

Roger Chartier & John Pollack
H-120: Textual Mobilities: Works, Books & Reading Across Early Modern Europe
8–13 June, 2025, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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, the pre-course advance readings were excellent, though impossible to get through although I spent many hours over at least two months. I would very much have wanted the readings for each day's class to have been given more than the two or three days in advance of the first class (and that was only the readings for Days 1 and 2); not until Day 1 did we get the readings for Days 3, 4 and 5, which was a little irksome. Difficult to finish the actually required class readings. Some of the time spent on advance readings (e.g., on Cannibals, the Montaigne essay, and another work) would have been much better spent on the actual class readings given to us much sooner than they were.
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. The pre-course reading assignments were excellent, although voluminous. I did most of them before the course began, and it gave me a good insight in advance into the mind of the main presenter, RC.
5. Yes, though there were lots of them, and it was sometimes difficult to know which ones to prioritize.
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}

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 content of both the advance readings and the daily readings was appropriate and useful. Yes, some of them will continue to be useful, as I still have some readings to get through. But above all, I must note that the daily exhibitions of books were absolutely stunning, by far the very best of ANY of the four courses I have taken at RBS over the years. The University of Pennsylvania library collections themselves are stunning, and JP did a tremendous job every day of retrieving and setting up the works that were totally relevant to the lectures RC was giving. As good as the RC lectures in the a.m. were, the first post-lunch session with the books was out of this world, absolutely on point with each and every work RC had discussed (of course, they worked this out in advance, but it was still a marvel of planning and execution both), even (or especially?) with the works that I never knew before I took the course I could be so interested in. The ability to

touch, and turn over the leaves of such treasures, every single day, was truly unforgettable. JP gave terrific introductions pointing out the works one by one before we walked around, linking them to RC's lectures (although the links were clear) and also handed out excellent bibliographies to match what we were seeing every day. JP is an absolute treasure!

2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. The teaching materials were very good generally, although given out in individual pieces of paper on a given day, so not easily kept for future reference. I wish there was one PDF or Word document that would have contained all course materials.
5. I believe so, JP did a good job of uploading things to a shared folder for future use.
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}

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. The manifold ways in which there are “textual mobilities”—through geographical movement, the relation between text and illustration, through translation and across genres—was important in the development of print, the book trades, and related subjects, in early modern Europe was in many respects a revelation to me. My own collecting and research focus is on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century printed material, but virtually everything RC addressed was of enormous relevance to me. Sometimes RC would say something that set me on fire, put me into a virtual trance of scribbling in my class notebook about my own project, because a new insight came to me from what he said, a greater insight even than the advanced readings had given me, and I didn't want to lose it. This happened every single day. My brain was on fire and is still burning now even these four days after the course. I hope I make myself clear on this.
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. I definitely walked away with new insights and ideas for the project I am working on, although it involves late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century machine-press era books, not hand press books of early modern Europe. In fact, the way in which developmental aspects of book culture repeated themselves, sometime in modified forms, so that many of the principles discussed by and insights of RC are useful for a modern project. The ways in which the various components of book culture—author, publisher, printer, distributor, bookseller, audience (reader/listener)—work together is as intriguing for modern (late nineteenth century through early twentieth century) book culture as it was for early modern book culture at the heart of Chartier's lectures.
5. The combination of lecture and in-person time with the associated materials was effective in inspiring me to think differently about my own research projects.
6. {no response}

7. {no response}
8. {no response}

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, absolutely. The one area I wish there had been more focus on, and which the advance readings had led me to believe would be discussed more, was on “orality, script, print.” It was certainly not ignored, RC giving us Don McKenzie to read (about the Maori in New Zealand, the famous essay) in advance and having some discussion of it. But we had a session at the end that we were encouraged the day before to send JP questions we had, so there was an opportunity to plug in some gaps. RC was beautifully, meticulously prepared every day, no surprise, and his talks had a freshness to them even where (as in one case) I had heard him discuss the subject before. (This was in a workshop in April of this year, where I heard him talk about the quipu in Francoise de Graffigny’s *Lettres d’une peruvienne* and related texts.)
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. Yes and no. The “yes” I describe above. The “no” is that we were told at the very last minute, two days before the course began, that RC would NOT be giving the lectures in person, but remotely from Paris. {private comment} Each and every lecture RC gave was impeccable, brilliant, and easier to understand through his accent and through Zoom than I would have expected. But above all, we could not have the kind of informal discussions with RC outside of his lectures about our own work, or about work of his (a lot of which I had read) that was not part of the reading or class discussion, that made it so desirable to take the course. I hasten to add that JP (assisted by Lynn Farrington, his wife) did a fabulous job: for virtually every work (in every edition) discussed in RC’s two daily lectures (one and a half hours each), JP did a meticulous job of laying out Penn’s copy of that work for our perusal in the afternoon sessions, with a printed list of those works (which, again, would have been great to be in one Word or PDF file). JP is a treasure who did much to make up for the disappointment of RC not being there in person.
5. Yes, though I think increasing the amount of hands-on time and decreasing the lecture portion would be helpful.
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}

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

1. Those on-fire new insights into many aspects of my own project that I scribbled in my class notebook during class at least once every day of the five days each need elaboration and development! A lot for me to use! I am so very, very grateful for this course, for RC, for JP, and for Lynn Farrington. I am the luckiest guy in the world. Bravo, RBS!
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. I am now working out the manifold ways in which the development of book culture in early modern Europe that took place over an extended period of time was replicated later, in one way or another, in mini developments that took place later. (See Don McKenzie on the Maori and the Treaty of Waitangi in *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*.) RC's lectures, which built on his written work (some of which was course reading, some of which not) were instrumental, and I am very grateful for them. In addition to the above, the early modern obsession he discusses with obliteration, forgetting, &c., is also replicated in my period of time with a kind of belated transition from a largely oral culture (rural Italy of the nineteenth century) to the culture of those same peoples as immigrants in late nineteenth-/early twentieth-century U.S.
5. The course makes a compelling case for and provides insights into how to accomplish a transnational book history project.
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}

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

1. Anyone who reviews what the subject matters of the course are, and for whom a perusal of the advance readings gets their juices going—as it did for me—will benefit from the course. Although the actual class readings (that we only received days before the particular classes) may change, but they should—each and every one—be added to the advance reading list.
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. Anyone interested in the development of book culture in the period of time central to the focus of the course; and perhaps even more so, anyone who is interested in the interplay of *histoire du livre* analysis and classical Anglo-American bibliographical approaches, as RC seems to be, would gain a great deal from taking the course.
5. Someone interested in thinking about the movements of texts across borders but unsure of how to research and tell these complex stories.
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}

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

1. Here's one: I had never really grasped before that the movement of books (in early modern Europe)—whether it was the printing of Spanish books in, say, Amsterdam, or the movement on donkey of copies of the immensely popular *Don Quixote* in rural Peru—might have affected the reception and appreciation of those works (for better or worse) where they ended up. That is a subject that is quite relevant to my understanding of the significance of importation of Italian books to the U.S. for the consumption of the Italian immigrant community, and how that affected the development of a U.S.-based Italian-language book culture, which developed just a few decades later. This course gave me new ways to think about this problem.
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. The relation of the early modern period's obsession with obliteration and forgetting and the physical aspects of books—in my case, thematic obsessions in the narrative work in Italian, the focus of my work, of the main character's fear of loss of connection to the old world, is matched by something that arises only from a bibliographer's eye—the poor quality of the paper (and printing) of someone who tried to do it all and failed—author who was also publisher, printer, distributor, bookseller and influencer of readers—in part because he used very cheap paper, like newsprint, that disintegrated easily to the touch. And this despite his awareness of the importance of copyright protection. Ironies of the first order. These and other connections that were intellectually very satisfying I made in the middle of RC's lectures when I had mini brain explosions. You can't buy that experience for love or money—you just get lucky, and I got lucky, to be in the presence —okay, the e-presence—of someone like RC. I would call those "aha!" moments, for sure.
5. I think the portion of the course focused on Garcilaso and the transmission of Incan writing practices was extremely compelling, as was the discussion of *Don Quixote*. Seeing and handling the key textual artifacts from these stories was very powerful.
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}

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

1. Yes, this is an easy one: to have RC be there in person. It was a big initial disappointment that Roger Chartier was speaking to us remotely from Paris (his having had visa problems apparently). But the electronic transmission, including especially sound quality, was excellent, which was important because RC has a thick accent. His words were sometimes hard to hear clearly, but I'm not sure any

more so than if he had been there in person. In a funny way, this was an illustration of one of the (minor) themes of the course. How orality was more than the words spoken—it was the gestures that accompany the words, and because the video quality was good, we had the benefit of seeing his gestures. Still, there is something about an in-person presentation that cannot be duplicated by Zoom.

2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. Yes, make sure the lecturer is there in person! Seriously, we should have received the daily class readings more in advance than at the beginning of the week itself, when ploughing through them became more difficult.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {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. 10
4. 8
5. 7
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}

10) *If your course made any (virtual) field trips outside of the classroom or had guest speakers, do you feel that they enhanced the course experience?*

1. We had a couple of minor field trips (e.g., to the old library). We didn't have any guest speakers (except the two broadcasting from Charlottesville).
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. We had a couple of trips to other bookishly important places on the campus, but the non-classroom stuff that really counted was JP's expert assemblage of virtually every edition of every work discussed in RC's lectures. Really, really enhanced the course experience, and mostly made me forget my disappointment at RC not giving the lectures in person.

5. I think the trip to the letterpress lab was very useful—it brought another hands-on dynamic to our learning.
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}

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

1. If perusing the advance reading list “grabs” you in any way—irrespective of whether your own research focus is in early modern Europe—TAKE THE COURSE, don't overthink it.
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. Do as much of the advance reading as possible.
5. Doing the reading in the evenings will be hugely helpful in following the lectures and getting the most out of the course!
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}

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

1. RBS creates a unique learning and growing experience—I am immensely grateful. Thank you, MFS, Barbara Heritage, and everyone else!
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. Very satisfying intellectually, and as a tactile experience, in ways that mere reading alone could not have accomplished.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}