

Eric Holzenberg
H-40: The Printed Book in the West since 1800
16–21 July, New York, New York

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. It would have been helpful to have digital copies internal to the class for the course readings that were expensive to obtain due to being out of print. Other than that it was good to have the course readings as a reference.
2. *Apart from the Text* by Anthony Rota is an excellent book and perfectly matches the course. *Five Hundred Years of Printing* by S.H. Steinberg makes an interesting subject dull. Perhaps it can be dropped?
3. I found all of the readings to be excellent preparation for the class. Rota is especially concise, helpful and enjoyable to read.
4. Gaskell is necessary. Rota provides some useful additional information. Cave is idiosyncratic but amusing. Steinberg I found irritating to read.
5. I was a bit overwhelmed by the amount of reading assigned and did not complete it prior to the course. I read most of the Gaskell assigned, and found the knowledge very helpful going into the course and plan to return to finish it.
6. Yes, I found the reading assignments exceedingly important to my experience in the class.
7. Extremely informative. I think the Cave could easily be a required text, I learned so much from it. Would have appreciated a reading of some kind on artist books and livres d'artiste.
8. I had encountered them in the past and didn't (I confess) refresh for this class: but that is not to say they weren't helpful! They are.
9. Yes, although links to online versions or PDFs would be preferred.
10. They were informative, but not entirely necessary. I am happy to have them on my shelf now.

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 workbook is useful and it will be helpful to have the PowerPoint slides. Would have liked to have had a more detailed syllabus.
2. Every bit helps, and I liked the timeline in the back of the workbook, but the quality of

the printing lessens the impact of many of the images.

3. I found the workbook to be very useful, especially for providing visual demonstrations of book production tools and machinery which I will continue to refer to after the course. There were other materials distributed during class which were also extremely helpful in understanding the progress of book production, including actual metal pieces produced from a Linotype machine and beautiful book examples.
4. The workbook provided helpful diagrams I could examine close up instead of relying on the slides. I particularly appreciated the timeline and will probably return to that in the future.
5. The workbook was very helpful to have at my desk! I appreciated being able to study the figures up close while they were discussed at the front of the room.
6. Course workbook is an important resource for me. I would also like to have a bibliography of additional reading materials.
7. Workbook is useful, but I wish it was organized chronologically to how the class was taught.
8. The workbook is very helpful and I'll be using it as a reference tool in the future.
9. The diagrams were the most useful—I will use the workbook later.
10. The course workbook was very helpful and will continue to be. The content in the PowerPoint slides were great for taking notes. I will be referring back to them in the future.

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. Seeing the mechanics / tools of printing and illustration processes. Also cool to see all the different varieties of books.
2. I have a better idea of binding processes and the book's progression. I would like to start promoting late nineteenth-century cloth bindings in our store.
3. The vast scope of book production, having both the broad and specific context as we examined each phase; actual book examples—including well-known texts—to be aware of and to pursue for collection development; and cross-currents and influences stemming from a fascinating point made in class about Medieval and Japanese influences in graphic design in an early twentieth-century fine press book—global connections which I am excited to pursue.
4. The course made me aware of gaps in my knowledge of printing technology and processes.
5. The course changed the way I have been conceptualizing what it means to produce a book by hand. I run a small book making studio, so this will have a big impact on my future engagement with students.
6. It's hard to segment what was most intriguing. I found the whole experience compelling and useful to me. I have so many ideas for future study.

7. Really gained an appreciation for how the fine press movement fits into the larger chronology of book history.
8. I really appreciated moving through the nineteenth-century in two- to three-decade chunks, which really helped break down and clarify print innovation during a revolutionary period.
9. The history of printing technologies was intriguing and helped me to see our collections differently.
10. The book binding process and fine printing. I walked away with so much new insight I can hardly believe it.

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. I was more interested in technique than content, but can appreciate both even if the latter is not immediately useful to my work.
2. Everything went smoothly until the last day, when we abandoned the syllabus entirely in order to stay on fine press and artist's books. We were supposed to cover the period of 1970 to the present day, but I still don't have a clue how books are currently produced. Presumably things have changed since the 1940s, which was when the last book-production video we watched was made. The course description also refers to "the rise of book-clubs", but that was not covered. I will give points for the book in a bottle.
3. Yes, wonderfully! I was hoping to learn the broad context of the history of the book in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as have specific book examples; and hoped to gain knowledge about the printing processes including how to identify them. I acquired these skills and the information through lectures, instructive videos and book examples—addressing all aspects of book printing and production. It was a fun, productive, engaging and inspiring class!
4. I was seeking a high-level overview and the course fit the bill nicely.
5. For the most part, yes. I felt we covered the first 120 years of the period very thoroughly, and I made huge leaps in my understanding of the development of the technologies at play. There was so much to cover, however, and a few diversions into side topics that took us away from the trajectory that left us a little behind going into the last two days. This meant that my grasp of the 1920s–1990s is not as solid. I don't fault the instructor for this, it seemed natural. I also did a better job of reading the homework for the earlier period as well, so this probably had an impact.
6. Yes!!!
7. {no response}
8. Yes, EH's knowledge was boundless. I'm coming away with ideas for classes, exhibits, and other outreach.
9. Yes. I felt that the instructor provided a wide range of information and covered the

topics described in the description. I learned much more than I expected.

10. Yes, and yes.

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

1. It was helpful to build a vocabulary and reference points for bindings, dust jackets, &c.
2. I can give more accurate information to customers, and have a better idea of which books are worth bringing to their attention. I can also help my colleagues catalogue new books more accurately.
3. I plan to apply the skills and knowledge I learned for outreach activities including giving presentations; researcher questions including identifying printing processes; and collection development enhancing our holdings.
4. For me, the class has served as a springboard for more specific research.
5. In addition to my new understanding about printing technology and its impact on the concept of "handmade" books, I increased my knowledge of fine and private presses. I have recently taken on collecting for my institution in these areas, and it was incredibly helpful to be able to go beyond Morris when thinking about fine press acquisitions.
6. I will definitely use many of these to teach "the history of the book," and I also have some new ideas for scholarship. I hope to be able to work in the Grolier Club library at some point.
7. The information I learned will be helpful in teaching with rare books.
8. I plan to apply what I learned this week to my teaching and exhibits.
9. I will apply to descriptions of items/collections, sharing knowledge with students, and investigating new archived items more closely.
10. I plan on using the skills and knowledge in my own research and hopefully applying it to a future career or degree that centers around print culture specifically.

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

1. Rare books librarians who focus on the West.
2. Every Used Book Buyer at my place of employment.
3. As it is a broad history class with many wonderful book examples, I think many groups would benefit enormously from taking this RBS course including librarians, students, collectors and booksellers.
4. The class is a broad overview that will benefit those with a variety of interests and needs. It has been useful for providing background and context for more detailed study.
5. I really liked that the course had a mix of librarians, a bookseller, a retired person, &c. I think the more diversity in the class as far as both the racial and ethnic background of the students, and also their place in life and occupation, the better.
6. I think more academics should be included. Many of the librarians seem to be well on

their way. Of course, that might be because my group had so many members who had taken several RBS courses already.

7. Someone new to book history; those already with a solid foundation might find quite a bit of this repetitive.
8. Anyone who needs a solid grounding in nineteenth- and twentieth-century print.
9. People interested in learning about printing technologies—students, archivists, librarians, archival researchers, library/archives staff, book dealers.
10. Special Collections librarians, professors of English, recent graduates. Anyone with an appreciation for the book as an object or literature in general.

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. The videos were super helpful in understanding mechanics of printing and illustration processes. Hearing about them in a lecture/seeing a diagram/reading about them is difficult for me to grasp without the visual.
2. I finally know how you can turn rags into paper! And getting a look at all the machinery in motion was fascinating. Also, the Grolier Club’s fine press books are stunning.
3. Yes! A few, including the intricate “magic” of how a Linotype machine actually works as the essential innovation influencing the future of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century book production. Another moment was seeing a Medieval and Japanesque nineteenth-century fine press book—the import of the Medieval period lasting into the future and the possibilities of noting global interactive influences in book typography and design.
4. Do not underestimate the power and range of the wood engraving. Letterpress, one way or another, has been the technology of printing until really quite recently.
5. There was a moment when I saw the back of a hardcover book’s cover before being assembled and added to the text block that suddenly made me realize that what we’re teaching students in the studio Morris might find to be unacceptably modern in terms of the materials and techniques, and it gave me a sudden realization that the book and its construction are not static. This might not sound like the most earth shattering realization, but there’s a certain consistency to what’s offered in terms of book arts instruction at institutions and organizations, that I suddenly realized is much more a product of a particular time/place than I ever had before.
6. I enjoyed the reverence placed on the book as a cultural object and very much appreciated insights from the instructor and from the class about how conservatively the book has changed over time. The technological stages of print were equally fascinating.
7. {no response}
8. Really taking the time to go over all of the different changes to the book—from case

bindings to linotype to lithographic processes—resulted in a cumulative "aha!" moment where I really felt I understood books of this period in a new way.

9. Learning how the printing press changed, seeing illustrations and videos made one think of our collections in a different light.
10. Learning about engraving, lithography, and wood-blocking. I find myself looking at illustrations with a new appreciation and understanding.

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

1. There's a lot to cover in this course so it's easy to get behind. Maybe sending a pre-class survey asking about the points that students want to make sure to hit on will be useful.
2. Please include an overview of twenty-first-century book design and manufacture.
3. No suggestions for improvement! The class was focused, well-organized and well-paced.
4. I wanted more hands-on exercises—although I'm not sure where the time could be found.
5. I do think the field trips would have added a nice spot of variety to the types of interaction we were having. It sounds like they were only skipped for logistical reasons, and so I think it would be great to bring them back next year.
6. I would have liked to have more time working with books. The activities we did at the end of the day were really fast.
7. EH is an engaging lecturer, but it felt like most of the content was covered in the readings, and there was not as much hands-on book time as I expected. More hands-on examples, and more lectures that are not just repeating the readings. Disappointed by a total lack of examples that were by authors of color.
8. I'd love more hands-on activities.
9. {no response}
10. Maybe a field trip or two.

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. 8
2. 8
3. 10
4. 9
5. 8
6. 10
7. 5. There was not much new content that wasn't covered in the readings and the

previous RBS class I have taken. I would recommend this class to someone who is truly new to book history. The added expenses that come with a visit to NYC also make it difficult to feel I got my money's worth.

8. 10
9. 10
10. 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. Yes, both speakers' topics were interesting and relevant to the course. Seeing the book covers in person at the MET would be cool.
2. Yes—I appreciate having Jane Eyre as a case study of the physical evolution of a nineteenth-century novel. The presentation on American publisher's bindings was also wonderful.
3. Barbara Heritage's presentation on Jane Eyre was a great enhancement to the class as well as a fascinating talk.
4. I appreciated both of our guest speakers, not only for the knowledge they shared but for the examples they provided of different ways to engage with the history of the book.
5. We had to skip the field trips this year, but I got the sense the Met visit held in past years definitely added to the course.
6. N/A
7. Holly Phillip's lecture was excellent, I wish we had been able to do that session in person to see the books up close.
8. We had two guest speakers, both virtual, and one visit to the Grolier Club library. All were excellent.
9. N/A
10. 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. Bring one of your winter sweaters, not a summer sweater.
3. You will have a great time! You will be "wow'd" by the exquisite books shown and the fascinating, multiple histories of book production which you will learn.
4. Do read the homework in advance. It will make the class time much more useful and interesting.
5. I was *terrified* before arriving in New York. I was worried I wouldn't have the right clothes or be the right sort of person to take this course. So my advice to those considering is that anyone can/should take this course. As long as you have a basic

overview of book history in your mind to glue things to, you'll be fine. {private response}

6. {no response}
7. I would only recommend this class for those who are novices to the topic of book history.
8. N/A
9. Providing a list of nearby restaurants and coffee shops would be helpful.
10. {no response}

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

1. What you would expect from an RBS/Grolier Club course, so it's useful to look at the canon with a critical eye but learn what you can since there is a lot of knowledge shared.
2. It's the path to enlightenment.
3. Learning essential, exciting information from EH, an excellent teacher, with wonderful people.
4. Wowza!
5. Enriching and transformative.
6. Enlightening.
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. I had no idea how much I didn't know.
10. I literally felt my brain soaking up all this incredible and new information. <3