

David Whitesell
G-20: The Printed Book to 1800: Description & Analysis
4–9, June, Charlottesville, Virginia

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. Yes, they are absolutely helpful.
2. The readings were useful, I was quite well versed in some of them already but revisiting them was valuable. I am surprised that Sarah Werner's *Studying Early Printed Books: A Practical Guide* was not assigned. When teaching myself bibliography, I found Werner to be by far the most accessible and clear introduction to the subject, and only originally understood Gaskell after I had read her. I feel strongly it would be a far more sensible basis for an introductory course such as this.
3. Sarah Werner's *Studying Early Printed Books 1450–1800: A Practical Guide* should replace Gaskell as the required pre-course reading. It is shorter but also a lot clearer for students who may be new to the hand-press period or bibliography itself. Gaskell is wonderful in many ways, but reading several hundred pages from it just won't stick for beginners. Similarly, Carter's *ABC for Book Collectors* should be given more attention so that everyone has the same vocabulary coming into the course.
4. Very useful!
5. Course readings were useful and relevant to the material. DW did a wonderful job in covering the topics and adding his own extensive experience. It was extremely helpful to have examples for so many topics in the reading.
6. The readings were very useful. I mistakenly got Pearson on provenance in the first edition and wished I had obtained the second, as it is much updated. More readings dealing with continental books would have been useful to me.
7. These were useful, but not really until the course itself. I entered very confused and am leaving quite confident in my knowledge of hand-press period books!
8. Yes, the readings were so useful! Now that I've been through the course I might go back and reread them now that I have a better understanding—especially the readings on the collational formula.
9. Yes! The readings were great. I think *ABC for Book Collectors* should be required too.
10. The pre-course readings were very useful.
11. The pre-course reading assignments were useful.

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. They are extremely helpful.
2. The workbook will be an invaluable resource for the future. I felt the content provided a level of clarity and precision in my thinking that I did not previously have. I would have liked to have had more 'pop quizzes' or workshops where we actually test our understanding, as I found those the most useful part of the course.
3. I really loved the course workbook and the teaching materials. They will certainly remain useful to me, not only as cherished souvenirs but as teaching/reference materials.
4. It is so very well made! The content is very useful. I will continue using that definitely after the course!
5. It will be very helpful to have key definitions, concepts, and resources together in a concise form.
6. The workbook was helpful in class and will remain an important resource for me.
7. The workbook was GREAT! I am so thankful to have a one-stop shop to consult as I bring this knowledge to my home institution.
8. The course workbook!!! What an invaluable item to refer back to time and time again! It is a real gift to take back with me. Yes!!! It will continue to be useful, I'm so lucky to have it!
9. Everything was great, and I plan on using my materials when I return home.
10. The course workbook was very helpful. The content supplemented the readings well.
11. The course workbook was very useful, I will hold onto it as a reference resource.

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. Actual handling of the books.
2. I understand collation and the priorities of descriptive bibliography in new and profound ways. I never thought I would be convinced of the value of Bowersian bibliography but DW has demonstrated just how powerful his methods can be. When I return to work I will see the books I work on in new ways.
3. I enjoyed the hands-on workshops the most, as well as the "quizzes" DW would give to us. Being able to apply your skills and check your knowledge was not only exciting, but really highlighted how much I was learning.
4. Mechanics of moveable type printing. Yes, I have so many inspirations for further research!
5. It was great to have this opportunity to synthesize information and gain a better understanding of key elements of hand-press era books and bibliography.
6. My goal was to begin to learn how to collate and I now have an understanding of the process and the ability to tackle simpler hand-press era books. I was intrigued by the

information on illustrations and plan to pursue this topic further. Also the very valuable insights of R.A. Sayce.

7. Yes—I run an Art of the Book workshop and now want to revolutionize it! I want to do 1–2 sessions uniquely on the hand-press period!
8. Each day I was amazed at the number of examples pulled for class. It was just so incredible to learn it then see it. I enjoyed the tests throughout the class—the workshops, the team work on provenance, paper format folding, type. The press! I could really go on. I will really take everything with me. No doubt in my mind I will better assist my patrons after this course.
9. I did realize that I may want to pursue a career in the rare books trade!
10. Many new insights, ideas, and projects, I can see a lot of possible work ahead.
11. I've widened my understanding of the history of the book arts. I will be able to return to work with this new knowledge and experience books in a deeper and more profound way.

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, for sure.
2. I cannot imagine a better instructor than DW. Intellectually generous, humble, nuanced, and eloquent, I feel honoured to say that I have been his student. He could teach anything and I would sign up.
3. Yes, DW was a wonderful instructor. I am leaving the course with a lot of new ideas about how to approach the physicality of books in both my research and teaching.
4. Yes. The instructor has been extremely helpful. The hands-on class activities gave me firsthand experience examining the books.
5. Absolutely—DW is a wonderful instructor and the workshop periods were great fun.
6. Yes, this course covered everything I expected and more.
7. YES! I learned more than I even knew I could. I mostly feel excited about having the tools to ask the right questions about hand-press period books.
8. Yes! Yes! And more!
9. Yes, and more!
10. Yes. And more!
11. The professor taught all that I expected and more. I've found this was a unique experience. I don't think this information is presented this way in any other context. Rare Book School is awesome!

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

1. Yes.
2. I will likely begin changing how I approach the books I work on in my scholarship.

Questions that seemed previously very difficult now seem quite obvious. I would like to study descriptive bibliography further, and I intend to practice what I have learned with other RBS alumni in my university cohort.

3. I teach bibliography and letterpress printing, and I also study bibliography, so most of the skills and knowledge acquired during my time here will influence how I continue to do these things. I have lots of new examples of different print features, bindings, &c. (for example), as well as ideas for in-class activities with my students.
4. I will rewrite the introduction and conclusion of my manuscript. The skills and knowledge are so foundational.
5. More engagement with my institution's rare book collection and with our donors and sellers.
6. I will apply my new skills to the cataloging and study of my own collection and to the evaluation of prospective purchases.
7. I will bring it back to my home institution to improve workshops and instruction sessions.
8. Teach my coworkers. Create workshops for patrons. Enhance descriptions of collections items.
9. One of my Ph.D. fields is material texts so everything I learned here will help.
10. In collections management decisions (knowing/understanding the collections more fully); also in classroom and public presentations.
11. It helps me understand the objects that I work with with new eyes. I may apply this knowledge towards rare book cataloging.

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

1. Learning the methodologies and the science of studying books.
2. The course would be accessible to anyone with an interest in early printed books. I can speak only as a scholar but it is obvious to me that this course could transform how one approaches the form and transmission of texts printed in the Western world before 1820.
3. This RBS course is really for beginners, either in bibliography or in the hand-press era. I am not a beginner and found a majority of the course a review, but it was a wonderful review and the workshops really engaged me. Still, I wish I would have taken a course closer to my level. The description of G-20 didn't make it clear how introductory this would be for so many concepts.
4. Book historians who do not have a foundational understanding of bibliographical study.
5. Individuals who want a sound introduction to hand-press era books for their work or as a foundation to other RBS courses.
6. It is a great general introduction for anyone who wants to understand hand-press era books.

7. ALL! People interested in rare books, special collections, those who are detail-oriented.
8. Anyone interested in books!
9. I definitely think graduate students!
10. Anyone who has responsibilities curating collections and teaching using rare books.
11. It is a course that a wide variety of people from various backgrounds can benefit from.

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

1. {no response}
2. They were frequent but one example that sticks with me came in the final session, DW said something to the effect of "in theory, printing prevents the variance that appears in manuscript copying, but every printed book varies in some way." That simply put statement made clear to me why it is we do what we do, and what makes it exciting.
3. The workshops, especially the collation and provenance workshops, were really noteworthy educational moments. I learned so much and they were very affirming. (And I also leave with ideas for activities with my students).
4. The exercise on provenance was so much fun. Through discovery, I gained firsthand experience studying the provenance of books.
5. The workshop sessions on collation and provenance and discussion after were very useful. Applying these techniques in practice was very helpful to understanding it.
6. Being able to distinguish sheep from goat! Also seeing my first mezzotint was amazing, as they are so distinctive and different from both woodcuts and copperplate engravings.
7. I think the collation formulas—they were difficult to master, but I now understand their importance to bibliographers.
8. They just kept happening! The course was so well paced and organized. I just feel extremely grateful for my experience here.
9. I think the most powerful was the final provenance activity—it made me realize I could do/"apply" my skills better than I thought.
10. Handing around/viewing so many excellent examples.
11. There truly were many "aha!" moments; I didn't even know what a signature mark was before I took the course.

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

1. Thank you so much, DW! I enjoyed every minute with you and the books.
2. None that I haven't mentioned above.
3. Less lecture, more workshop (though I understand this was for beginners who needed the lecture first. I had a little more experience coming into the course so the lectures felt

like a review. Still, I think they could be better balanced.).

4. At some points, the acoustics of the classroom were not satisfactory.
5. {no response}
6. Again my only suggestion would be more information/readings about European continental books.
7. N/A—DW is WONDERFUL and SO KNOWLEDGEABLE!
8. NO. Make it longer, HA! :) Though I actually think my library would not have let me come if it was more than a week.
9. N/A
10. I would have enjoyed more two-person team work exercises (so we can help each other learn).
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. 8
4. 10
5. 10
6. 10
7. 10
8. 10
9. 10
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 enhance the course experience?*

1. {no response}
2. The printing workshop was wonderful, the SC visit felt rather like a somewhat weaker version of our hands on class workshops.
3. N/A
4. Yes.
5. The printing field trip was good fun and it was great to get your hands on the equipment and experience the printing methods we'd been discussing. DW chose interesting things for the SC visit.

6. We had an excellent trip to SC to view some treasures.
7. SC was wonderful, especially inking the engraving plate!
8. Yes! Really enjoyed the common press!
9. Absolutely—our experience with the hand-press was amazing.
10. Yes—I appreciated both of our field trips to SC.
11. Absolutely. The field trips were super interesting and useful.

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

1. {no response}
2. Do not be afraid if you don't understand the reading before the course.
3. {no response}
4. Highly recommended, regardless of your backgrounds.
5. Highly recommend!
6. What makes RBS special is all the hands-on experience with the books as objects. The class includes plenty of "workshops" and practical exercises. Also it is a non-threatening environment with self-tests, so the atmosphere is low-anxiety and supportive.
7. DO IT! You won't regret it!
8. Do it! The time is now! You will not regret it and it just means more years to take classes! HA! :)
9. Definitely do the readings!
10. {no response}
11. Don't worry if you are intimidated by the reading. You'll get it once you get to class.

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

1. {no response}
2. DW is a bibliographical hero.
3. {no response}
4. One of the best classes I have ever taken!
5. I'm ready to come back for another week!
6. Delight!
7. THE BEST!
8. A life changing experience! Sometimes you are lucky enough to have them—this was one! :) Thank you to everyone at RBS!
9. Amazing, informative, and addictive!
10. {no response}
11. An experience like no other!