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H-90: Teaching the History of the Book
5 – 10 June in Charlottesville, VA

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, but perhaps should be fewer in number to avoid duplication and should be referenced or otherwise used in class, which they were not.
 2. No. I think with no emphasis on or guidance about pedagogy, they don't make sense for what the course purports to do. We've self-selected to take a course on teaching. By offering a course that frames itself as an introduction to book history, it seems the assumption is that the content of book historical scholarship matters more than teaching.
 3. Please, share these readings earlier. I was only able to skim the readings because of the late date when I received a notification (I must have missed an earlier message).
 4. We didn't discuss them. Would've liked to see pedagogically focused readings.
 5. Yes.
 6. Reading assignments were useful and relevant, though I'll admit I didn't get through all of them, and I don't think my experience in the course suffered for it.
 7. {no response}
 8. Yes, they are very useful. I plan to read/recommend several of them in the fullness of time. I would appreciate it if readings more directly addressing pedagogy could be added to the reading list.
 9. These were good; wish we had discussed them.
 10. Books were only good in hindsight as ways to build my own knowledge foundation. At the time, I took them (e.g. Gaskell &c) as predictors of course content/aims; I was not looking forward.
 11. Yes, though admittedly I only did some because of time and work constraints. The list, I think, could be more global in scope. I'd love to see Black Bibliography represented in the pre-reading.
 12. Extremely.
 13. Useful but perhaps excessive for those with some background in the area. It would have been great to see a "If you don't feel confident in X, read Y" style guide alongside.
 14. I'd like to see more contemporary readings (after 2016) on the list.

- 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 Google drive might have been provided earlier. I think a more specific class by class syllabus with goals and objectives could be useful for the "free form" exploration of student questions and ideas.

2. The course workbook makes for fine reading about book history but not teaching. The Google doc that a colleague generated for our own contributions was a great idea, but we were often told to "put it in the doc" if our comments in class strayed too far from the instructor's mission.
 3. I still have to work my way through the course book: it looks extremely helpful.
 4. Course book was good, from what I've been able to see, but I wish it was integrated into the course sessions.
 5. We didn't receive a physical workbook, but the digital materials provided were very useful.
 6. Definitely—the workbook and the collaborative Google Doc are a wealth of useful resources that I will absolutely return to in the future.
 7. I really appreciate all the resources MFS shared and look forward to using them. I also appreciated that we as a class created a Google Doc to share sources.
 8. They are very useful, and I'm sure I will come back to them in the future when I design/teach History of the Book courses.
 9. Workbook will prove extremely useful in future semesters of teaching: we got access to it too late.
 10. Great, great. Google Docs folders, &c.—it's like I have been granted a boon.
 11. I found the texts valuable and will need time to comb through them. I particularly appreciated intros to the global book and I'm excited to dive into the shared Google Doc as well. I plan to use the Drive/Doc materials as I teach my fall course.
 12. I'm sure it will be valuable for many years to come. I reserve comment on the materials distributed during class—I have yet to read through the wealth of information.
 13. MFS was very generous with syllabi, handouts, and other materials. I will absolutely use them!
 14. The course workbook is very helpful.
- 3) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your RBS course? Did you walk away with any "aha!" moments, new ideas, or project plans?*
1. I took many notes and learned or reviewed much about book history but more targeted as specific tools/ideas for teaching book history would have been helpful.
 2. My colleagues gave me so much to consider about how they approach teaching. I'm immeasurably grateful for their perspectives.
 3. There were many "aha!" moments—too many to list here. The (advice) reminders not to want to cover too much, to be humble as a teacher and to capitalize on one's strengths was extremely empowering.
 4. I have a few ideas for exercises. This course made me think a lot about how I teach in ways I didn't expect it would.
 5. Lots of "aha!" moments, and a few "ooo, yeah!" moments.
 6. I'll be using many of the activities, lesson plans, and approaches we discussed this week as I teach both literature and book history courses—I'm looking forward to spending more time with the resources we didn't have time to delve into.
 7. I absolutely plan to use fewer materials and use them in conversation together, rather than using more and lacking contextualization. "Objects make their meaning in relation to other

objects"—MFS. YES!

8. I definitely had a lot of "aha!" moments during the week. One big take-away is always pair one object with another, and sometimes the comparator can be counterintuitive/surprising/or belong to a different medium/textual culture.
 9. Absolutely. Took copious notes—pages of notes—about facts as well as about teaching materials.
 10. Looking forward to putting lots of stuff into direct use. "Aha!" moments would be objects with other objects, importance of process.
 11. Great refresher on key terms. I feel empowered to use what I know and what I have access to at my university and online. I loved resource sharing with peers and learning how one object can spark something different in each student. I will be immediately using these skills in my fall 2022 course, which is a collaboration with special collections.
 12. I plan to use exercises and workshop some of the material suggestions in both studio and seminar classes with both undergraduates and graduate students.
 13. I'll employ much of this material immediately in my fall "History of the Book" class. I have too many ideas and projects brewing to list here.
 14. Yes! I'll be working with faculty much earlier in the semester to really figure out the objectives they want for the class.
- 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. Generally yes, but perhaps the class could have been informed more by specific learning goals.
 2. No. I think he was good at modeling his own teaching practices but given that part of the application was to submit a syllabus, I thought the class would deal more directly with what and how we teach.
 3. The instructor encouraged us to develop our own strengths and abilities and put them to good use—which is a wonderful message to receive.
 4. This felt more like a book history course than a course about book history pedagogy.
 5. Yes (to be brief). Yes, I did (to be slightly less brief).
 6. Yes, I think so! My institution, despite its size, has a fairly negligible SC department, so I'm grateful we discussed alternatives to expensive, rare books, and would have liked to have pursued those even more.
 7. 100% Yes.
 8. Yes, I've learned so much from this course—more than I expected! {private response}
 9. Yes.
 10. Yes.
 11. Yes. I came away with an expanded and refined toolbox of terms, techniques, best practices, cautionary tales and experiments that will transform my pedagogy. I learned so much from MFS and my peers, together. I would have loved the chance to do a quick teaching demo on the last day as a kind of mini assignment.
 12. It was a jam-packed week. I'm walking away with a radically new way of thinking about my pedagogy.

13. I am certainly better situated and am leaving with more resources and new ideas. I hoped to learn more practical/specific teaching techniques and exercises.
14. I learned much more than I planned, but I would have loved a larger focus on how we design our curriculum.

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

1. Each class session should include a specific different teaching tool for teaching book history. All classes were interesting but many of the teaching demonstrations were variations of the "compare" theme.
2. Many ways. Participants could be encouraged to teach or model their own teaching. The teaching librarian(s) might be included in a way that models what it looks like to teach with librarians—not with them in the background.
3. Empower the participants to contribute from the first day on. Have people introduce themselves with an object or a teaching idea &c. Mention Cervantes! {illegible} Dare to step away from your passion and your expertise. First step: British empire beyond the English speaking world.
4. Increased time to share the expertise in the room (the other people in the course were clearly very skilled instructors), more practical nuts and bolts {illegible} pedagogical takeaways. Having everyone bring in a lesson plan/syllabus/problem to workshop would have been great.
5. Move structured time for mini-group activities.
6. I was glad that we spent some time discussing how to diversify our teaching, and how to responsibly attend to populations who are often overlooked in the field, but I think those discussions could have been more strongly and seriously foregrounded.
7. The only thing I would have liked and would suggest for future iterations is to have Krystal Appiah speak—she is a great presenter and a wealth of knowledge in her own right and I would have loved to have heard from her during our time in SC.
8. I feel very very happy about this course and definitely one of the best RBS courses I've taken. {private response}
9. More graduate students! No cameras all the time taking photos of the books! Fewer students—too many for discussion.
10. Well, a certain level of "benign chaos" in ordering of materials: e.g. Aldine edition then Tom Clancey. Sort of delightful once I surrendered to the flow but a bit disorienting at first. Maybe frame expectations better? I.e. "this is not going to be chronological" or "not organized by media or concept."
11. I would have loved a more robust intro to my peers on the first day in order to make connections with each other more immediately. I would appreciate themed/organized days such as Day One: Parts of the Book, Day Two: Teaching with What You've Got, Day Three: Diversifying the Field, Day Four: Teaching Demos (each taking turns with something we selected), Day Five: Book Tech and Futures of the Book.
12. {no response}
13. At times this course felt like "Teaching the History of the Book at Yale"—the amount of time

and anecdotes given to specific rare books that I cannot access was a bit demoralizing. I'd like to see the proportion of time adjusted between show and tell and practical pedagogy.

14. I think we could be even more collaborative and dedicate specific time to sharing our current teaching strategies and maybe taking an inventory of what we think we do versus what we actually do in the classroom.

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

1. Those who would like an engaging review of book history in a collegial environment of those who teach the subject and inform that conversation.
2. People who want an overview on what book history is.
3. E-V-E-R-Y-O-N-E.
4. Someone who's never taken a book history course.
5. Those without a great deal of knowledge about book history, or those without much experience teaching book history outside their historical field of expertise.
6. Anyone whose teaching involves primary textual sources, and who has at least a reasonably strong understanding of the history of the book already.
7. Anyone who teaches with or about books, manuscripts, or archives.
8. Everyone who plans to teach a course on book history (and I would add, media history and cultural history at large!).
9. More Ph.D. students need to take this! More early career scholars in general.
10. Gosh, anyone with a sense of wonder.
11. Instructional librarians and professors who are at a stage in which they can update or revamp their instruction. I think someone should already have some working knowledge of the subject and some facility with key terms.
12. Consider faculty outside of the humanities. Art historians and design historians cannot only benefit from the course but can add a unique perspective to the conversation. And books are a large part of the research and teaching.
13. Teachers with access to a good special collections library (see Q5).
14. Anyone who teaches a large survey/intro class in the humanities and social sciences.

7) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? Would you recommend the course to others?*

1. Yes.
2. {no response}
3. Highly recommend it.
4. I had a fellowship.
5. Yes and yes!
6. Yes and yes, especially for the chance to engage and collaborate with others teaching in the same area. That was hugely valuable for me, this session.
7. Yes!
8. Yes! and Yes!!
9. It's really expensive, but I would recommend to those with institutional money.

10. Yes, absolutely.
11. Yes and yes.
12. Yes and yes.
13. Definitely worth it! I would recommend with caveats.
14. Yes and yes.

8) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*

1. N/A
2. {no response}
3. SC visits were inspiring: a different space and different set up.
4. We went to SC at UVA nearly everyday, but never got to hear from the librarian who assisted the class (and whom I know is a terrific instructor).
5. The time we spent in SC was great. I would have liked to hear from Krystal Appiah directly. Having an archivist/cataloger/librarian share their expertise would have been lovely.
6. Yes, to SC and for a few social events.
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. SC visits were vital, but book-viewing space was crowded. Need fewer students and no camera phones.
10. SC was indispensable.
11. I enjoyed time in SC and only wish we could have heard a little more about Krystal Appiah's work as well and perhaps had a quick and general overview of UVA SC/collecting strengths since I am unfamiliar.
12. 100%—the trips to SC were the highlight.
13. For my personal/research edification, I loved our trips to SC; the number of visits seemed to me to have diminishing value for pedagogical purposes in my particular situation.
14. Yes; I think we could have been more hands-on in SC.

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

1. Strap in, there is much to learn and experience.
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. If you like an anecdotal approach to teaching, this course is for you.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. Do it! MFS is great fun and an incredible source of knowledge and pedagogical insight.
8. N/A
9. Don't be hesitant to speak!
10. {no response}
11. I would recommend that someone already have a course they are teaching or designing in mind

before they take this course. Total novices would not benefit quite as much.

12. Always create a Google Doc for the collaborative sources.
13. The more specific your questions and problems, the more this course will help you.
14. Take advantage of the resources available, especially your peers. These people will be with you in this field for the long haul.

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

1. It is always pleasant to engage intellectually with others who share an interest—you can put that in the book!
2. {no response}
3. Energizzzzing.
4. Prepare your students to see.
5. Books are alive with the meaning of their makers.
6. Go for the books, stay for the people.
7. I would just reiterate my immense gratitude to MFS. I will cherish this experience for years to come!
8. N/A
9. MFS is wonderful; I should like to be like him when I grow up!
10. {no response}
11. A week of fellowship with other lifelong learners and lovers of books.
12. {no response}
13. My classmates and the overall collegiality made the course! Try to get your students so excited about a book that they interrupt you and say "Can I just say one more thing about whales?"
14. This course gave me a lot of direction for a person who felt aimless in their teaching, especially in these pandemic years.