

John Hessler
H-110: The Art & Science of Cartography, 200–1550
26–31 July 2015

Narrative Course Evaluations

- 1) *Were the pre-course reading assignments useful? Did you do any additional preparation for your course? Are there any books or articles that you would like to see included in future years? Any that you might suggest removing?*
 1. Yes. More reading—perhaps with optional or recommended bibliography—would be great. Assign or require the *Cosmographiae* translation. More primary sources (even in PDF) would be lovely.
 2. They were okay. I wish my background in the field of cartography was higher, so I could have understood them better. A general survey or introduction would be helpful.
 3. Yes, the pre-course reading materials were helpful. The instructor should have also required the two books he has written and published about Waldseemüller and the maps he made.
 4. Pre-reading was enjoyable, with one exception, and it prepared me well. Although the Newton might have been useful for a Newton scholar, several sections seem to have been beyond the scope of the class by quite a bit. The in-depth reading of Ptolemy was invaluable.
 5. The readings were very useful, especially the edition of Ptolemy. JH's book translating Waldseemüller's *Cosmographiae Introductio* should also be required. And *A Renaissance Globemaker's Toolbox* is definitely important to read.
 6. Yes—resources were useful. Also suggest first volume of Strabo. A few articles were too technical, or were written with academic jargon.
 7. The pre-course reading was very well chosen.
 8. Yes, useful. Additional readings should include the Pfloder book on portolan charts.
 9. Pre-course readings were very useful.
 10. The readings were appropriate and interesting, especially the *Geography*. We did not discuss some of the articles, but they provided useful background.
 11. Pre-course materials were very helpful prefaces to the course, and in fact covered a greater theoretical range than the class itself.
 12. The instructor's translation of one of the texts would have been useful pre-course reading.

- 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. Yes. Excellent materials, particularly for teaching.
 2. Very helpful. JH was very good at sharing additional readings and PowerPoint presentations.
 3. The other teaching materials distributed were helpful. It was particularly helpful

to be able to see the maps discussed, and to view the atlases/maps that were the focus of the lectures. The content was very appropriate and useful, and provides great historical background for my work. I will be using the Map Analyst program that we discussed.

4. Handouts were fine. I found the “Manifesto” to be very useful as we progressed.
5. Many of the articles handed out during class will be useful later. A general bibliography on the subject would also be useful.
6. PowerPoint presentations were promised for delivery afterwards.
7. Good handout materials.
8. Yes.
9. The materials will be very useful for later reference, for personal research, and for use with students.
10. N/A
11. I appreciated article handouts throughout the week to go more in depth on materials, and these will certainly be useful beyond the course. I would have appreciated a list of items we viewed from the collections, however.
12. Yes to all. Particularly good articles were given.

3) *If you’ve taken previous RBS courses, how did this one compare?*

1. {no response}
2. More interesting: Great hands-on activities with the actual maps. Best part of the course!
3. This is by far a much better course than the one I attended in 2009. The lectures were interesting and detailed.
4. All have been excellent; however, this one has really been transformational in a way I am not quite sure how to articulate. Fragments of my thoughts: it’s changed how I view the way the world is viewed, if that makes any sense.
5. This class was equally interesting and high level. It does cover a great range of material, though, so it does not always have time to go into as much depth with each topic.
6. This was the most thought-provoking and intellectually challenging, because it focused on process, rather than being descriptive.
7. Much better than the last one.
8. About the same.
9. One of the best I’ve taken.
10. N/A
11. N/A
12. It was excellent. The instructor was well prepared in every way, and knows his material completely. Good sense of humor and easygoing nature helped.

4) *Which aspects of the course were most interesting and relevant for you as an individual? Did you walk away with any new insights, ideas, or project plans?*

1. Excellent for helping to develop better research questions about maps and cartographic history.
2. The tour of the facilities, the actual handling of maps, the tour of the Kislak exhibit in the Jefferson Building.
3. Yes! I have new questions to ask as I research maps at my institution, and have

- learned additional means to research maps using modern technology. Very helpful!
4. Yes. New insights on the representation of our world in historical perspective. Most interesting was the analysis of maps, and the translations of Ptolemy's and Waldseemüller's perspectives on mapping the world.
 5. For me, understanding how Ptolemy's projections were constructed, and the details (that we know) of how portolans and the Waldseemüller map were made, will be very helpful in my work.
 6. 1) I learned that land maps and sea charts came from two different traditions; 2) learned that mathematical tools can be used to extract data about ancient maps and their sources.
 7. Excellent discussion of Roman surveying. Useful insight into Ptolemy as larger part of mapping by scholars before him and of his time.
 8. Portolan charts, although the entire course was interesting.
 9. I do have some ideas now for presentations and for projects for students, both things I hoped to gain.
 10. The areas of the instructor's own research were the most interesting and valuable.
 11. Most useful components: in-depth discussions on mathematics, databases, and data transforms, lessons that would have benefited from hands-on practice. I certainly cultivated new insights on cartography, especially related to projection, historical representation, and history of science.
 12. I am most interested in the historical information, and in the physical objects; the research into the humanities relations between these cultural objects is exciting.
- 5) *Did the instructors help you to acquire all the skills and information promised in the course description? Was anything left out or undeveloped? Did you learn what you had hoped to learn?*
1. Yes, excellent.
 2. Overall, it was a bit over my head. But I learned a great deal.
 3. Yes. Yes, I did. It would have been nice to actually use Map Analyst, but it isn't the instructor's fault that the LC security system was blocking it.
 4. The course delivered even more than I anticipated. I appreciated going into depth in different areas—we could go even more into depth in any one of these areas if we had the time. Follow-up class?
 5. Yes, I learned all that I had hoped to, and more. The course description could be altered to reflect the digital discussions that we had on day five.
 6. Way beyond my expectations in terms of new insights into history of cartography.
 7. Yes.
 8. Nothing left out; yes to what I hoped to learn.
 9. I actually learned more than I even expected. The instructor was incredible.
 10. We examined discrete maps/moments/texts—I expected a broader overview, and would have appreciated more integrative discussions that incorporated this broader context.
 11. The class could have been titled “Maps: 200 and 1550,” because medieval (and non-Western maps) were not addressed. The instructor developed a thesis on Ptolemaic projections well, but it would have been useful to take even one session to discuss potential continuities between mappae mundi and projections. The “art” aspect of the title was slightly under addressed in terms of technical production,

- but the “science” part was incredibly compelling. I would have liked to gain more hands-on experience in these methodologies.
12. The course gave me a much broader view of the historical field of cartography, which I will continue to find very useful.
- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. In both teaching and research. This will help to shape my network-based mapping project. In teaching, I got the basis for a unit about early cartography and geography out of this. Very useful stuff.
 2. More interest in my own institution’s map collection.
 3. 1) I’ll be researching maps with new questions to ask. 2) I’ll be uploading manuscript maps, surveys, &c., to research published maps, and to try to determine sources for published maps in our map collections.
 4. 1) To develop history of cartography activities for grades 6–12 using primary sources; 2) to expand my use of GIS in different classes.
 5. {no response}
 6. I’ll further my interest in the history of science.
 7. General background knowledge for articles I write or edit; some Ptolemaic material applicable to current research project.
 8. Background for articles I want to write on how certain charts and maps were actually used in the past.
 9. Working with students in using our map collection.
 10. I will teach a course on the history of cartography.
 11. I plan to brush up on Latin and GIS software to engage more deeply with the materials. This course was fascinating, and gave rise to many questions on geospatial theory, spatiality, and scientific inquiries across history.
 12. This knowledge is easy for me to apply directly to my work as a conservator.
- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*
1. Excellent. I think the best materials were the most rigorous—but as an academic, I also recognize my bias.
 2. A bit higher than I expected. I wish I had had a better background for the course.
 3. It was definitely intellectually challenging. JH explained the materials in a manner understood by everyone. Student questions were very insightful, and the instructor was able to answer every single one.
 4. Very good. JH seemed to be able to judge when he needed to fill in with background and when he could increase the level for a very diverse group.
 5. The course is most appropriate for someone with an interest in how maps are constructed, and in the science behind them, but without a deep math/science background. However, someone taking it should have an interest and some proficiency in basic technical areas.
 6. This course was conducted at a very high intellectual level, but the instructor did not overwhelm participants with math.
 7. High intellectual level.
 8. Very high.
 9. The instructor worked to keep the instruction at a level that was appropriate for

- the group, which had varying backgrounds, disciplines, and knowledge levels.
10. It was pitched at a high, graduate level.
 11. Someone interested in the history of science or ontology or philosophical approaches to GIS would appreciate the course. Very high intellectual level.
 12. High level. I would like to have known more about the history of cosmography, astrology, and astronomy to have helped inform better questions during the class.
- 8) *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. The knowledge gaps, skepticism, and care in teaching maps as primary documents was a huge “aha.”
 2. Maps! Atlases!
 3. Yes! What are the networks of information compiled by early mapmakers? And Map Analyst should be easy to use—why haven’t I used it yet?
 4. The history of cartography suffers from a multitude of assumptions that researchers fail to communicate.
 5. {no response}
 6. Learning that we could identify areas of Ptolemy’s maps that were compiled from different sources.
 7. No.
 8. {no response}
 9. {no response}
 10. The discussions of Ptolemy were the high point.
 11. The concept that geography consists of proportionality above all else was a huge eye-opener!
 12. Many moments—JH has an enormous amount of knowledge, both directly and peripherally related to this course.
- 9) *How could the course have been improved?*
1. More hands-on in the lab? More practical GIS work? More actual compass, pencil, and ruler work? These are minor points.
 2. Shorter hours—it’s hard to concentrate that long each day for a week.
 3. I can’t think of anything to add. Just include the books written by the instructor on Waldseemüller in the required reading.
 4. {no response}
 5. {no response}
 6. Would like to see actual scanning and analysis of a map.
 7. Less time spent on Kislak meso-American treasures; less time spent on GIS technologies; re-direct time to course objectives.
 8. {no response}
 9. {no response}
 10. The primary text discussions might have encouraged more student participation. The final section on GIS, though interesting, did not seem germane.
 11. Either deeply engaging the technical side or the theoretical side of Ptolemaic mapping—or even better, mapping as a flexible visual category—would have been more focused.

12. Possibly divide the course into two components: the history/humanities portion, and the GIS portion.
- 10) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? Would you recommend the course to others?*
1. Yes, and yes.
 2. Yes, but only if they had more of a technical background.
 3. Yes! I do feel that I got my money's worth. I would definitely recommend the course to others.
 4. Absolutely. Yes, I would.
 5. Absolutely. It was a wonderful class that I would highly recommend.
 6. Yes—I'll be recommending it to a colleague who is the curator of modern physics at my museum.
 7. Yes.
 8. Yes.
 9. Absolutely. I would recommend the course.
 10. Yes. Yes.
 11. Would absolutely recommend. Due to scheduling, it seemed like the instructor's time was sometimes shortened, which didn't leave time for open-ended questions or discussions.
 12. Yes, and yes!
- 11) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*
1. Yep. Maps: they're great. The lab and "vaults" were also useful. Perhaps more hands-on work in the lab?
 2. Yes! They were the highlight of the course.
 3. Yes. The trips outside of the classroom were good, and totally applicable to the content discussed in class.
 4. Our time in the imaging lab was a rare opportunity.
 5. All the trips to the vault to see maps were great. I think the trip to the preservation lab could have been longer and more in depth.
 6. Enjoyed our trip to the Jefferson Building to see the Kislak Collection and Waldseemüller map.
 7. Yes.
 8. N/A
 9. Yes. The visits to the vault to see materials being discussed were very useful.
 10. Yes!
 11. Absolutely—we saw our instructor's curated exhibit, went to the vaults, and had tours of the facilities—true course highlights!
 12. Yes. Excellent exhibit tour with the curator.
- 12) *If you attended any of our optional evening events, do you feel that they were a good use of your time? Were there any that were particularly important to your RBS experience? Any that you could have done without?*
1. {Redacted for the web—RBS staff} The evening lectures were a true

- disappointment, sadly, and should have been better conceived.
2. I did not attend any.
 3. I attended Museum Night, and had a blast! I enjoyed seeing the different materials from various LC collections and being able to ask staff about them.
 4. I used my evening time to explore museums in D.C.
 5. The Museum Night was very valuable, primarily for the chance to meet the other instructors/department heads.
 6. They switched the lecture order, so I missed the one I wanted to go to!
 7. N/A.
 8. {no response}
 9. {no response}
 10. N/A
 11. I went to one talk and one Museum Night. Both were interesting, but it would have been really nice to have had a GIS/map-themed talk to dovetail with the course. Or a workshop!
 12. I was unable to attend evening events.

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

1. Take it!
2. Make sure you really love and understand technical aspects of cartography!
3. Read those books written by the instructor that are related to the topics discussed in class.
4. Coming in with a review of my old Latin classes would have been fun.
5. {no response}
6. Do it!
7. No.
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. I would tell students to prepare for a very specific approach on Waldseemüller, Ptolemy, and mathematical projections—and perhaps research other approaches in advance to better contextualize this approach.
12. Get a lot of sleep! Brain work is tiring.

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

1. JH is brilliant, and working with him, as well as with this excellent group of lovely people, was a genuine pleasure.
2. Amazing that I can get this window into cartography in such a great place.
3. The class was fun. However, since it was held in DC, instead of in Charlottesville, students didn't spend as much time together. I don't feel like I know my fellow classmates as well as I knew my classmates who attended RBS in 2015{2014?—RBS staff}.
4. 1) Assumptions get in the way of acquiring knowledge when you don't pay attention; 2) read the original!
5. LC was a wonderful place to take an RBS class. The collections and the experts

- there are unparalleled.
6. Always a peak experience.
 7. Useful.
 8. Very stimulating. JH is a vast intellect on the cutting edge.
 9. RBS has been the best professional experience of my career!
 10. Time well spent.
 11. Professionally illuminating, personally gratifying.
 12. A whole new world...a different point of view!

Student Data

Number of respondents: 12 (of 13)

How did you arrange for time off to attend this course?

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 4 (30.77%)
My institution/employer did not give me leave; I used paid or vacation days: 1 (7.77%)
I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule: 5 (38.46%)
I am retired, and can arrange my own schedule: 2 (15.38%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 4 (30.77%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 6
I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 2 (15.38%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 3 (23.08%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 5 (38.46%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.77%)
I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 3 (23.08%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 6 (46.15%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (30.77%)
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.77%)
I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 1 (7.77%)

Which of the following best describes your current occupation?

Library disciplines:

Archivist: 1 (7.77%)
Conservator/binder/preservation librarian: 1 (7.77%)
Library administrator: 1 (7.77%)
Special collections librarian: 1 (7.77%)

Student working toward a/n:

Ph.D./D.Phil: 1 (7.77%)

Professional educator:

Lecturer/adjunct: 1 (7.77%)

Assistant professor: 1 (7.77%)

Associate professor: 1 (7.77%)

Other: K-12 librarian: 1 (7.77%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Independent scholar: 1 (7.77%)

Retired: 2 (15.38%)