

Paul Needham & Eric White
H-25: Fifteenth-Century Books in Print & Manuscript
21–26 July, 2024, Princeton, New Jersey

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. {no response}
2. Yes, they were useful; they set a baseline of knowledge that was an undercurrent for the week.
3. Yes.
4. Yes! Although some were difficult to find through my institution, so it might be nice to have PDFs for the articles.
5. The pre-course readings were essential to a full understanding of the course content and enhanced the in-person learning. I would have appreciated a fuller bibliography of relevant scholarship related to the course topics in advance.
6. I had trouble finding them to be honest—I would appreciate if we received the list via email (maybe we did and I missed it?).
7. The general sense of each article was useful, but many were also deeply technical.
8. {no response}
9. Yes—advance readings helpful—BUT there needs to be tutorial information about collation formulas and more guidance on paper size and formats.
10. The readings were optional, and I think I will get more out of them after the class.
11. Yes, all of my readings were very informative and helped whet the appetite for what we would learn in class.

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. Very well done.
2. My thoughts became far more positive with the color workbook we received.
3. The course handbook was comprehensive—a little more provenance/description might assist—but given the IT issues on the day before the course it was extremely well presented.
4. The course workbook was incredible! I will definitely continue to refer to it. However, we didn't receive a color version until halfway through the week, and the color was really necessary for understanding a lot of the images.
5. Having the course workbook was essential to our learning and understanding of the topics discussed. Having the color workbook at the outset would have been appreciated.
6. It was helpful!
7. The workbook had many examples and will be useful. It was important to have it be in color, so it was good when the color copies finally arrived.

8. {no response}
9. Excellent course workbook—Will get used from now on as a reference.
10. I would have preferred more consistent catalog numbers next to photos of books.
11. The course workbook was extremely helpful, especially once we received the color copies.

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. There were many new things I learned.
2. This course helped me gather my thoughts around holistic and thorough treatment of Fifteenth-century books as a field of study. All week, I jotted down ideas, thoughts, notes for books I want to return to at my home institution, and even sketched outlines for a catalog of all the incunabula at my institution—and what such a catalog might contain.
3. Teaching one to look at aspects of a volume—To look carefully at all features—nothing on an old volume is irrelevant.
4. PN and EW's discussion of the *Catholicon* "problems" was fascinating and taught me in a broader sense how to collect historical data and ask evidence-based questions. I was also thrilled to see the Fifteenth-century printing types held at Scheide, which are relevant to my current project. I walked away feeling much more inspired about my research and excited to look closely at more Fifteenth-century books with these new skills.
5. Absolutely walked away with insights and potential projects including plan for re-examination of incunabula in our collections. I would like to learn more about collation and having the session on this was particularly helpful. I hope to have a small exhibit in 2024/2025.
6. I loved learning about print, which I knew very little about before the course since my background was mostly in manuscripts.
7. Distribution of early printed materials and fragments.
8. {no response}
9. Several sessions of the class directly touched on research I'm currently doing.
10. Seeing the books in person was extremely helpful.
11. I felt that repeated use of the same teaching subjects (e.g. the Gutenberg Bible (B42)) but approaching that object from all new angles each time was very effective and gave me a renewed sense of how to teach with our own incredible collection.

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.
2. {no response}
3. Yes.

4. YES! I learned even more than I hoped to learn. This course taught me more in one week than many of my semester-long courses.
5. Yes. I learned more than expected.
6. Yes, I did—PN and EW were so knowledgeable. I do wish we had more chances to ask questions and try hands-on work.
7. Yes.
8. {no response}
9. Not really—I am still wobbly on how to calculate formats and how to read a collation formula. We could also have used a bit more of an orientation about type and its relation to script.
10. Yes, and they taught me where to go to learn more.
11. Yes they did. PN and EW were both very focused throughout the course, but also made place and time for enjoyable digressions.

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

1. Electronic publications.
2. {no response}
3. To return to my collection invigorated and better informed—will look again at them with fresh eyes.
4. I plan to apply the skills and knowledge I acquired to my current research project on early English printing. I also plan to apply this knowledge to my work teaching and describing Fifteenth-century books in the library.
5. Cataloging and exhibition of works.
6. {no response}
7. Not sure.
8. {no response}
9. As part of my research and as background for teaching undergraduates.
10. Apply it to my job.
11. My first plan is to reach out to a faculty member at my school to discuss how we might co-teach a course on early printed and manuscript books.

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

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. Anyone with an interest in early books.
4. All could benefit, but I think the emphasis on evidence-based historical research would benefit students, educators, catalogers, and anyone else who compiles and shares data about Fifteenth-century books.
5. Librarians & curators.
6. {no response}
7. Someone that already has some fairly deep background in the Fifteenth century and book history. This course is not for a beginner.

8. {no response}
9. Rare book dealers? Librarians—students of incunabula.
10. People with 3-5 years of experience.
11. Certainly librarians who have early printed books in their collections but also academics interested in the history of early printed books and late medieval manuscript codices.

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. {no response}
2. The 1457 psalter changed my thinking about early printed books. I knew some of the other books we discussed, but not that one. It was revelatory!
3. Using the 1455 Bible as a teaching aid—at least four times—is a very special experience... the sheer quantity of rare and interesting books shown to us was extraordinary.
4. So many “aha” moments! The printing of the 1457 Psalter, the conflicts with the *Catholicon*, and the final lecture on binding waste were all extremely illuminating.
5. Binding waste!!!
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. Intimate encounters with the Literary Bible were overwhelming. Later, putting that work in the context of all other printing done in Mainz [Germany] during the 1450's was/is very useful as a conceptual corrective to my understanding of this period of technical change.
10. Mapping the movement of books post printing. Seeing Gutenberg printing waste!
11. The moment it dawned on me that the *Catholicon* must have been printed by some early form of stereotyping was probably the most notable. And once you review the evidence, the conclusion is unimpeachable.

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

1. A little time at end of sessions for questions.
2. Will's presence.
3. Hmmmm tricky—not sure.
4. Not that I can think of. PN and EW were incredible, especially given the circumstances.
5. N/A
6. {no response}
7. Give more context or signposting of sections. Do more hands-on learning or activities. There was a lot of standing and show-and-tell which made it tiring and hard to focus.
8. {no response}

9. Yes—by using fewer examples and by allowing time for questions.
10. The color photos in the workbook we get eventually made all the difference. Also, I would suggest a reading about Fifteenth-century book production technology should be required!
11. {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}
7. 6
8. {no response}
9. 8
10. 10
11. 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. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. Yes.
4. {no response}
5. Yes, our trip to the press was wonderful and the keepsake created in memory of Will Noel was touching and added extra meaning to the course.
6. I loved visiting Pied Oxen Press!
7. Yes, the field trip enhanced the experience.
8. {no response}
9. Yes! See above.
10. {no response}
11. Yes! The owner/operator of Pied Oxen Press is a treasure! Keep going there.

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

1. You can't take this as a first book course. You need some background on terminology.
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. Take time to review the pre-course readings. Take time to review a bit of the history of paper and watermarks.
6. {no response}
7. No.
8. {no response}
9. Also see above.
10. Having knowledge of Fifteenth-century book production techniques (how books are put together, a.k.a. binding) would be useful.
11. {no response}

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

1. Wonderful as always.
2. {no response}
3. Edifying.
4. {no response}
5. I will remember this course as one of the highlights of my years of working with and learning about rare materials. Thank you RBS & PN & EW.
6. Thank you so much! I know it was a challenging week and I appreciate all the instructors did even in difficult circumstances.
7. I need a nap!
8. {no response}
9. Intense, passionate love of books—and the making thereof.
10. It was a really lovely experience!
11. A friendly but rigorous community of scholars and book enthusiasts.