

Ann Blair & David D. Hall
H-115: Book Production and Social Practice in Early Modern Europe and America
6–11 December 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. The pre-course reads were most helpful—as were the instructions for selecting materials for a research project.
 2. Yes.
 3. They were. I did not, though this topic is closely related to my studies.
 4. Very useful but I would have preferred something by James Raven; maybe something on the Stationers' Company; and Loughlin's Federalist chapter instead of her intro.
 5. Yes.
 6. The readings were helpful, but it would have been helpful to read more outside the British and North American context.
 7. Most of the pre-course readings were useful, though in general having the readings (and the course for that matter) cover America AND Europe was perhaps too broad. Occasionally readings in early American subjects felt less relevant and helpful to me. I do wish, also, that we addressed more of these readings in class.
 8. I found the readings useful but too plentiful (about three articles too many). A couple more readings by women would have been nice.
 9. Reading was a mixed bag.
 10. Somewhat useful, but could have used more narrative history for context.
 11. As a non-specialist, all readings were helpful for me to have some advance ideas about discussions that I would have in class.
 12. The readings were excellent, though I would suggest some modifications, though I think the necessary modifications were helpful.

- 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. AB's "Suggested research strategies in book history" will serve as an excellent resource for my work and teaching.
 2. Yes. Good survey of the field.
 3. Yes/Yes—though I might have liked a bibliography to take with me of useful sources for future work.
 4. Very good.
 5. It was useful to have the brief bios of the other students in H-115 as well as those in the other course ("The Art of the Book in Edo and Meiji Japan, 1615-1912"). AB and DH's activity and citation handouts were particularly useful in conjunction with my class notes.

6. The teaching materials given to us were very useful and I will definitely return to them, likely for teaching purposes.
7. Yes, handouts and additional readings distributed during class were illuminating and useful! I will refer to several of these handouts well after the course is complete.
8. I would have liked a pre-made course pack, bound with all of the week's handouts.
9. {no response}
10. Somewhat useful; yes, some will be useful later.
11. Everything was really relevant and thought provoking.
12. I liked when we had exercises that complemented the readings.

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

1. This was an enriching experience—much more book historical than other RBS courses, but filled with objects from Harvard's collections. A good balance of discussion and hands-on study.
2. No.
3. Slightly less rigorous/organized.
4. Equal.
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. {no response}
10. This one took more of an intellectual approach than others that were more of a practical nature.
11. This one was much better than the one that I took in the past.
12. At times too discussion heavy compared to other courses.

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. Discussions and critiques of scholarly articles were super helpful. Research projects and presentations also helpful; I hope to use the work done this week for the foundation of an article.
2. Just a good grounding in methodologies of the history of the book. Stimulating discussions of what other people worked on.
3. The project work for the week was very productive for me. I was most interested in methods and this addressed that.
4. Wide variety of backgrounds/experience of fellow students and their enthusiasm. Using "the real" thing to understand concepts.
5. Yes! Yes! Yes! All were relevant, even the most tangentially stated comment presented a possible avenue of inquiry for one or more of us. DH is encyclopedic in the breadth of information he presented on the history/culture of New England and Harvard.
6. I found the entire course relevant to my work, but in particular I found our class discussions on the distinction between bibliography and book history—defining it as a discipline—helpful.
7. I walk away with so many new ideas and a reinvigorated perspective on my own

- work. The combination of readings, seminar discussion, and research time in Houghton has led me to a wonderful new project that I am excited to pursue.
8. The discussions around books and the presentations were the highlight of the course. I learned about materials I'd never before seen, and I learned new ideas about familiar materials.
 9. The independent study aspect was the most valuable to me.
 10. Yes, I definitely have new insights.
 11. The in-depth discussion about the narrative styles and authors' intentions were well orchestrated with our works on primary texts.
 12. I think sessions where we move from reading discussion to practical/material encounter/exercise were best.
- 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. AB and DH made a great team. The conversations about American and European practices (reading, publication, circulation, &c.) were quite developed. I learned what I hoped to learn AND more—my colleagues were very learned.
 2. Yes. AB and DH are fantastic professors—ever enthusiastic and inexhaustibly erudite.
 3. Yes, no, yes. The project work might have been better scaffolded, but all else was great.
 4. Yes—I feel well equipped to deal with certain problems, but also to ask better questions.
 5. Yes. The last two days in particular were fabulous in terms of fulfilling my expectations. I had hoped to fill in gaps in my approach to book history and dissertation methodology, and I leave with more knowledge and a list of citations, suggestions, ideas, and inspiration with which to begin my project.
 6. I found the course very useful, but I would have liked more on strategies for actually tackling research for a book history project. We began to discuss this on the final day, and I would have welcomed more.
 7. The professors for this course were incredible. Though I think we tried to cover too much ground looking at both America and Europe, I wouldn't sacrifice DH or AB! They had a unique and effective co-teaching approach.
 8. I really enjoyed AB's teaching style and feel like I even learned some great teaching tips from her. And the course delivered on everything promised.
 9. I had hoped for more of a lecture component, as the seminar discussion format could get a little overwrought at times.
 10. Yes to all questions.
 11. I benefited from the instruction by all means.
 12. {private comment} Having a guest speaker Wednesday morning was great.
- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. I plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired in this course to create the syllabus for a book history survey—and for my writing and research and collecting (both personal and institutional collecting).
 2. I plan to write a book about appraisals and infuse it with book history.

3. To produce a conference presentation and frame my dissertation prospectus.
 4. Finishing a lot of unfinished projects.
 5. Dissertation writing, teaching undergraduates, organizing workshops with my institution's tiny special collections material.
 6. I plan to embark on dissertation research utilizing the skills I learned at this course. I was always intending to work on the history of reading, but I have a much bigger toolbox available to me now.
 7. In drafting the introduction to my current project, I will have new tools, ideas, and vocabulary to better frame my work.
 8. A lot of the cautionary examples about scholarly rigor relating to the economics of book production will feature more in my research.
 9. As a book cataloger, every morsel of historical context helps.
 10. In teaching my own classes and in researching my own institution's holdings.
 11. This skill would absolutely affect the ways in which I will approach rare books and manuscripts in my subjects.
 12. Assist me with research methodology.
- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*
1. The intellectual level was very high—on the order of a graduate-level seminar. Academics would certainly benefit, as would anyone conducting research or teaching on early modern books and MSS.
 2. Graduate students/junior scholars.
 3. Grad student and higher.
 4. Very high level of discourse.
 5. All—academics, graduate students, booksellers interested in provenance, curators/librarians.
 6. A higher level graduate student at minimum would benefit. There was a good deal of “in the know” discussion and someone below the Ph.D. level might feel left out.
 7. Our class ranged from grad students recently completing coursework to librarians and junior faculty. Everyone was able to participate thoughtfully.
 8. This was a little inconsistent. Anyone who has attended grad school/is attending grad school in relevant fields; however, specialist knowledge about American history would have been helpful at times.
 9. Very rigorous intellectually.
 10. Intellectual level is high. Probably docs and post-docs would benefit most.
 11. The discussion was rigorous, so I think this course would be suitable for junior faculty and upper-level graduate students.
 12. This course would work best for grad students as it is as it introduces ideas and approaches.
- 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. There were so many! Discoveries made during research sessions—suggestions from AB, DH, and my fellow classmates. One great moment: use of types in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.

2. 1) The methodological discussions; 2) Close contact and examinations of primary materials; 3) Insights from AB and DH.
3. DH was amazing to have in class—his anecdotes from the archives and methodological tips were great/useful.
4. Finally handling an unbound eighteenth-century pamphlet.
5. AB on annotating! DH on Foxe! Student presentations, discussion among our class. Aha moments came in our conversations with one another!
6. I had many “aha” moments with my objects, brought about thanks to the course.
7. Too many to share!
8. There were many of these moments when we were looking at books!
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. When DH recalled his research experiences and his personal path in scholarship, it really inspired me to think about how I could be successful as a scholar.
12. The last day when we presented objects to our classmates and received feedback and ideas was perfect.

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

1. It might be helpful to structure more of our hands-on exercises with books (in the way we did with Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*). {private comment}
2. It was pretty good as it was!
3. Less discussion of secondary readings and more books/exemplars/practical examples.
4. More from the Houghton staff—curators and catalogers, &c. {private comment}
5. N/A
6. I think I would have benefitted from a bit more time with my objects, even extending that time by an extra half hour.
7. {no response}
8. {private comment}
9. I would have liked a lecture or two from the faculty, more hands-on with the books, and less open discussion of the reading.
10. {no response}
11. It is great as it is.
12. I liked when we looked at objects/books, but sometimes we got bogged down in an object that was only helpful to some. Perhaps a more structured exercise?

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

1. Yes! Yes! Sign up.
2. Yes.
3. Yes, as usual. Yes.
4. Yes, and yes.
5. Yes, and yes! Already have!
6. Yes, because I had a scholarship.
7. Yes, definitely.
8. Absolutely.
9. Yes.

10. {no response}
 11. Absolutely.
 12. I would recommend the course to ABD students.
- 11) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*
1. Yes—the visit to Harvard’s archives was most illuminating, as was the tour at the very end of the week of the various collections (Hyde, Keats, Lowell) at Houghton.
 2. Yes.
 3. {no response}
 4. Yes—visit to University Archives.
 5. Great trip to Harvard Archives.
 6. Yes, I very much enjoyed our trip to the Harvard Archives.
 7. I found the trip to Harvard Archives interesting but perhaps too specialized.
 8. I do. The visit to the archive was engaging.
 9. Yes.
 10. {no response}
 11. {no response}
 12. The archives were a resource I was unaware of. A lovely 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. I found the Tinios lecture informative, if a tad long—it was still well worth the time! I was less engaged by the Hunter lecture, which seemed to ramble....
 2. Honestly, I thought they were a little too much. I would have rather had the time to do my own reading and research.
 3. I attended them—they were social occasions which is good to have during the week.
 4. Yes {private comment}—Emily Dickinson party a lovely surprise.
 5. Both were great, especially the opportunity to attend the lecture on Hokusai which was outside of my discipline of study, but incredibly worthwhile.
 6. I found both to be a great use of my time, but I will admit that a lecture on the very first night after a full day of class was taxing.
 7. I enjoyed both lectures immensely. Thank you.
 8. {private comment}
 9. They may have been the best part!
 10. {no response}
 11. Evening lectures were beyond my expectation. It would be great if we could have had more serious speakers.
 12. {no response}
- 13) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*
1. Check out the reading list and the other evaluations. Look at Harvard’s collections online before coming so as to make the best use of your research time.

2. I wish I had a better research question before the class so that I could plunge into the library collection immediately.
3. Do the reading twice over.
4. Take notes! Take pictures! Don't just use your computer.
5. {no response}
6. You should take the class! Especially with AB and DH. They are an invaluable resource.
7. {no response}
8. Trawl the Houghton catalog for gems before coming. It is 100% worth it, and it's a chance to imbibe fabulous material.
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. It would be necessary to read advance readings carefully.
12. {no response}

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

1. I am amazed at the quality of RBS instruction, and will definitely attend every year for as long as I can. Thank you, RBS and Harvard!
2. Away from the familiar ecology of one's own institution. I was able to interact with scholars from all across the nation and gain exposure to materials that are not always ready at hand.
3. Always worthwhile, enriching, and a real asset to novices to book history.
4. A joy.
5. Book a course!
6. Rare books, manuscripts, discussions, oh my!
7. An enriching experience for which I am truly grateful.
8. Intellectual. Many books and discussions. So many new friends.
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. Thankful for everything
12. {no response}

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: 5 (41.67%)

My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days: 3 (25%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule: 4 (33.33%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 2 (16.67%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 2 (16.67%)
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 2 (16.67%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 5 (41.67%)
My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 3 (25%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 1 (8.33%)
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 2 (16.67%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 3 (25%)
I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 3 (25%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 4 (33.33%)
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 3 (25%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 3 (25%)
I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 2 (16.67%)

Which of the following best describes your current occupation?

Library disciplines:

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 1 (8.33%)
Curator: 1 (8.33%)
Special collections librarian: 1 (8.33%)

Student working toward a/n:

Ph.D./D.Phil: 4 (33.33%)

Professional educator:

Assistant professor: 4 (33.33%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Other: 1 (8.33%)