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H-25: Fifteenth-Century Books in Print & Manuscript
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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. {no response}
2. Yes, though they might have been a little too technical. The course was more broad.
3. I read and liked all of it.
4. Good, but some were several decades old, wondering if there are more recent articles.
5. The two books were a good introduction. The articles would be a better fit for a second course on the topic.
6. The reading lists were very helpful. The current one was updated quite shortly before the course so I had the benefit of reading materials from both the old and the new lists.
7. {no response}
8. Yes, these were very useful, they made it easier to understand what was being said. It gave you a chance to figure out more about areas you were unclear of ahead of time, and so you could get more out when there.
9. The pre-course readings were interesting, but far more technical than what we covered in class. I appreciated the perspective this gave me on the methods that PN and EW use in their research.
10. {private response}
11. The pre-course reading was beneficial to my experience with RBS. Each article provided important information that established a solid foundation in vocabulary and concepts used throughout the course. I wouldn't remove anything from the reading list, as I found it all useful and appreciated the context they provided for the course. However, I would have liked an article on manuscripts in addition to the various articles on print materials.
12. The pre-course reading was helpful, without a doubt. Some of PN's arguments were subtle, and pre-course reading would have helped, but on the other hand, it would steal part of the thunder. I am sure the teachers considered this question and I trust their judgment.
13. I thought the pre-course reading assignments were fine.
14. Some of the readings were very technical and difficult to fully understand before having taken the class, especially considering that some of the students didn't have much hands-on experience with fifteenth-century books. But I absolutely loved the essay on the Bradshaw method, it was brilliant!

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. The course workbook was great overall and I'll definitely come back to the printed content as well as my notes in the future. Consistent page numbers as well as (occasional) color printing would have been useful for class discussion though!
2. Workbook needed to be numbered correctly and color images should be required.
3. Workbook needs pagination, sharper images and to be in color. Could have a table of contents by "days used" and then a couple of blank pages for each day of note taking.
4. Good.
5. The workbook—especially in its color PDF version—was useful and instructive. I believe a more structured syllabus and a list of items presented in class would be valuable.
6. The pagination on the course book was the only major stumbling block as it was inconsistent. The digital colour version was helpful to have in addition.
7. Workbook was useful, especially for taking notes! Obviously, pagination would've been helpful.
8. Very useful, but could have had better scans/print outs. And many that were in color on screen were black and white in the workbook; color would be better. Also there could be better citations; often pages from printed works were very sketchy.
9. The printed course book was an abomination: it needed to be in color and the resolution of all images increased. The digital file was a small improvement. By itself it is a useful record of what we looked at and discussed, but will not be of particular use except for the notes I took.
10. {private response}
11. The information within the workbook was very helpful, and I appreciated having the various examples. However, the pages were bound out of order in most books, my book was only partially bound, and it would have been more helpful if the pages were in color.
12. Yes and yes. Color printing —and a higher resolution—would have been nice.
13. The course workbook, especially the PDF version **in color**, will continue to be particularly useful after the course.
14. Unfortunately, the course workbook was badly organized. It should have had pagination, color images, an index, and perhaps some blank pages for notes.

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. Watching the faculty members at work was a real joy, they modeled close observation

and careful reasoning as much as an occasionally playful approach to the “detective work” of how any one object came to be in its current state.

2. I did get lots of new ideas and can't wait to talk about it with the curators I work with.
3. This deepened my knowledge on the bits I knew, and also broadened my knowledge across areas that connected them.
4. My understanding of the earliest printing in the Mainz area was greatly improved . I will look at my institution's collections in many new ways.
5. The sheer quantity of items presented and described in pairs, the skeptical approach toward vulgate narrative, the genuine enthusiasm the instructors exuded.
6. Having not worked closely with fifteenth-century books previously, the sheer range and number that we had the opportunity to view (and be talked through) was superb.
7. The concrete instruction on bibliographic description was useful. But the rest of the research presented to us was not in my specific area of interest so it was cool, but not useful.
8. All were, and yes, I have so many ideas for things to check in my collection. I also learned things that will help me correct errors in a paper I'm working on.
9. Much of the class was interesting. The best parts were on Mainz and provenance. All the methods we learned I can see using in my research.
10. The historical modifications of biblical layouts, particularly in the long transition of manuscript to print, was what I expected to focus on during the course and I had that to some extent—I will definitely think about the implications of that on the history of biblical exegesis.
11. The differences between the various fonts were beneficial, as was the information I learned about the different formats of books. After this course, I am walking away with increased knowledge of fifteenth-century books that will benefit my future career and academic plans. The professors were also great about working with me on materials I found exciting and providing opportunities for continued study.
12. More than any one aspect, the course is a short and intensive apprenticeship with some of the greatest masters of their craft. It was an honor to get to learn how they think and do things with books. Of course, many aspects of their argumentation are hardly transferable to other contexts. The methods taught are very much situated in the fifteenth-century book and require decades of experience in order to weigh in on some of the questions. That said, the course touches on core questions within the history of printing. Some points were radical given the standard narrative regarding the printing revolution which I have learned and taught. I will absolutely not teach in the same way I taught before. And there were several points—paper size, deckle, new sources for finding evidence for my work that fit in directly to my research.
13. I can't wait to get back to my home institution to measure bibles and other incunabula! I'll be examining my institution's holdings with a more critical eye.
14. I've always been interested in the small details of books' materiality, but now I feel more confident in recognizing, analyzing, contextualizing and interpreting them.

Observing the details of fifteenth-century print & manuscript production and their relationship with the books' material manifestation and preservation was the best part of the course.

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. {no response}
2. Yes! And I learned more as well.
3. This was a very educational course for me. I learned what I expected and then some.
4. Yes, for the most part, but I wish the curriculum had extended past the early 1470s and further away from Mainz: where did it spread to when? How did the marketplace develop, &c.
5. I have learnt a lot. I wish each day included a practicum with specific tasks.
6. The skills acquired and the information provided more than met the expectations that I formed from reading the course description.
7. Somewhat—more hands-on diagnosis, more synthesis of big ideas, and a broader range of materials (more genres, more languages, &c.) would've been nice. I did learn a fair amount but it doesn't feel completely satisfactory.
8. Yes, and more!
9. Yes, to an extent. But it was not clear to me from the course description and pre-course readings what exactly to expect.
10. {private response}
11. Yes, each instructor was amazing, and I appreciated the vast knowledge they used to instruct us. I learned more than I anticipated and appreciated how each professor ensured everyone had a chance to use their skills and learn.
12. I think so, sure. I haven't become PN overnight, but I didn't expect to become him.
13. Vēnī, vīdī, didicī!
14. I wish there had been more time to discuss the bibliography of fifteenth-century printing and its good and bad practices. I wish I had a better idea of the reliability of the main bibliographies and reference books on the subject.

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

1. {no response}
2. I will speak to students differently when teaching and plan to revisit collections with new eyes.
3. Will help me with various aspects of my work: instruction to acquisition.
4. In purchasing, cataloging, digitization, conservation and teaching about incunabula.
5. {no response}
6. I plan to use the knowledge and skills acquired in my work and research.

7. In future working with fifteenth-century books, adding more bibliographic and material description to my textual analysis. Not sure how much it will inform it but form affects meaning even subconsciously, so it's certainly not a waste of time.
8. In my research and cataloging and teaching and thinking.
9. {no response}
10. To fill in some gaps I had on the history of the book and maybe for actual research.
11. I plan to use the skills acquired through this course in my career and future academic endeavors.
12. Besides teaching and my own research? I don't know what's left.
13. I'll be able to perform more of a knowledgeable and critical analysis of manuscripts and books.
14. I'm going to implement all this in my bookseller profession!

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

1. Anyone interested in early printed books or the overlap and interaction between print and manuscript production in the fifteenth century.
2. Everyone working with books. This book was relevant to all sorts of backgrounds.
3. {no response}
4. Curators/librarians, graduate students, teachers.
5. Instructors.
6. Book trade, cataloguers, Ph.D. students, curators, &c. Any one who would potentially be working with early printed books or fifteenth-century manuscripts.
7. If you're interested in Gutenberg or the history of print you should definitely take the course—anyone else could probably just do the reading list. Of course, the community and the experience is pleasurable as a whole so if you have spare time and want to meet book nerds, it's also great!
8. Everyone. So much was relevant across periods and disciplines. There was a lot about the study of history and material culture that applied to almost anything.
9. People with an interest in early printing and in particular with technical aspects of early printing processes and materials.
10. Librarians and curators who work on the period.
11. The course would benefit anyone who takes it, especially anyone interested in the history of books or those working in any book-related profession.
12. I cannot testify for archivists and librarians, whose concerns are far from mine, but as far as academics are concerned, I would recommend that any graduate student who is interested in book history should learn to see the world from a new perspective on book history.
13. Other rare book/special collections librarians will benefit the most from taking this course.
14. Someone who has already done the descriptive bibliography course or has some

knowledge of it. I think this should be told to students in advance.

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. Page sizes.
3. EW's last session brought so much excitement. Of course, we needed all the previous days for that to work.
4. Too many to name.
5. {no response}
6. N/A
7. I hadn't realized that we don't have examples of fifteenth-century presses and types (excepting the Lyon type) so it was exciting to see how the knowledge about this technology was created from the material evidence itself. That was fun! But I certainly won't be doing anything comparable in my career so it was more a fun experience than a job training or professional development.
8. Learning new ways to think about and approach evidence and what you see.
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. PN's series of iconoclastic arguments were spectacular, both in terms of content and way of argumentation. There were many points that I noted as "neat to know", and other moments I noted as "useful for teaching."
13. There was a moment during the course when I realized that rulings might be considered part of the aesthetic of manuscripts rather than mistakes or cheaper works, as I had previously thought.
14. The class on Friday afternoon was a very good wrap-up and tied everything together nicely.

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

1. The Scheide Library has such a rich collection that the sheer amount of materials presented occasionally felt overwhelming—I'm not asking to see fewer books, but maybe an occasional reminder from the faculty as to how a specific observation/line of inquiry relates to the broader goals of the course/activity in general might be helpful at times.
2. No more binary analogies. Was totally lost with that.
3. Overhead camera to project onto the screen some of the tight bits that were shown.
4. Move beyond 1472.
5. 10 students is a more plausible cap for this class (both in terms of classroom space,

proximity to the book object, possibility of an assisted practicum).

6. No.
7. Less show and tell of specific research and more broadly applicable, hands-on work.
8. Better info on travel. It didn't give specifics, particularly it said 'Train, not the names of the train services and there was more than one (Amtrak and NJ transit) and if you only thought of one—e.g. Amtrak—you had so many fewer options. Also no map of campus in materials, very hard to find buildings if you didn't come to the exact registration brief window.
9. Clearer explanation and discussion of the potential uses of the methods of analyzing books.
10. {no response}
11. No. I think PN, EW, and WN all work wonderfully together and have created a course that would benefit or interest anyone.
12. Practically speaking it would have been very useful to set a series of high chairs around the table of seeing books.
13. The use of a document camera for demonstrations!
14. More individual hands-on work with the books & students sharing results with the class, less teachers' show-and-tell.

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. 8
5. 9
6. 9
7. 5
8. 10
9. 7
10. 4
11. 10
12. 9
13. 10
14. 8

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. Yes they did.
3. Yes.
4. Yes.
5. {no response}
6. N/A
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. N/A
12. Yes.
13. Yes. As already mentioned, getting to experience what it's like to use a printing press gave me an idea of what the printing press actually is. I certainly learn more by doing rather than reading.
14. Yes.

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

1. {no response}
2. Definitely take this course if you're interested in early print. This course has so much in it. A real treasure of a course, this is.
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. Do the readings. Wear comfortable shoes for standing for long periods of time.
7. If you're not interested in German printing history you might not get much out of this in terms of technical skills—but the people are great and you'll have a great time regardless!
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. N/A
12. One of the best things about RBS is that the classroom is not packed with other academics. Being one, I highly valued the thoughts and inputs of my classmates who are in the trade, in the library, or in the conservation lab—and I rarely would get to hear these thoughts outside RBS.
13. Do all the readings and maybe one to two more foundational readings in analytical bibliography.

14. Taking descriptive bibliography first.

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. #print #manuscript #early #bearsdogscatsandbirds #bloodletting
#ioncebeleivedbookswouldbeblackandwhitebuttheirgolden #gutenberg #booktrending
#iconic #slay
3. Deeply intellectually satisfying, but pre-reading is a must!
4. {no response}
5. Lector intende, laetaberis.
6. {no response}
7. Incunabula / are great but even better / are those who like them.
8. Absolutely wonderful!
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. Helpful.
12. It was grand, now it's late and time for drinks.
13. I already made my vēnī, vīdī, didicī statement!
14. {no response}