

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. The bibliography was great. I'd love a list of publications by each of the instructors – PN, WN, and Eric White.
2. Yes, kind of lengthy.
3. Yes, though it would have been nice to have some/all compiled in the Google drive. Even with access to a university catalog/special library I couldn't find them all.
4. The ISTC CD-ROM reading felt a little out of date, but I don't know if there's a good overview to the online ISTC database with which to swap it out.
5. Yes, the pre-reading was very helpful.
6. They were.
7. Very useful. The assigned reading list might benefit from a survey (even if book length) of early printing for context. Similarly, the pre-reading would also benefit from a few links to digitized collections.
8. The reading list was useful and quite thorough, but it was lengthy and a scavenger hunt to find some of the materials. The list could be trimmed and/or updated with more recent scholarship.
9. In general, yes, although some were more pertinent than others. I would recommend reading PN's articles about Bradshaw, Stevenson, &c. Goldschmidt was great but we didn't spend too much time looking at bindings. I would have liked to have read PN /Aguera y Arces before class.
10. Some of the readings didn't seem necessary – CD-ROMs really aren't in use anymore.
11. The reading assignments were well chosen, and I shall return to them. The volume was tough to plow through while also fulfilling my other duties.
12. Materials were somewhat obscure and not easy to track down or copy. The course material list was intimidating and gave the impression that delving into the historiography of the subject would be central to the course – thank goodness it was not representative of the dynamic and interactive five days of class. Printable workbook was helpful – an expanded version of that and a suggested bibliography would have been more appropriate.
13. The pre-course readings were interesting. They were never referenced in class, however. {private response} So it should have been marked as optional!
14. The readings were useful preparation for various components of the course subject

matter but lacked an overview reading which may have been beneficial.

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. This is the best class I have ever taken anywhere.
2. Great.
3. Yes!
4. A printed copy of the workbook in a binder would have been helpful.
5. All materials were useful and will certainly be helpful in the future.
6. Very interesting.
7. The course workbook was very useful.
8. I loved that our course workbook included so many images of the books we saw in class. The workbook will be a helpful reminder of what we've seen, and I may use it as teaching material.
9. Definitely will be useful. I wish I had printed it out so I could take notes directly on the sheets.
10. It will be more useful after the course – it would have been great if it had been printed for use during the week.
11. All good – but the hands-on materials and demonstration materials WN put together had the greatest pay-off.
12. Workbook was useful – table of contents and pagination would help – not all used a computer to view.
13. The class materials were all interesting and informative. Perhaps the workbook could include more descriptions of the photos.
14. The workbook was closely followed and provided a way to track the course topics and progressions.

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. This course will inform how I approach fifteenth-century material for the rest of my career. I'm so grateful to the instructors.
2. Yes–amazing.
3. Enhance personal study.
4. I already have a plan to check out my library's collection of unidentified incunabula leaves the next time I'm in the office to begin to identify them!
5. Towards my dissertation research. I feel refreshed in my perspectives and am ready to consider my materials from a new, rich perspective.
6. I have several new ideas I hope to argue with people about.

7. The links between the manuscripts and printed traditions, the similarities and differences between the two, are the heart and soul of this course.
 8. I feel much more confident in my ability to approach books in special collections, and I am excited to tackle some of the more recent acquisitions at my institution.
 9. I will use the knowledge for bibliographical description, reference work, teaching, and general enjoyment. I am going to add leaf dimensions to all my catalog descriptions! The sessions on early Mainz printing were revelatory.
 10. What I learned could potentially inform my methodology for approaching the books I examine for my dissertation. Our discussion about paper size was an “aha” moment – it is so neglected when thinking about the material book.
 11. I woke up on Thursday morning with new ideas about how to teach a credit-heavy, often-dreaded graduate course – entirely inspired by WN and PN’s dynamic, active, engaged approach. I likewise have many notes to self for my current projects and planned future project.
 12. Yes, and yes. It completely changed the way I view the structure, construction, production, and cataloging of printed books and manuscripts.
 13. The class may be useful for future research in fifteenth-century manuscripts.
 14. Yes, a number of takeaways including measuring our books for paper size and looking at other elements in the binding and book make-up.
- 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, this class was remarkable.
 2. Yes!
 3. Yes!
 4. Yes!
 5. Yes, absolutely. They were exceptional.
 6. Yes.
 7. In a way, yes, although I left with more questions than I started, which is a sign of unalloyed success!
 8. Absolutely, (besides the books, of course) the instructors were the most amazing, essential part of this course. Their collective expertise is unparalleled, and they were so open and accessible for all questions. No stone was left unturned.
 9. Yes.
 10. Yes, I certainly am leaving with a much clearer notion of what the early years of printing look like.
 11. Yes – and much more.
 12. Yes. I learned far more than the course description implied. I think the description should be more pragmatic and simplified, as the tone indicated preparation far beyond what was necessary to truly gain a firm and basic understanding of the world of

- incunables.
13. Yes. Perhaps it would have been interesting to look at non-codex manuscripts to learn more about non-formata writing.
 14. I expected a little more coverage on how to compose descriptive bibliography but was not disappointed in the topics and approach of the course at all.
- 5) *Are there other ways in which the course could have been improved?*
1. Make it two weeks long. ☺
 2. No.
 3. {no response}
 4. {no response}
 5. No.
 6. It would be nice to have time for immersion in paleographical materials to discuss early type design. Also, more attention to post-1470 print. This really was a Mainz course.
 7. {no response}
 8. I would have personally loved to see more manuscripts as the course was more heavily focused on printing, but the balance of both generally excelled.
 9. I would have liked a little more time spent on fifteenth-century bindings, but also realize you can't do it all in one week.
 10. I'm a bit biased, but I would have loved for more time to be spent on fifteenth-century manuscripts.
 11. It could be two weeks?
 12. Good balance of looking and lecturing and hands-on projects. Having three experts teaching was a treat – having taken a course with one expert only – this was far more illuminating.
 13. {private response}
 14. I felt in the dark about course logistics and schedule until relatively late in the process.
- 6) *Who might benefit the most from taking this RBS course?*
1. Curators and special collections librarians.
 2. Curators.
 3. Anyone who is interested.
 4. Special collections librarians with early print collections.
 5. Anyone interested in the history of books or literary scholars seeking new perspectives.
 6. Scholars interested in the rise of European printing.
 7. Anyone working at the transition point between manuscript and print traditions.
 8. Anyone working with fifteenth-century material or material adjacent to the period, and anyone engaged with the fundamentals of printing.
 9. This course is widely applicable. You can learn something whether you are brand new

- to bibliography or have more background.
10. This class seems most useful for those without a lot of experience working with fifteenth-century books – some of the material/topics will be familiar if you're spent time working with manuscripts or incunabula.
 11. I came to the subject relatively naively, from a rather different discipline, and gained a great deal. WN and PN teach a method of thinking about texts as much as specifics about the century/collection at hand.
 12. Anyone who interacts with incunables at any level, bookmakers or craftspeople at any strata of book making. Art historians interested in prints and manuscript illumination. All manner of scholars based on content.
 13. It provides a nice introduction to the history of the book, while providing many examples that could interest scholars with more experiences.
 14. ANYONE interested in books and book production of the fifteenth century – librarians, curators, graduate students, &c.
- 7) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? Would you recommend the course to others?*
1. Yes, and yes.
 2. Yes.
 3. Yes! Please keep the print shop visit!
 4. Yes.
 5. Yes!
 6. Yes – maybe. I'm pretty deep in the weeds, so I had a good time. Others may think it is too narrow.
 7. I would stand in line to buy a ticket to watch PN, WN, and Eric White talk about early books!
 8. My expenses were covered by my institution, but if I were self-funded, I would have still found the course to be worthwhile. It feels once-in-a-lifetime to be in a class taught by such greats of the field.
 9. Absolutely!
 10. Yes!
 11. Yes, and yes.
 12. Yes – thirty hours with three experts showing top level examples is priceless.
 13. Yes, I would recommend this course to anyone interested in medieval to Renaissance codices.
 14. Yes, and 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 – they were incredible.
3. Yes!!
4. Yes.
5. Yes, all trips were pertinent and enriching.
6. Yes.
7. The trip to Pied Oxen Printers was very effective in demonstrating the process that went into creating the books we worked with in the classroom.
8. Yes, visiting the print shop was fun and memorable, and touring the Scheide Library was a treat.
9. Yes. It was very helpful to see printing in action, then to talk about “locking up in forms” &c. when we discussed early printing the next day.
10. Yes!
11. Yes.
12. Yes. Ours was in context and introduced us to another perspective on the subject.
13. The time at Pied Oxen press was well spent, even if it was a long day! The printer is a fascinating man.
14. Going to the letterpress shop was very helpful to bring the physical production of printing into the discussion of how these books were made.

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

1. Take this class – it will change your scholarship and your understanding of the fifteenth century.
2. {no response}
3. I hardly used my knowledge of Latin, and the basics of incunabula/printing processes were covered, so don't let the “requirements” deter you.
4. {no response}
5. Nothing in particular – it's a great time!
6. I thought it was great but would love more attention to printing outside of Germany– and some further discussions of post-1460s technological changes. Also, more WN – I need to know about post-1450 manuscript markets and shifts.
7. {no response}
8. Do it! It's such an amazing opportunity that you really can't get anywhere else. I've gained so much knowledge and experience in only one week that my confidence as a young scholar of books has grown tremendously. And there are many avenues one can take to secure funding.
9. Do as many of the readings as you can. They really round out the knowledge gleaned from hands-on instruction.
10. {no response}
11. Book accommodations early. Princeton fills up fast.

12. Do not be intimidated by the reading list or description of course. Do research on instructors first, as they usually have a fascinating career. Be prepared for total immersion for five days – impossible to work or do other things.
 13. {no response}
 14. Having the course at Princeton was amazing because of their unmatched collection of early printed materials. The three instructors made the course entertaining while still providing a first-rate course. Thanks WN, PN, and Eric White!
- 10) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or haiku, what would you say?*
1. Learning to slow down and look carefully at books is life-changing.
 2. Astounding – best experience ever!
 3. A fun, informative vacation for people who love books.
 4. RBS is always an informative good time.
 5. Textura quadrata formata!
 6. Gloria plena.
 7. Early printed books / With manuscripts a plenty / Unwarranted joy.
 8. Exhausting, stimulating, unforgettable.
 9. “Mainz-printing” day was one of the most moving experiences in my rare book education. To hear PN and Eric White share their formidable knowledge and for WN to ask questions and make comparisons with his own formidable knowledge of manuscripts was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Thank you!
10. Truly lovely – wear comfortable shoes. ☺
11. I would wish that my graduate education had been a tenth as dynamic as this week and am inspired to teach my own students in this focused yet intellectually generous and pragmatic way.
 12. Thank you!
 13. Manuscript and press / the latter killed the former / with loving embrace.
 14. Just splendid!