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H-15: The History of the Book in America: A Survey from Colonial to Modern
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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 readings were very useful. I would be interested in seeing more about Black bibliography in the Nineteenth century in the future.
2. Yes, very much. There were quite a few, but all were helpful in different ways. I appreciated how we touched on nearly all of them in class, but not in a way that made the readings central. All told, the readings made me feel quite “ready” for the week of class itself.
3. Yes, they were. Having an advance reading list provided an overview of things to come. Any new students who plans to take H-15 should start working on the reading list as soon as they are accepted into the course. Great materials reading, by the way!
4. The readings were fascinating and very well-balanced between theory, historical overview, and detailed examples. They provided a useful preview and framework for the course, but the classes themselves offer so much more! I really appreciated that the readings were a jumping off point more than course content.
5. There are a lot of readings for this course, but I found them useful. Since this is a survey course, a lot of material is covered in a short period of time, and the readings give a helpful background.
6. I found the course readings to be overall informative and generally helpful in painting a picture of the field. In the future, I would like to see more readings on women’s printing experiences (for example, readings about the Victoria Press) or women’s publishing and editing (women-run newspapers, magazines, &c. or women writing from the domestic sphere). There is only so much that can be covered in a week, and this course could be an entire dissertation, but it would be nice to have a fuller picture of women’s activities in the book world.
7. The advance read list sits at the core of the course, so their [the readings] usefulness is not in doubt.
8. I would like to know which readings were “critical”—a must read! And then “highly encouraged” so I knew what to read first, as I ran out of time at the end.
9. My pre-course reading were quite useful. I thought that the scaffolding of each reading really contextualized the previous ones.
10. I thought all but two of the reading assignments were excellent and useful. Two of the articles (II, Philip Round and 25, Finkelstein) were poorly written and argued. I had trouble following what Round was even talking about. I did not read the Abbot book but plan on doing so.
11. Loved all of the readings but it was a lot to recall by the time I got through them.
12. Yes, very much so. The Round, or Kanellos article wasn't as strong or as well written as Danky's but I don't know what to replace them with. Overall, I enjoyed the reading a great deal and appreciate the reading list.

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 thought the workbook was well-formulated and the materials directly supported what we were learning about. I plan to find such examples in the collections of my own institution to build upon the experience.
2. The workbook was well organized and laid out clearly what the schedule was and when different readings would be discussed. The real highlight of the course was the sheer numbers of artifacts that we got to look at and work with—which made the abstract come to life. The content itself was great, and it will be a boon to my future teaching, both in terms of the content I learned and the pedagogical methods our teachers used.
3. The course was a fine balancing act between general and specific aspects of the history of the book in America.
4. The workbook was very useful as the week unfolded and will be a valuable reference resource in the future. It was lovely to have it printed and bound for us. Especially useful: the breakdown of which readings for which session, the additional video resources, the blank note-taking pages in back (a few more would be welcome), and the book history epigraphs (such a useful overview of the field, and a touchstone for future discussions). Also, the bibliography of books discussed in class that was compiled over the week and shared. The hands-on activities were inspired, as were the discussion questions that helped to focus our thinking (so easily distracted with artifacts in hand)!
5. The course workbook was good because it was small and practical, but also had room for notes. It will allow me to keep everything together for future reference. I'm glad to have the instructions for the class exercises as models for my own teaching.
6. I found the course materials and workbook very helpful. I especially appreciated the incorporation of newspapers, which I generally find to be underutilized resources in academic research. I really appreciate the attention given to ephemeral material and job printing as important movers in the publishing world.
7. The course workbook is mostly an outline of the in-class activities we participated in, and as the week went on several loose handouts have been tipped in. I wonder if it might be better next time to incorporate some of these handouts into the workbook itself? Either way, I will definitely be referring back to the booklet, as the other major benefit of the workbook are the blank pages at the end for note-keeping.
8. The workbook was good.
9. Yes, the course workbook was helpful, as it was a daily agenda in combination of being a nice place to compile my notes.
10. The course material was appropriate and useful. Yes, it will be useful.
11. The workbook was perfect! Super helpful at staying on track; a lot of space for notes.
12. Yes, everything was well planned and ran like a well-oiled machine. The instructors complement each other well and answered every question. They are knowledgeable, conscientious, and personable, and they are highly skilled delivering engaged learning.

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 detailed explanations of print technologies and how each worked was extremely useful. I struggle with following and visualizing explanations of these processes in written works. The explanation alongside the actual materials used and other visual aids was enlightening.
2. This course really helped broaden my knowledge of book history in America, and it reinforced many things that I'd learned elsewhere. I loved the hands-on approach, which made everything come to life in unexpected ways. I learned a ton about early American book and printing history, which will help in my own research and scholarship, but I also will walk away with a trove of ideas for teaching literature and book history.
3. The whole saga of the book in the United States is a riveting story. Yes many, many new insights, ideas for research and projects to implement.
4. My interest in American book history is broad, so all the course readings/discussions/activities were fascinating to me. I am leaving with lots of possible avenues for future investigation. For example, I'm very excited to learn more about the amateur efforts of young publishers in the Nineteenth century.
5. It was interesting to see the themes and patterns that emerge from a birds-eye view of American book history. Some issues keep popping up throughout the centuries, like social and cultural anxiety over reading, the impact of changing technology, attempts by the trade to balance commercialism with the intellectual capital associated with books and learning. It has made me think more deeply about connections between past and present in my own work.
6. The most important/useful aspects of the class to me were the ones which focused specifically on readers and distribution. I was also interested in the manufacturing aspects of books. I found myself wanting to look more into any crossover between some of the domestic objects I study, like cast-iron pans, and cast-iron printing presses. I'm generally beginning to see some crossover connections between these vast communication networks I thought of as fairly separate prior to the class.
7. As someone who focuses a lot on the material life of a book, its passage through time and through private and public collections, session six, "reading in the Eighteenth century", was perhaps the most closely related to my research. I am about to go off to purchase a copy of *Book Traces* right after I finish this survey!
8. I benefitted the most when the materials were linked/connected with larger trends in American history and culture broadly. Yes, I walked away learning a lot!
9. I thought that the survey method was informative & an especially important structure for those attempting to grasp the vastness of book history.
10. I particularly liked the printing demonstrations. I have read many descriptions of printing techniques but never really understood them until we actually did the work. I would have liked to see a do lithographic printing. Nothing really changed for me with respect to my interest in this subject; I was provided with more information.
11. Very inspiring—the presentation of concepts and their connection to the materials gave me many ideas. I kept a running list of research, instruction, and collection development ideas that I can't wait to explore.
12. I was most intrigued by antebellum publishing practices and learned a lot from JG and SC's guidance and discussion of Abbott's book. I feel that I have acquired new skills for encountering and re-encountering antebellum material texts.

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, I feel much more confident in a more comprehensive view of the book in America. I now have several through lines I can use to structure my work.
2. Yes!
3. The instructors did a superb job calibrating the course to the specific needs and impetus the students have.
4. Yes, absolutely, and more! Like the reading list, the course is a beautifully choreographed blend of skills, ideas, and information, with lots of opportunities to learn from each other as well as from the gifted instructors.
5. Yes! The class somehow struck a balance between rigor and relaxed conversation, which I found very conducive to learning. A lot of material was covered, but I never felt rushed.
6. I think the course did a good job of giving an overview of the field and a good sense of what the study of the book means. The instructors fulfilled the promises they outline in the course description and only left me wanting to learn more—which means the course has done its job.
7. Most definitely! SCand JG make a great team—where one's knowledge may falter the other takes over to fill in the blanks.
8. Yes.
9. I feel as though they did.
10. Yes, I had trouble following some of the illustration unit. The information was lightly covered (which is understandable given the time constraints). I can see why there is a 30-hour course on the subject.
11. The instructors provided a complementary approach that was so impressive—the skills and info far exceeded my expectations.
12. Yes, I believe that I have acquired a strong overview of book history and that I can continue to investigate the aspects that most interest me and are most useful to my scholarship.

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

1. I plan to use the references sources provided in answering patron inquiries. I also plan on using my knowledge of print technology to explain to the public the value of what our collections demonstrate about the history of information and book materiality. I also plan to use this information to support future collections research projects and acquisitions plans.
2. In my research, and in my teaching.
3. The knowledge acquired will allow me to discuss in an intelligent manner about the place of the book/s in my job as a librarian. It will also allow me to share it with my colleagues.
4. The course will definitely help to inform my rare book collection inventory work, as well as future study in the field. And I will undoubtedly bore my friends and family to distraction with book history tidbits!
5. They have given me more knowledge about the collections I manage, and they have helped me to think more deeply as a researcher.
6. A significant portion of my dissertation focuses on materiality and material repurposing of books, but in many ways, I lacked the vocabulary to properly engage with these topics in the field of book history. I think the terms I have learned this week will help me navigate scholarly work in the field much better.

7. I will be bringing my new knowledge back to my institution to have a better understanding of the materials we offer patrons. Even if they aren't looking to research bibliographic history, it is useful to know how this information came to be manufactured, distributed, and hopefully, received throughout early and modern America.
8. I have new ideas about what I should collect. I have new ideas about what I can use in the classroom.
9. I would like to think that a lot of what I learned in this course will be important for my research, but in a circuitous fashion.
10. To enhance my understanding of book history as I continue to read more and attend book-related events.
11. Immediately in our current work to revise and develop our collecting policies. Developing additional instruction topics & collaborations with our makerspace & tech spaces.
12. Will apply them to my archival research in special collections at my university library; they will help to enrich my scholarship hopefully enabling me to draw insights about the paratext that will strengthen my textual/thematic analysis.

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

1. Those who work extensively with comprehensive collections in American history (students, researchers, librarians, archivists, collectors, &c.)
2. Anyone, really, who is interested in history of the book in America—scholars, professors, librarians, collectors, &c.
3. Anyone who is interested in learning about the history of the book in America (librarians, archivists, conservators, collectors, antiquarians, college professors, and graduate students).
4. Anyone with a vocation or avocation involving books, American history, material culture. The mix of backgrounds in our class really enriched our discussions.
5. Anyone looking to contextualize American book history in its general material, technological, and social-cultural dimensions. Also, anyone hoping to see how folks from multiple disciplines approach the subject.
6. Those who are wanting to properly dip their toes into book history and even those who have done a lot of reading, but perhaps limited to a specific period, should consider taking this course. I found a lot of gaps in my knowledge (gaps I wasn't even aware of) being filled in this short time and I now feel much more confident about engaging with the research within this community.
7. Librarians of many different persuasions will find this useful, as well as academics looking to understand some of their research material from a new, contextualized perspective.
8. Curators and historians.
9. I think those with relatively minimal experience in this field and geographic scope could benefit.
10. Academics at all levels; museum officials/employees; general history and English graduate students. Collectors.
11. Anyone who works with rare books—any background can benefit.
12. History and English and American Studies professors working on reading and writing at virtually any period of American history.

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. The entire explanation of late-Nineteenth/early-Twentieth-century trade and technology shifts provided a bridge in my knowledge of earlier printing to mid- and late-Twentieth-century practices that I had some familiarity with prior.
2. The printing press was a highlight, for sure. Being among a community of equally passionate learners and teachers was incredible. The whole class experience feels to me like it will be transformative for my thinking about the subject, and in my approaches to teaching.
3. Yes, learning about the technological breakthroughs, how they were achieved, and the impact they had in the industry was powerful. Also learning about marginalized voices was fantastic.
4. Way too many "aha!" moments to count! Being able to see and handle artifacts in the class was incredible—so many details of the printing process make more sense to me now!
5. The last day of class when we shared our thoughts on the future of the book was especially valuable. It was interesting to collectively see the patterns in the way students were thinking.
6. Any moment where we discussed labor were like crumbs of gold to me. I am always thinking primarily about laboring classes and the lives and reading habits of everyday people and the more full a picture I can get of the everyday, the better work I can do in my own research to surface these experiences.
7. I'd like to share my favorite object from the week as an example—the Daily Citizen from Vicksburg, during its siege in the civil war. Not only was the content from a battle-weary town rather arresting, but the real moment of amazement was realizing what the newspaper had been printed on, as supplies dwindled low (spoilers!).
8. I'd say overall the course "exceeded expectations" and I was very happy with what I learned. I struggled the most with the rigorous schedule that did not give me a lot of mental breaks. I really liked both of the instructors; they were extremely knowledgeable.
9. I was particularly struck with the development of engraving processes! Their evolution into photo offset and beyond.
10. In addition to the information I learned from the printing workshop, I was particularly struck by the Monaghan article. The article made me understand the different types of literacy.
11. I got what I wanted—all of the disparate ideas and knowledge I had were filled in and tied together, it was wonderful to have such a great environment to engage with colleagues, the instructors, and materials.
12. I greatly enjoyed studying the almanac as a secular and dramatizing genre of early American print culture. I feel that I probably learned most about the Colonial era printing, which I had never studied in depth before and I realize how it is crucial to understanding Antebellum print culture.

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

1. Letting us know that the readings would eventually be provided by the instructors would have been useful as I spent a lot of time trying to find them through various sources myself.
2. Make it longer?!
3. N/A
4. I cannot think of a thing that I would change.
5. I would have loved a little block of time in the classroom to browse through the reference literature.
6. Again, I think illuminating some of the work women did in the industry, particularly in domestic print and through presses like the Victoria Press would be really helpful.
7. Possibly finding the time to incorporate a discussion of the use of American manuscripts. Barring that, maybe just inviting Ashley Cataldo to visit the class every year would suffice.
8. I think we needed more physical space, I felt very cluttered and locked in.
9. I do think that some time could've been spent considering the definition of "America" as there's a lot of book history happening across the hemisphere.
10. More printing demonstrations. I did not watch any of the videos, so that might have helped.
11. N/A
12. A minor thing: if possible, send out the PDFs about three weeks earlier. I spend some time locating and printing off the readings, and then received them in the Google Drive.

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. 9
7. 10
8. 9
9. 8. Yes, I feel this course was worth it. I would recommend on a scale of 8.
10. 10. Yes, very likely to recommend the course to anyone that would be interested in book history.
11. 10
12. 10

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. Yes. I felt it added to the variety of expertise available to me.
2. Yes, the printing press visit was excellent and Ashley Cataldo's presence was an unexpected boon!
3. Absolutely!
4. The field trip to the RBS printing presses proves what we all know: that kinesthetic learning can be much more powerful than learning only by just reading or watching!
5. Yes, but I would have liked a little more time to speak with Ashley.
6. Yes.
7. We had the pleasure of visiting Josef Beery at his press and gain hands-on experience with both a common press (based on that of Isaiah Thomas) and a wooden rolling press. Nothing really substitutes for a working knowledge of the hand press!
8. {private response}
9. I enjoyed the printing press demos. That was extremely illuminating. The instructors could think of adding maybe one more session outside the seminar room—just for the sake of difference.
10. N/A
11. {private response}
12. N/A

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

1. {no response}
2. Take it!
3. Start the reading list as early as possible.
4. Only that I highly recommend it!
5. Do the readings, engage with the conversations, stay caffeinated and well fed, and you will learn a ton!
6. {no response}
7. The advance reading list is an essential part of the course. Many of the sessions throughout the week referred back to the readings in a group-wide discussion. Do as many as you are able!
8. {no response}
9. Do the readings, without them it may not be as informative in the hands-on sessions.
10. N/A
11. Stay somewhere close and go to bed early. Review the readings just before. Stay the day before/after so you can have time to explore.
12. Be sure to do all the reading ahead of time like I did; it enables you to focus on the content of the class meetings during the week.

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

1. I acquired a deeper knowledge of the history of the book amongst a group of wonderful experts and peers who shared an equal enthusiasm, fascination, and dedication to such history.
2. Transformative!

3. An enriching journey, / Lots of knowledge, / Lots of fun / What's not to like?
4. Engaging, exhausting, and unforgettable!
5. Happy tired.
6. Printing makes the books, books make the reader, but readers make the printers.
7. News makes the world round/Distribution networks we/See. How do I read?
8. Intense!
9. An exhausting triumph!
10. Definitely the most enjoyable and informative graduate seminar I ever took.
11. This was the most transformative professional experience I've had in many years.
Can't wait to come back.
12. I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of American book history. Thank you, SC and JG!