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H-105: The Bible and Histories of Readings
5–10 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. De Hamel was very helpful, though it did not need to be brought to UPenn. I enjoyed the suggested readings, but they were not necessary to appreciate the course.
2. Yes, very useful readings.
3. Yes, although not all were discussed/covered in class. Herbert was too much for “required” readings.
4. Could have more on American and/or modern periods. Paul Gutjahr’s American Bible would be the obvious source.
5. The pre-course readings were very interesting and useful.
6. The readings were highly interesting and useful for following the course.
7. Required readings were helpful. I did some of the non-required as well, which helped me get more from the course, as I had limited knowledge of the subject.
8. The de Hamel book was enormously useful in general, not only for the course. Herbert and the New England Primer would have been fine to leave until the course itself. I wish I’d read a few of the articles in the New Cambridge History of the Bible as preparation.
9. Yes; The Book (de Hamel), in particular, was so insightful. It was the most useful reading. I think a certain amount of biblical literacy would have been helpful, so some readings in the Bible itself would have been useful. I might remove the Herbert.
10. The de Hamel book was excellent, and provided a very useful overview. The three suggested articles were also a good introduction to PS’s thinking and method.
11. Pre-course readings were largely essential, and very helpful. I didn’t really feel like we needed to read all of the Herbert in advance (although it was enjoyable). In the future, I wouldn’t require students to bring the de Hamel book along.
12. The Christopher de Hamel was terrific background. I’m not sure it would be necessary to buy and bring a copy of the Primer.

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. Course workbook was great—obviated the need to purchase New England Primer and Herbert, though.
2. The content was useful when explained, but ambiguous when standing alone.
3. Good, but could have benefitted from being better organized.
4. Yes, useful, with the above caveat (see Q1).
5. We did not end up using the workbook a lot. I think the class slides will be very

useful in the future.

6. I will continue to use the course workbook for future reference.
7. It was useful—had additional readings. The instructor emailed more material, as well, which will be useful after class.
8. The workbook is very comprehensive, and I'm sure I'll refer back to it for the bibliography.
9. The course pack was useful. I only wish we'd had more time in class to do the exercises.
10. Our instructor was very generous in sharing PowerPoint presentations and lots of supplementary reading via Dropbox. I am glad it wasn't all required reading during the week, and will refer back to it when I have more time.
11. Workbook was helpful, easily navigable—will certainly be a valuable resource to keep on hand.
12. The physical workbook will be less useful to me than the electronic bibliography and readings provided. I haven't explored the course pack beyond very specific pieces we used in class.

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

1. Less organized, less time for hands-on work with material texts.
2. PS is a somewhat wild teacher, but this is to his benefit—every class had a genuine air of excitement.
3. Excellent, very engaging.
4. This one was considerably less historical and more literary; less bibliography, although still lots.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. One of the best.
8. N/A
9. I felt that the teaching quality and the instructor's expertise were top notch, as is typical for RBS courses. It would have been helpful to have the materials presented in a more linear fashion.
10. N/A
11. N/A
12. This class was a bit less structured than others—probably due to the fact that this was the first time it was taught.

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. Handling medieval books. Seeing the full range of ancient/medieval/Renaissance material forms of biblical text. I gained new ideas about organization systems as forms of subordinating texts.
2. As a researcher, it gave me food for thought, mostly, but also led me down a few specific paths for my own research.
3. Looking at books themselves.
4. Many new insights about reading practices; I learned less about the print/material history of the Bible than I expected.
5. {no response}

6. Yes, the course gave me several new ideas to improve myself as a scholar and teacher.
 7. Broader understanding of the Bible in a literary, historical, and material-culture context. Overview of translations of the Bible in English, their places in history, and their relationships to Catholic versus Protestant traditions.
 8. Reading the de Hamel book was the most interesting and relevant aspect. I left with a number of useful pointers to other resources.
 9. It was helpful to think about how visual and textual traditions both work together and compete with one another to create meanings and religious traditions.
 10. The mix of visual and textual sources was good. I will continue to think about the text/image relationship in my work, and this course enhanced my understanding of that area.
 11. I now have a much better understanding of these general concepts and their influence on my specific field.
 12. I think I did learn many interesting things/ideas that I will take with me in my work, but they aren't exactly what I expected.
- 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. I would have liked a stricter focus on analyzing/navigating material texts and more class discussion of larger trends in biblical texts. PS was fantastic, but unplanned detours (lectures) sometimes prevented us from getting to the books.
 2. The course matched the description.
 3. More on bigger picture of "histories of reading" would have been great, particularly with reference to more recent material.
 4. Mostly. Underdeveloped was the above{referencing Q1}. The actual who/what/where/when/how of making and distributing bibles.
 5. I thought the course might be a broader overview of the Bible and reading. The focus was on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.
 6. PS is not just extremely knowledgeable and passionate, but also very available.
 7. Yes. I acquired useful knowledge.
 8. We didn't end up spending very much time with rare books, and there was often less bibliographic information than I'd hoped for.
 9. I think the class would have benefitted from more time spent working with the rare bibles themselves. Spending more hands-on time with the rare books and MSS would have helped to ground some of the discussions.
 10. I really enjoyed the "histories of reading" aspects, but wish the focus had been broadened in the English context a bit more. (The instructor is super enthusiastic and very welcoming. Not sure where to put this, but it should be noted.)
 11. Absolutely—he went far beyond expectations, really catering to our interests and input.
 12. This is a giant topic to fit into a week. Some topics of interest had to be omitted. I feel that we didn't have enough time to explore the physical rare bibles.
- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. Teaching—many new ideas for my courses.

2. Integrate it into my teaching and research to some extent.
3. Will influence reading, research, and teaching.
4. Research for a book on religion and reading in America—especially the early-American portions of the book.
5. Will take many of the ideas and questions brought up into my research. Much of the information will also be useful in teaching.
6. I will use them to improve my research, and in my teaching.
7. Interpreting manuscripts relating to the Bible, such as sermons, commonplace books, and vocal music.
8. Follow up on the things I've realized I need to learn, and fill in the historical details of the general broad outline acquired here.
9. Plan to work with colleagues at my institution on an exhibit or digital humanities projects using our collection of early bibles.
10. To think more broadly about what extra-biblical sources may have influenced the religious art that I study.
11. To improve my research skills and methods, to deepen my understanding of my subject area, and to contribute to the writing of my Ph.D. dissertation.
12. {no response}

7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*

1. Graduate students, librarians. Because it's so broad, the intellectual level is slightly lower.
2. Graduate students or academics, especially those working within the Anglo-American tradition.
3. Academics.
4. Varied a lot; some was pitched too low (comparing Genesis 1 and 2).
5. {no response}
6. Librarians and professors.
7. Best for someone with a graduate degree in the subject area and/or someone who works with rare books or manuscripts.
8. Someone with a general interest in a thematic approach to the subject. (Fairly easy) undergraduate level.
9. Highly intellectual. Students with strong backgrounds in the humanities will benefit the most.
10. Not much background in the Bible is required at all, as stressed by the instructor.
11. We had graduate students, professors, and librarians all taking the course; everyone seemed to contribute to, and benefit from, the course equally.
12. Anyone with strong interest and a willingness to engage could benefit.

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. Studying Pastorius's beehive after having just looked closely at medieval breviaries, psalters. Also great to hear about PS's research methodology.
2. Every day there was one—PS's interests were always surprising.
3. {underlined "original, powerful, or otherwise noteworthy"} PS.

4. Relationship of codex, discontinuous reading, and typology.
5. {no response}
6. I especially enjoyed the discussion sessions and the visits to museums and libraries.
7. Seeing and handling example bibles that illustrated the points discussed.
8. {no response}
9. Useful to think about the power of visual traditions, and how they shape religious practice and belief (sometimes in ways that contradict the text).
10. Seeing a wide range of bibles and other religious texts on the same table, getting to handle them and note similarities and differences based on physical interaction with them.
11. Actually, PS talking about his own approaches to, and attitudes toward, research, pedagogy, and writing were the most resonant for me.
12. {no response}

9) *How could the course have been improved?*

1. More time discipline, more class discussion. The class really came alive, for example, when we discussed Milton.
2. A bit more direct book contact, and more object-oriented exercises.
3. Better organized, more structure. Staying “on topic” just a little more. Less “Bible study,” more books.
4. More structure. More clear topic sentences—by which I mean explication of the “so what?” More grounding in history.
5. A stronger focus on developing skills and working hands on with the books.
6. I’d love a bit more time to explore the UPenn special collections.
7. More time to look at books and manuscripts. More discussions of American bibles and related history.
8. More time spent looking at books, and more acquisition of bibliographical skills.
{private response}
9. More time spent with the bibles and other rare books, and a more linear presentation of information. It may have also helped to engage with theological conversations when delving into biblical interpretations.
10. A clearer organization, perhaps chronological. We did jump around quite a lot.
11. As a first-time course, I think the few small bugs were self evident, and I’m sure things will be appropriately refined and streamlined in future iterations.
12. More structure; setting expectations. More time with the materials. I would have preferred a little less time on Herbert and Milton. Maybe ask students to come to class prepared to discuss topics so that class time is not needed.

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

1. Yes, and yes, though I would qualify recommendation to faculty.
2. Yes, and yes.
3. Yes, yes, and yes.
4. Yes.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.

7. Yes, and yes.
8. {private response}
9. Yes, and yes. {private response}
10. Yes.
11. On the first count, I can't really say, as I had a scholarship. But yes, I'd absolutely recommend the course.
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. Loved the Free Library and the art museum! Great trips!
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. Yes.
5. The field trips to the art museum and the Free Library were great and very valuable. We could probably have even spent more time at the art museum.
6. Yes.
7. Yes—very well spent. This increased the time and contact with primary materials, and the range of materials used.
8. Yes.
9. Yes—all the field trips were well worth the class time.
10. Definitely.
11. Definitely.
12. Yes—especially the Free Library trip.

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. N/A
2. The lecture was excellent, and yet the additional post-class work of it is exhausting.
3. {no response}
4. Skipped the evening lecture—the day was too long.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. I enjoyed the evening lectures.
8. The lecture on the book trade in India was methodologically illuminating, even though outside my field.
9. Yes—I appreciated the lecture for the opportunity to engage with other topics in book history.
10. The Tuesday lecture was interesting, and our class visit to the Philadelphia Museum of Art was very enlightening.
11. Because of the baby, I really couldn't make it to any optional evening events.
12. Yes—great lecturer, appropriate.

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

1. Ask lots of questions! Class was always best when people broke into lectures.
2. No.
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. Do the readings in advance.
7. Well worth attending for anyone interested in Bible history or history of the book.
8. You would need to have literary and theological interests to make this course a good fit for you; it's only partly bibliographical/book historical.
9. {no response}
10. Come early if you want to do any individual research in Philadelphia, or if you want to visit any museums. The city has a lot to offer!
11. Not in particular.
12. Consider that this is not a true "bibliography of Bibles" course.

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

1. Really super fun, as usual.
2. As always, the most intense and engaging week of learning one could possibly have.
3. Outstanding. A wonderful opportunity.
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. A wonderful experience.
7. Thank you!
8. {private response}
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. PS's enthusiasm is infectious, and everyone's willingness to work and learn together was really inspiring. It was like a dream summer camp for book lovers.
12. Enthusiasm for bibles and reading!

Student Data

Number of respondents: 12 (of 12)

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

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 4 (33.33%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 6 (50%)

My situation does not fit any of the options above: 2 (16.67%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (33.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 8 (66.67%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (33.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 7 (58.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; my institution/employer paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

My institution/employer paid 100%: 3 (25%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 6 (50%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; my institution/employer paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)

Which of the following best describes your current occupation?

Library disciplines:

Archivist: 1 (8.33%)

Public services librarian: 1 (8.33%)

Special collections librarian: 1 (8.33%)

Student working toward a/n:

Ph.D./D.Phil: 2 (16.67%)

Professional educator:

Lecturer/adjunct: 2 (16.67%)

Assistant professor: 4 (33.33%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Post-doctoral fellow/researcher/scholar: 1 (8.33%)