

Lynne Farrington & Peter Stallybrass
H-105: The Bible and Histories of Reading
2-7 June, 2024, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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 assignments were informative and very good at getting me prepared for the course.
2. PS actually hadn't meant to assign reading this year, but he forgot that there were already some things suggested—oh well! I ended up only skimming the De Hamel text, and I think that was useful to offer some background. But you really could come with no background knowledge and perhaps be more ready to see this material with fresh eyes!
3. The pre-course readings, De Hamel's "*The Book. A History of the Bible*" and selected passages from scripture were both relevant and useful.
4. The reading material was helpful to provide a foundation.
5. Yes, the Christopher de Hamel book was extremely helpful, and I am glad I carved out the time to read as much as possible. This gave me the background necessary to understand the content presented throughout the week. I did complete some of the other readings (not all!) and again they were helpful to understand content presented.
6. {no response}

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. Incredibly useful and I'll be referring to them even after my course.
2. PS and LF were so well-organized! Both the syllabus and the workbook made it easy to follow along with the material, and PS is so generous to offer us all of his PowerPoints for future use! I will definitely be referencing all of the above as I work on my own research moving forward.
3. The course workbook, lengthy syllabus, and two other handouts were both appropriate and useful. We used them every day during both lectures and exercises. They provide abundant illustrations, summaries, and lengthy quotations that we did not fully exhaust during our sessions, so I plan to refer back to them frequently, both to refresh my memory and to expand on what I learned. PS also made the commentary and lavish images contained in the PowerPoints he used over the week available for permanent consultation, most generously inviting us to use them as we wish without giving him credit! I plan to refer to them regularly.
4. The content was fascinating and will be useful to refer back to and continue to learn from long after the course is over.
5. Yes, I thought the pace using the syllabus, workbook, slides, and in person look at rare items was very well done and kept me engaged. I appreciated the focus on specific aspects instead of trying to cover the entire history of the Bible.
6. {no response}

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 first day with the huge amount of materials spread out for us was just incredible. Such a wealth of texts and objects for us to study.
 2. I have never really worked with iconography and illustration, and I look forward to applying my broader cultural and theological knowledge with texts to more visual materials. My own research looks at discontinuous reading practices of Scripture and other theological content, and so I found the various means in which that was done to be super insightful.
 3. For me, the course's overall concept—the Bible's influence on the history of reading, along with the opposition between discontinuous and continuous reading—was most important. Rather than one particular segment of the course, it was the richness of the presentation of both the codex as technology and the variety of the reading practices it fostered—liturgy, typology, common placing, translation, &c. — that made the deepest impression. It offered numerous insights applicable to my own work.
 4. I appreciated the in-depth analysis of images (like woodcuts) and will have a new approach to looking at them while reading and researching.
 5. For me, I am interested in how the book was used as a communication tool, so the view from the reader added to my deeper understanding of the history of these objects. I plan on using all of the exercises at some point, including the slides. I haven't processed which ones and how yet, but I could see how these could translate to other types of classes that I teach.
 6. {no response}
- 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, and more than I had hoped!!
 2. Before the course, I had been expected to learn more about other forms of "reading" and teaching Scripture, such as homily cycles, but that ended up not really being a focus of the class. Which is okay, because there were so many other interesting things to cover! The emphasis here was definitely on certain specific things that could be used as a basis for further individual research on the Bible and reading practices.
 3. An emphatic yes on all counts! The instructors complemented each other and encouraged collaboration among members of the class. The opening exhibit, which acquainted us with technologies of reading and illustration from the cuneiform tablet through the stereotype was a helpful introduction which made what followed more meaningful. The instructors' regular practice of moving from projected illustrations to examinations and exercises involving the multiple Bibles (and other materials) from different eras exhibited throughout the week was very effective. One unexpected benefit was their insistence that we not just look at, but read, some of the undecipherable texts before us, helping to demystify black letter, for example.
 4. Above and beyond expectations.
 5. Yes, I was grateful they didn't expect me to already be an expert in religious practices or a top-notch theologian. The conversations and instruction were at a high level, but everyone came to the table at different levels, and we learned together. I believe the instructors did a fantastic job setting up that environment. I learned more than I hoped.
 6. {no response}

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

1. I will be applying the knowledge I have gained to my ongoing thesis.
2. My dissertation deals with lay reception of theological texts, including Scripture, and this class has definitely given me different ways of approaching my subject matter. I'm looking forward to finding connections that I hadn't noticed before!
3. It will help me nuance and enrich my own ongoing work on the history of reading.
4. The skills I learned have encouraged me to go to SC and to collaborate with librarians.
5. I plan on continuing with the readings and will incorporate this new knowledge in my classes this fall.
6. {no response}

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

1. Those interested in scripture and learning about its history as a deeply dispersed set of texts.
2. I think any graduate students who work in the medieval or early modern period could benefit from a broader awareness of Biblical and theological materials, so this would definitely be a way to gain that! Additionally, anyone who works on the Bible in particular, regardless of time period, should understand this specific history.
3. The course could appeal to an especially wide range of people. Its appeal for librarians/curators and for scholars interested in almost any aspect of the history of Christianity and the Bible is obvious. It could be equally interesting for those interested in the history of the book and reading, whether or not the Bible is of primary concern. Despite the scholarly nature of the topics it raises, it is presented in a highly accessible fashion and one can imagine it appealing to clergy or lay people interested in deepening their knowledge in the way the Bible and Christianity have evolved.
4. Anyone who works with the Bible or with European cultures that were heavily influenced by the Bible would benefit immensely from the course. I'd also recommend it to those who are interested in the history of reading or in analyzing the relationship between the words and the visual elements of text.
5. Anyone. However, I think the content is most relevant to people who are interested in the materiality of Bibles.
6. {no response}

7) *If applicable, what were the most original, powerful, or otherwise noteworthy educational moments in the course? Were there any "aha!" moments you'd like to share?*

1. Yes! When PS informed us of a book history myth! That books were often not sold unbound in the early modern period, as is so often said!
2. I loved being given full rein to explore the old Bibles in Penn's collection! Flipping through the pages, observing the woodcuts and the use of headings, etc., and discussing the implications of what we found—it was so enlightening!
3. I suspect many would agree with me that the treatment of the ox and ass in the Christmas story was a delightful aha! moment.

4. During our discussions, a couple myths of book history were dispelled, raising some new ideas about book binding and the cost of paper. These will certainly stick with me, and I can't wait to discuss with other scholars!
5. {no response}
6. {no response}

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

1. {no response}
2. We never actually went around and introduced ourselves! By the end of the week, we knew each other decently well, but it would have been nice to know who people were and what their areas of interest were from the beginning of the week!
3. {private response}
4. I was impressed with the respect the instructors demonstrated toward all the students.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}

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. 10
5. 10
6. {no response}

10) *If your course made any (virtual) field trips outside of the classroom or had guest speakers, do you feel that they enhanced the course experience?*

1. {no response}
2. N/A—I wish David Stern had been able to make it, but unfortunately, he was unable to attend at the last minute.
3. Two after-class demonstrations on printing and on woodblock Japanese prints (aimed at a simultaneous course, but interesting for us too) were entirely worthwhile additions.
4. It was fun to visit the print shop at Penn!
5. {no response}
6. {no response}

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

1. Do not hesitate—apply!

2. Do it! I think you would benefit from having at least general background knowledge of the Bible, so if you haven't ever read it directly, you may want to brush up a bit!
3. {no response}
4. Don't feel as if you need to have any prerequisite research to attend; the faculty did a wonderful job of making the content accessible and bringing everyone up to the same page.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}

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

1. Life changing—I'm so grateful.
2. Printed bibles say/A lot about believers/But also readers.
3. Illuminating!
4. We learned a lot and had some laughs, especially with the ox and ass. My heartfelt thanks to PS and LF for such an unforgettable class!
5. {no response}
6. {no response}