend this course to others?

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

6. 9
7. 8
8. 7
9. 8
10. 8
11. 9
12. 10

12) *If your course had any virtual field trips or guest speakers, do you feel that they were time well spent?*

1. First guest speaker was great, the second (last day) not so much.
2. Yes. Dr. Clemens is an exceptional and gifted teacher. He's a hard act to follow. The guest speakers brought different perspectives and added overall to the experience.
3. All of the virtual field trips at the Beinecke collections were really fun (I wish we could have been able to see/feel them in person) and the guest speakers on ink (M-FL) and bookbinding (DD) were so informative. The lecture given by KH on global manuscripts was a very important part of the course. Drawing the connections between what we learned dealing with Western (Latin) European manuscripts and writing traditions around the world set the base for a lot of interesting questions we could ask about global writing traditions. The information provided was very thought-provoking and I became really curious about some of the materials (namely, Persian and East Asian writing/illuminating traditions). The lecture was very well organized, she answered questions in a very thoughtful manner, she was well prepared, and she presented so much information.
4. Yes, definitely - they "rounded" out the course very nicely. It was a great choice to include guest speakers.
5. Yes, both guest speakers brought a great amount of information and excitement to the course. Very much time well spent.
6. Yes, I enjoyed the virtual trips to the Beinecke library and getting to see the books "in-person!"
7. Yes, but would have loved to be able to do field trips.
8. {no response}
9. Yes! The sessions that were streamed from the Beinecke special collections were fascinating. Our guest speakers were a treat too, especially the teaching assistant working on this course, Kristen. Her presentations were engaging and well-organized, and I feel that she contributed a lot to the course overall.
10. Absolutely! I very much want to make an in-person trip to the Beinecke Library now!
11. Yes, everyone seemed very knowledgeable and passionate and I enjoyed seeing the instructor handle different materials.
12. The virtual speakers were a highlight, as were our virtual visits to the Beinecke Library.

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

1. {no response}
2. I can't imagine anyone not enjoying this course.
3. If you are at all interested in learning about the physicality of the book/roll/manuscript, the material history of writing, or the foundations of dealing with early writing, take this course! Very informative, and worth the investment in time and money!
4. Definitely take up the offer to ask questions for clarification, because the RBS instructors and staff are so helpful and they are willing to try their best to help you.
5. Take this course, you will be greater informed and enlightened afterwards.
6. Don't be nervous asking questions, even if you feel you are the most inexperienced student there!
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. If you already have a foundational understanding of book history and manuscripts in the medieval era, you might consider taking another course as H-20a is more entry-level. (Though I would totally recommend Ray's book to anyone looking for an excellent overview of the topic.) I would also recommend to anyone who is coming to this course from a literature perspective (like me) to find the manuscripts associated with the texts you're working on and apply the skills from this course directly in that way.
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. Start making the ink two weeks before class begins. It needs to sit and ferment for at least ten days.

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

1. Come, gather, enjoy / Like you have not done before.
2. {no response}
3. Ink is fun to make Parchment makes you want to write Bookbinding preserves
4. An inspiring, rich experience that I feel so much appreciation for.
5. I am so proud and glad to have taken this course, it has given me all I had hoped and more.
6. Long yet worthwhile days surrounded by dedicated people, like a workshop of historical knowledge.
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. "I'm sorry to leave you all. The guards are here, and they have pointy things" - Raymond Clemens (signing off from the Beinecke at 4:50PM as guards politely tap at his office door)
10. {no response}
11. I learned that there's a lot more things I don't know than I ever knew!

12. Time spent surrounded by books and booklovers, even in the virtual realm, is always time well spent.

Student Data

Number of Respondents: 12 (of 12)

How did you arrange for time off to attend this course?

1. My situation does not fit any of the options above.
2. I am retired, and can arrange my own schedule.
3. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.
4. My situation does not fit any of the options above.
5. My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used vacation or unpaid leave days.
6. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.
7. My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used vacation or unpaid leave days.
8. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.
9. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.
10. My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used vacation or unpaid leave days.
11. My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used vacation or unpaid leave days.
12. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

1. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
2. I paid 100% of my tuition costs myself.
3. My institution/employer paid 100% of my tuition costs.
4. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
5. I paid 100% of my tuition costs myself.
6. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
7. I paid 100% of my tuition costs myself.
8. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
9. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
10. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
11. I paid 100% of my tuition costs myself.
12. I paid 100% of my tuition costs myself.

Not including this year, how many RBS courses have you attended?

1. 1
2. This is my first course.
3. This is my first course.
4. This is my first course.

5. This is my first course.
6. This is my first course.
7. This is my first course.
8. This is my first course.
9. This is my first course.
10. This is my first course.
11. This is my first course.
12. 1

Which of the following best describes your current occupation?

1. Professional educator: Assistant professor
2. Other Occupations/Vocations: Retired
3. Student working towards a/an: Ph.D./D.Phil.
4. Library discipline: Cataloger/metadata librarian
5. Library discipline: Library assistant/clerk
6. Student working towards a/an: B.A./B.S.
7. Library discipline: Other
8. Student working towards a/an: Ph.D./D.Phil.
9. Student working towards a/an: Ph.D./D.Phil.
10. Professional educator: Lecturer/adjunct
11. Library discipline: Public services librarian
12. Library discipline: Special collections librarian