

Heather Wolfe
M-70: The Handwriting & Culture of Early Modern English Manuscripts
9–14 July, 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. They were very helpful, and I will definitely be consulting them in the future.
2. N/A
3. The pre-course readings were very useful, though they were not necessary to begin the course. They were rather helpful supplements to the course.
4. Yes, I got one of the books HW recommended and it is very helpful and beautiful.
5. Yes, the readings were appropriate and useful.
6. Yes! I found the pre-course reading very useful, especially the University of Cambridge page.
7. {no response}
8. We had some suggested resources to look at, but no formal assignments. I think that was good, though, because this class is about skills which can't really be taught at home.
9. Yes—I checked out the book on the reading list from my library but am going to purchase my own copy. The websites were also all very helpful to get a baseline familiarity.
10. The pre-course reading assignments were useful, but the most useful one by far is HW's own 'Alphabet Book' (available for free online). It synthesizes the most important information and organizes it in a really useful way.
11. {no response}
12. I found the pre-course reading/website exploration useful, in that it gave me a nice survey of topics that would be covered. They were not mandatory preliminary readings, but helped provide me with common ground as I entered into the course.
13. Yes.

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. Impressively helpful—probably the best and most practical workbook for paleography I've ever come across.
2. Content was appropriate and very useful.

3. The material was extremely useful during the course and will continue to be over the course of my work—especially the reference alphabet for secretary hand.
4. Very, very helpful! And yes, I will keep our materials to continue to practice secretary hand!
5. The workbook is wonderful and will be a tool that I use throughout my academic career. I will also use sections of the workbook in library sessions with undergraduate and graduate students.
6. I thought the course workbook was an absolutely phenomenal resource that I know I will use for many years to come.
7. The handbook was exceptionally useful, a resource that I will certainly return to in research and teaching.
8. Fantastic. HW wrote the textbook used for the course. It is so clear and thorough. It will definitely prove useful to consult when going to archives in the future.
9. The workbook and handouts were all incredibly useful—I will be referring to them often in the future.
10. The updated version of the 'Alphabet Book' and various handouts we got in class will be a useful resource that I will return to in the future, especially all of the various links to digital resources like transcription sites and digital image collections.
11. The workbook and worksheets were incredibly helpful and well-organized. The content was extremely interesting and fascinating. I will definitely consult the alphabet book as I continue practicing paleography after the course.
12. The course materials in class are useful for continued reference into the future. They are practical materials that serve to illustrate points and provide engagement.
13. The alphabet book was incredibly useful as were the various handouts and worksheets. I plan to save all of them and continue to use 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. I came here to gain access to a broader range of materials, and I'm leaving with an eagerness to go back to our own collections and look through our manuscripts with the skills I've learned.
2. Economic history documents.
3. Most intriguing was the hands-on physical work with manuscripts and documents. Working with the material texts allowed me to achieve a better understanding of the materiality of literary culture in early modern England, something that I had previously assumed to be dominated by the print medium.
4. The making of ink and the practicing of writing secretary hand.
5. The entire course was fantastic and I left with a sense of direction for many personal projects.
6. For me, learning secretary hand and specifically the prevalence of marginalia as well as

letter-locking techniques were particularly relevant for me. I now have new insights as to potential source material for my undergraduate senior thesis as well as new ideas about the material culture of women in early modern England, particularly with the letter-locking techniques, which is yet another unique facet of the intersection between text and textile for early modern women writers.

7. {no response}
8. I needed to learn secretary hand to read documents for my dissertation. I have tried to teach it to myself for over a year and was not able to make any progress. Within just this week, through HW's amazing teaching, I am now armed with the ability to confidently go forward into the British archives.
9. I came into this course with very little experience in paleography. I've tried learning on my own, but learning from HW—and in a group setting—over an intensive five-day period made such a difference. I'm excited to go back to my institution and try to transcribe more manuscripts.
10. The practical demonstrations of how to make ink and write with quill pens were really fun and illuminating, as they helped me to better understand the formation of letterforms. Viewing and collectively working on a wide range of early modern manuscripts from the RBS collections and online image collections was really useful for getting to grips with difficult hands and letterforms “in the wild.”
11. {no response}
12. I am most interested in the development of English handwriting and form from the end of the early modern period up through the nineteenth century—as well as reference sources and teaching materials. I have an abundance of ideas/plans for incorporating content and methodologies into my own work.
13. The entire course was wonderfully designed. I felt challenged by the material but also capable of accomplishing at least some aspect of each activity, even if I did not finish the task in the allotted time. The pacing was perfect. I appreciated the impressive breadth of HW's knowledge of early manuscript materials coupled with the practical skills-based focus 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, absolutely.
3. I learned everything that I hoped to learn in this course, and a great deal of information that I did not even know I needed to learn.
4. Yes, and yes!
5. Yes. Having the week to focus on one subject and specific task offered a very sound foundation to the subject.
6. Yes! Absolutely.

7. {no response}
8. Absolutely! The aim of the class was to learn secretary hand and I truly feel that I went from being able to understand 25 percent of what I could read to 95 percent.
9. YES. HW is an incredible teacher—very positive and supportive. I have learned so much through this course and am looking forward to continuing practicing and attending the monthly Zoom paleography sessions.
10. Yes! I feel like I learned a lot and am ready to delve into some manuscripts for my own projects.
11. Yes, yes, and yes! Once again, it was challenging at first, but as the week went on, I began to recognize the secretary hand better. The instructor is brilliant, and I cannot emphasize that enough.
12. Yes, and Yes.
13. Yes, I feel much more confident than I thought possible after only five days! I learned a great deal about manuscript culture in addition to learning secretary hand.

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

1. {no response}
2. In research and reading of period probate records.
3. I plan to rely on the knowledge I've accrued in this course whenever I encounter early modern materials in my research.
4. I am an archivist who deals with a lot of handwritten material, this course will help immensely in my ability to read the items I work with!
5. I will use the skills and knowledge acquired during RBS in both my professional career in libraries (providing curatorial context to materials) and in my own personal research. The knowledge gained here will also help in the classroom in instructing students in engaging with primary sources.
6. I plan to use this knowledge to gather new source material to be able to transcribe marginalia for my senior undergraduate thesis.
7. {no response}
8. Two of the chapters of my dissertation require a TON of reading of documents in secretary hand. The ability to read them now gives me such a more varied and expansive selection of documents for which to write about.
9. I work with a lot of materials that I have thus far been unable to read. Although that doesn't necessarily affect how they are treated in conservation, our institution encourages us to do blog posts and outreach. I will be able to write much more comprehensive and interesting blog posts if I'm not solely discussing the materiality and treatment of the items.
10. For various textual editing projects and archival research at the National Archives in Kew.
11. I think that this course gave me a lot to think about my project in a good, beneficial

way. It made me realize that I'll need much more time to complete the project, but for the better.

12. I will incorporate it into my own work as a curator, particularly in instruction. I will also be using the skills and knowledge to improve my leisure time, in transcription and writing practice.
13. I plan to read receipt books. I also look forward to joining the working group this fall and in the future. I love the values of collaboration and community that HW clearly brings to this course and this kind of scholarship.

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

1. {no response}
2. Other students like myself, professors or researchers who find that the studied handwriting would be useful, curators or archivists.
3. Students of medieval and early modern literature, as well as conservators and librarians who interact with early modern material.
4. Librarians, archivists, curators, conservators, and anyone who has a love of history!
5. Anyone interested in manuscript and print history of the early modern period.
6. Students, professors, librarians, historians, and curators of early modern England.
7. {no response}
8. I think any student of sixteenth-/seventeenth-century Britain who is struggling just to start. This course was not offered by my university (and I don't know where else it would be), and it truly is a skill they would benefit from.
9. Curators, conservators, archivists, cataloguers.
10. Anyone who is curious about early modern manuscripts or needs to learn how to work with manuscript sources and documents.
11. I personally think that everyone should take this course! This can be a challenging course, especially for the first-timers, but it really broadened my understanding of books, manuscripts, handwriting, writing instruments, and paper.
12. Most humans.
13. Anyone who is interested in learning secretary hand.

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. All of the documents had their moments.
3. {no response}
4. Our whole class: line-by-line transcription exercises were extremely helpful!
5. Working on the documents together as a group made the material very approachable.
6. One noteworthy moment I had was being able to confidently read many of the

documents written in a much more difficult hand on the final day—even to the point where I felt comfortable volunteering to read my transcriptions!

7. {no response}
8. I looked at a document which was very similar to what I work on and it was amazing that I could actually read it when materials like that have always given me trouble.
9. There was a point on Day Four where suddenly I could read more quickly and easily.
10. The whole course was brilliant, in part due to the materials we consulted, but mostly because HW is a brilliant instructor who attends carefully to the different stages/levels of the students in the class.
11. The moment we learned the alphabet on the first day, and the time we tried to write with a quill pen. They were both "aha!" moments and really fun activities. Made me appreciate the writers' and transcribers' labor so much more than before.
12. {no response}
13. The feeling of learning a skill in such a short amount of time was truly rewarding, as was the camaraderie of the group. All of us very much appreciated HW's positive attitude, constant smile, and endless patience.

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

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. More time spent on the actual practice of writing secretary hand, maybe practicing the making of quills. More calligraphy practice please!
5. No.
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. No! This class was SUPERB.
9. Nope—it was fantastic!
10. N/A
11. {no response}
12. {no response}
13. I would love a list/bibliography of the materials on the shelf in the room. There wasn't really time to look through them because the course was so wonderfully full.

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. 8
3. 6
4. 10
5. 10
6. 10
7. 9
8. 10
9. 10
10. 10
11. 10
12. 9
13. 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. Yes.
3. Yes. Our trip to SC was especially enlightening.
4. Yes, we got to visit UVA SC and it was great to handle more materials in person.
5. Yes, the guest speakers brought additional voices and experiences to the classroom.
6. Yes!
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. It was fun seeing the items in SC but I learned the most from being in the classroom.
10. We had a Zoom with three speakers from the Folger, who presented on a paleography project they're doing. It was really useful to hear their experiences.
11. Yes, as it introduced me to broader, more diverse areas.
12. {no response}
13. Yes, I really enjoyed each aspect of the course. It was nicely balanced with skills, practice, content, and hands-on experiences. Top-notch course design!

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

1. {no response}
2. Bring bedding, unless they change that.
3. {no response}
4. No advice, just that they must take the course!
5. Take it!
6. If you stay in Bond House, consider bringing your own bedding.

7. {no response}
8. HW is AMAZING. She is such a patient, kind, brilliant teacher. I would take any class she would ever offer about literally anything.
9. Take it! You'll benefit in so many ways! HW is a great scholar but also an amazing teacher. I would take any class she taught!
10. If you're on the fence about taking this course, I'd advise you to go for it!
11. You will struggle a bit, but I promise it will be worth the labor, effort, and time!
12. {no response}
13. This will certainly be worth your time if you want to learn secretary hand from a brilliant and kind teacher.

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

1. Enlightening.
2. {no response}
3. Secretary hand / Is difficult, but Heather / will teach it to you.
4. Life changing!
5. RBS never fails to inspire and amaze.
6. The most welcoming atmosphere for engaging in new intellectual discoveries for all age levels and professions!
7. {no response}
8. HEATHER WOLFE IS AMAZING.
9. I could not read it. / And then suddenly, this week, / My eyes were opened.
10. Rauff!!
11. The best week I'd ever had since the beginning of the pandemic!
12. I am walking away with a wealth of newly-gained knowledge, and a modicum of exhaustion.
13. I feel so stupid. / Wait, I can do this in fact! / A new skill and friends.