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H-35: Modern Art of the Book  
31 July–5 August 2016

### **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. No.
  2. It was a long, but worthwhile list. I had read some previously and enjoyed the online references quite a bit.
  3. Our reading list consisted of a book and several articles, some quite lengthy. While they were helpful, they were not referenced explicitly in the class. I did not attempt to familiarize myself with the instructor's scholarship before the class. {private response}
  4. The required pre-course reading assignments were useful and not onerous. It was very helpful that JD provided most of the required texts via Dropbox.
  5. The pre-assignments were a very good way to get an initial handle on the subject. {private response}
  6. Yes, the pre-course reading was helpful. It was useful to have both books and articles to refer to. (I found affordable used copies of the books.)
  7. They were helpful to an extent. It would be nice if they were placed in sequential order, or according to a timeline. Most provided good background for the class. I only read the required reading for the class and felt adequately prepared. (I also skipped a few articles that appeared repetitive.)
  8. Yes, the pre-course readings were valuable preparation.
  9. The pre-course readings were excessive; the professor did not refer to them in class so it felt like a waste of time and effort to read them all. Please narrow down and focus the readings. Do we need to read the instructor's book? How about a chapter?
  10. Reading lists will be very useful after the course, as a reference. They were not useful for/before the course, and they were not referred to during the course.
  
- 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. Skippy, but adequate. Should include blank note pages.
  2. It could be useful to group the show order in the workbook (especially for SC materials) as well as to add imprint, format information to the list, if possible.
  3. The workbook was slim but useful for following the ideas and materials presented in class. The supplementary readings are great, and I will refer to them in the future. I would like the course readings to have been used more. Perhaps they could be put into the workbook, or students encouraged to bring laptops to tie the readings into the discussions. {private response}
  4. The course workbook will continue to be a valuable resource after the class, and it

- was particularly helpful to have a list of all the books we viewed over the course of the week.
5. The workbook was useful, especially the book lists for class periods. For future courses, perhaps leaving space for notes on each book or only printing lists on one side of the page would help for organization of notes within the workbook itself.
  6. It was very helpful to have the checklist of works we viewed in class. This helped with note taking. The suggested further reading and resources we are compiling as a class will be a useful resource.
  7. The booklist is invaluable. I am bringing it back to my institution to check over as my new August project.
  8. Absolutely valuable as a list to refer back to and while taking notes.
  9. It would be nice to have a course packet with room for notes. The checklist and citations are helpful. A photo of the book cover of each work would have been a great take away.
  10. Absolutely.
- 3) *If you've taken previous RBS courses, how did this one compare?*
1. N/A
  2. It was a very art-centered course focused primarily on art history and criticism. It was on par with other courses intellectually.
  3. N/A
  4. This course (and the instructor) certainly met the standards of RBS. I have taken three classes in all, and I think I learned more in this one than in the others. This one was also the most challenging for me and took me out of my comfort zone, which is a good thing.
  5. This was a very good class, but was slightly less polished than the other courses I've taken.
  6. I prefer this class to the RBS class I've taken before. JD gave us a historical framework to start with and the SC viewings were thematically selected to facilitate deeper engagement.
  7. They are all taught on a high academic level.
  8. N/A
  9. N/A
  10. N/A
- 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. The first day. Yes, I'd like to write about poetry books as artists' books.
  2. This course has helped me frame both my work as an artist as well as the book art works that I have seen/will see within the historical viewpoint of how the modern art of the book form has evolved.
  3. I had little knowledge of the arts of the book pre-twentieth century, which is the period the first half of this class focused on. I thought it was extremely helpful, and while I did not think we would spend so much time on it, I'm grateful to have this exposure. I did walk away with several new project plans I hope to explore as I begin my career as an academic librarian!
  4. This course really broadened my understanding of what an artists' book is and

- isn't. I am excited to get back to my institution and think about my collection in the context of what I learned this week. I found the last session that was about creating an acquisition policy for artists' books to be particularly helpful.
5. This class taught a set of skills for examining and evaluating artists' books in an objective rather than subjective manner. This isn't something I've ever had a skill at wrapping my head around, but JD presented it in such a way that I have a much better chance at putting aside my personal opinion of an item and evaluating it for a broader audience than just myself.
  6. I found the historical framework and appreciation for bookmaking processes invaluable. I have a better understanding of how book makers of different eras have approached bookmaking.
  7. Discussing the dialog between illustration, content, and historical context. Seeing the development of artists' books play out in front of us over the week.
  8. Discussing nuts and bolts for a potential collection development strategy and justification was very helpful, though that was not the focus of the course. So many interesting aspects and ideas...too many to list.
  9. This course is a mile wide and an inch deep. It did fill a few gaps. But I was hoping for more depth. Just looking at a lot of books was not so helpful without greater context or discussion.
  10. Collection development aspects of the course and the practical/functional (critical) assessment of the books/materials. I appreciated the foundational examples (Blake, Morris).
- 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. Wish we had spent more time on the nineteenth century.
  2. Yes, but I would have enjoyed seeing more examples from contemporary book artists even if only online. I did not expect to learn as much about the curatorial decision making process, but am pleased to have been part of these discussions.
  3. The instructor helped me acquire the skills mentioned in the course description. There were many flashes of insight. I do think we sped through some of the material. Asia, Africa, and Latin America were absent. {private response}
  4. Definitely. Everything that was promised in the course description was covered in class.
  5. JD made a concerted effort to address the subject in a meaningful way for the present class after evaluating our individual needs and goals on the first day of class.
  6. I have a toolbox of questions to approach books and librarianship with.
  7. Yes, JD is a wonderful lecturer, and I will be processing our discussions for a while.
  8. Absolutely. Everything was covered well. I learned all I had hoped to learn and so much more.
  9. It felt like the instructor did not prepare for this class, but just winged it, teaching off the cuff. For such a brilliant scholar and educator to be as unprepared for this course was a little disappointing.
  10. For the most part, the course delivered what it promised. The contemporary-digital section could have been developed more thoroughly, as well as updating the

resource list. More discussions about reading approaches with artists' books.

- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. Translate the critical criteria JD introduced into literary judgment.
  2. To help me describe the artist choices I am making in relation to the broader landscape of book arts.
  3. I feel I can go to my institution and make a solid case for why certain artists' books are worthy of acquiring. I also feel like I have a good framework for evaluating books at book fairs or quoted by dealers.
  4. I am going to re-evaluate many items in my collection using the knowledge I gained in this course.
  5. My institution's developing acquisitions policy will benefit greatly from the knowledge I acquired in this course.
  6. I recently curated an exhibition of library and archive materials that I have been meaning to make an online exhibition for. I plan to use my new knowledge to take a more informed look at the (physical) exhibition for the (virtual) online exhibition. I have ideas for other works to include in this exhibition. I will assess the library's collection and consider acquisitions. I am also involved in an upcoming publication, and will use concepts from this class to guide its conception and production.
  7. Working to assess my institution's collections with an aim to work on our collection development policy.
  8. Firstly, I will assess what we already have with a more informed eye. Then I'll determine how we might begin to build a collection, and pitch those ideas to others.
  9. I'm not sure.
  10. It will help me develop collection policies for modern books at my institution as well as develop a reading collection.
- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*
1. Curators, librarians—not too technical.
  2. JD is able to speak at great length on many topics. The intellectual level is relatively high, though not inaccessible. A curator/librarian would seem to be the best candidate for the course.
  3. The class was of a high intellectual level. Many references to different artistic movements, artists, musicians, &c. I think artists, curators, librarians, book dealers {private response} would benefit a great deal from this course.
  4. Librarians working with (or hoping to build) artists' book collections will benefit the most. The intellectual level is high. The discussions were very thought provoking and, at times, challenging.
  5. The first half of the week relied heavily on historical knowledge, a strict interpretation of fact. The latter half of the week became much more cerebral—"how do we interpret what looks at first glance as nonsense?" for example. Definitely flexed some new muscles for someone not accustomed to modern art.
  6. The course provides a lot of great food for thought. Great for those who are intellectually curious. Also addresses practical concerns of collection development

- and teaching.
7. High intellectual level. I think librarians tasked with working with artists' books on any level, from acquiring them to teaching them, would benefit from this course. JD opened my eyes to new ways of "reading" these books I hadn't considered before.
  8. I think it varies. I think the variety of backgrounds among the students enhances the class discussion.
  9. Someone with little or no knowledge of creative publishing from the nineteenth century to the present. A library science student, but perhaps a library professional. The instructor is not a librarian/library professional and some of the concepts taught are off the mark.
  10. Early career librarians, curators of collections, folks very familiar with the genealogies of modern books. Good intro course for beginners.
- 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. "Possession" is an art-world/movement consideration possibly applicable to the scholarly discourse on books.
  2. The phrase "production value versus conception value" will be branded on my mind as I look at and create artists' books.
  3. The instructor was extremely knowledgeable, and I thought her anecdotes and personal experiences added a great deal to the class.
  4. My "aha" moment was when I finally understood (or at least think I understood) conceptual artists' books; i.e., the idea making the work vs. the execution of making the work.
  5. The lively exchanges between JD and artists' books enthusiasts generated a great environment for building up multiple appreciations and interpretations of a single item. Examining "unsuccessful" artists' books was a good way to understand the successful ones by providing stark contrasts.
  6. Appreciating the evolution of the concept/identity of Artist. Thinking about how a book works. I enjoyed the experiential approach to the class. We looked at what we saw there before us, and worked with our growing understanding of the bookmaking tradition.
  7. Really, the best educational moments were the daily sessions where we looked at the SC material and compared and contrasted relationships.
  8. There were so many...and they were partially because of the rich selection of materials brought up from SC each day. I appreciated the visit from Molly Schwartzburg as well, sharing her ideas about collection development.
  9. Learning that the instructor is really interested in literary moments, language, and digital humanities. Her eyes sparkle when talking about digital humanities and media studies.
  10. Seeing the production/conceptual pedigrees of works and where they fall on the "modern book" spectrum. Very useful to see "bad" examples to illuminate interesting and transformative work.

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

1. More Socratic dialog.
2. The course materials focused, understandably, on the time period that JD was an active artist. I think that it would have been better to edit out some material to make room for artists who are actively creating work today.
3. More from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
4. Being able to handle the artists' books would have enhanced our understanding of many of them. Having duplicate teaching copies of some of the books would be very beneficial.
5. There was some confusion in terms of which books needed to be pulled from UVA's SC. A review of materials before the next iteration of this class would prove useful.
6. Bring in Russian avant-garde books to the collection.
7. Some incorrect material was pulled from SC, and other books were forgotten, which jarred the class a bit. It would be better to have the carts/materials looked over first before teaching for the day/week. There was also an entire section of books, from Thursday second period, that we didn't get to.
8. Maybe build in a slower-paced time for students to really examine and handle some of the related items in the RBS collection. Perhaps an optional evening activity before the other events.
9. If the instructor prepared more, perhaps coming a few days early to review books pulled. Taking time to also do the readings and discuss connections to the lectures and presentations. Preview PowerPoint slides for citations and quality images.
10. Pushing or challenging the western conception of "modernity" or modern period, including more work from the global south-periphery. De-privileged/de-centering NYC-LA/Europe. Can the history of the book be told from a different global perspective? More emphasis on women artists especially for the canonical works.

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

1. Yes, though perhaps not to literary scholars.
2. Yes, and yes.
3. Would highly recommend.
4. Yes, and yes.
5. Yes. It's a very good course especially for anyone in acquisitions.
6. Absolutely. I only wish it wasn't over. It was a wonderful and worthwhile experience.
7. Yes! Yes!
8. Yes, and yes!
9. I was hoping for more. The instructor has a great reputation. It felt like she was coasting through teaching our class. Her knowledge is not as current as I had thought/hoped. Why was she so unprepared?
10. Yes.

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

1. Yes.
2. I have done plenty of letterpress printing, but it is always enjoyable to print.
3. I did enjoy the field trip. It made me appreciate the work put into making the materials we looked at.
4. We went to the VABC and had the opportunity to work with letterpress. It was a new experience for me, and one that really helped to enhance my understanding of the printing process.
5. The field trip to the VABC was a fun, hands-on experience to give perspective in terms of the traditional methods of book production.
6. Definitely. I have a better appreciation for the craftsmanship in bookmaking. The time and effort involved are more palpable after our visit to the VABC.
7. Working with letterpress at the VABC was fun and was a good way to have us consider and understand the amount of time and patience that goes into constructing/producing a letterpress book.
8. Yes, the trip to the VABC was time well spent. Letterpress and hand-setting type was central to our understanding of the labor in many of the works discussed.
9. We spent half a day in a letterpress shop setting type and printing a keepsake. This was very helpful and instructive. Having it on the first or second day would have been more impactful than on the fourth. I loved it!
10. Yes. The letterpress experience was eye opening and very humbling.

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. Lectures were great. I didn't attend others.
2. The lectures were excellent! They were a bit long, but quite informative and enriching.
3. The evening lectures were time well spent.
4. JD's lecture was outstanding; it was a very good use of my time.
5. The evening events are wonderful. The lectures this year were compelling and interesting, and Booksellers' Night is an ideal way to socialize and revel in your cohort's various specialties in the book world.
6. The lectures were fascinating. I could have done without the Lynd Ward documentary. It lacked scholastic rigor and drama.
7. I find the lectures valuable as a group activity, but was not impressed by the Monday night lecture. Booksellers' Night is a nice activity to participate in with classmates, but after attending a few years in a row, the material/stock doesn't change so there isn't much for me to browse.
8. Yes, the lectures, the film, and Booksellers' Night all have value and enhance the experience.
9. All good. Dinner sign ups on the first night could have been done more frequently.
10. Movie Night was good. JD's lecture was excellent and accessible. The first lecture about italics was too navel gazing and esoteric. It has a limited audience.

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

1. Be prepared to step outside your normal perspective if you are a scholar.
2. Be open to exploring the nineteenth- and twentieth-century landscape of visual, cultural, and book production without a seat belt and a map that is inherently (and necessarily) fragmented.
3. Do the readings, take some notes, and bring them to class. Speak up during discussions.
4. Don't worry if you don't have (or don't know if you have) artists' books in your collection.
5. If you don't do any of the other pre-reading, at the very least, read JD's book. It really provides a solid foundation for what you'll be looking at.
6. Take it. JD is incredible! A scholar and artist. Great mind. Knowledge of the trade. An eye for books. And someone who creates an open dialog and empowers students.
7. There is a lot of material covered, and we ran out of time. Be prepared to take lots of notes and to engage with the material. JD will make you think!
8. Be prepared to take copious notes!
9. A class just focused on contemporary artists' books (including zines, sculptural books, twenty-first-century publishing) would be great! Whether by this instructor or someone else.
10. {no response}

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

1. "Production value" matched "conception value."
2. Do you need a spoon or milk with that book?
3. Awesome!
4. Outstanding, as usual!
5. RBS is where I go to revitalize my love of books after a hard year of working in a windowless basement makes me start to question my career choices. {private response}
6. "Does it need a jelly spoon?" "Here's some milk?" (Our fun adages of assessment...you had to be there.)
7. Looking forward to the course offerings for next year!
8. A high quality whirlwind.
9. I look forward to taking more RBS classes in the future.
10. Sharpen your pencils, buckle your seatbelts, folks!

## **Student Data**

*Number of respondents:* 10 (of 12)

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

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 8 (80%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 1 (10%)

My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (10%)

*Who paid your RBS tuition costs?*

I paid 100% myself:

My institution/employer paid 100%: 7 (70%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 3 (30%)

*Who paid your RBS housing expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 3 (30%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 3 (30%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 2 (20%)

I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 2 (20%)

*Who paid your RBS travel expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 1 (10%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (40%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (10%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 2 (20%)

I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 2 (20%)

*Which of the following **best** describes your current occupation?*

**Library disciplines:**

Conservator/binder/preservation librarian: 1 (10%)

Digital collections librarian: 1 (10%)

Library administrator: 1 (10%)

Special collections librarian: 4 (40%)

**Student working toward a/n:**

M.L.I.S./M.L.S.: 1 (10%)

Ph.D./D.Phil: 1 (10%)

**Other occupations/vocations:**

Other: 1 (10%)