

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 readings that I did were very interesting and made me overall more educated. However, the total list was too long. Because it was so clear that I wouldn't be able to finish the whole thing, I didn't try to read beyond the six pieces identified as most important. I would have read ten or twelve, but the 50+ on the list was unrealistic.
2. {no response}
3. Overall I found the readings useful for rounding out my understanding of the field, but there were A LOT of them and we only discussed two in any detail. I'm not certain the time commitment was justified.
4. The readings were stimulating and compelling. {private response}
5. I think trimming the required reading list would be useful for future sessions.
6. Definitely useful. I'm happy to have such an extensive theoretical corpus at my disposal.
7. The readings were voluminous but useful, especially the Gell. I did not get to the supplemental readings.
8. Somewhat. We only really got into one major reading in depth. I would recommend making it clearer that extra readings can act as a resource list, as not having the chance to discuss as a group equals might as well read on my own.
9. Many of the readings were useful and will be useful in future research and teaching, but I do wish we had discussed them more in class. If the class isn't going to incorporate the vast majority of the readings, they should be classified as "further" or "suggested" reading, not required for a specific deadline.
10. Useful, but too much. I would keep section one and only the asterisked articles. Context for readings would be helpful.
11. Yes. I especially appreciated the anthropological and art historical readings. This was an opportunity to engage with literatures and methodologies I was not very familiar with.
12. I found nearly all the pre-course readings helpful, especially in conjunction with each other. Simply doing the readings was a valuable education in itself.

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 collection of materials MFS circulated as an upload was very useful.
2. {private response}
3. {no response}
4. {no response}

5. Tough to predict. Since we had many good conversations, we rarely cracked the workbook.
6. I think it might be useful. It overlapped in some (if not many) ways with DesBib, which I had already taken.
7. I looked through the workbook, and I wish we had used it more as a guide for discussion. There are good questions there that I felt could have offered structure and focus that were sometimes lacking.
8. Course handouts will be helpful for teaching. We didn't use all of the course workbook materials in class.
9. We didn't use the binder at all (though it makes a fine holder for loose papers), so N/A.
10. Workbook barely used. Don't know if lab questions were helpful.
11. The teaching workbook (digital files) is great. I may adapt some of the labs and worksheets for my own courses.
12. We seldom used these. I found the lab lists helpful, and would suggest expanding them so as to match the "museum" format in DesBib.

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

1. This was my favorite that I've taken.
2. {private response}
3. This course was very different given the seminar format. I find it hard to compare with the more praxis-based courses I've taken before.
4. The course was more advanced.
5. As good as DesBib.
6. Very solid.
7. This course was much more theoretical and wide-ranging than my previous RBS courses, with a broader range of interests among students.
8. This was much less focused and tightly organized than the first (DesBib), which functions like a battleship.
9. I have, and each has been so different it's hard to compare. However, I'd say there's been a strong positive correlation between the level of attention to specific objects and the quality of the course.
10. Quite different in that it's more conceptual, theoretical, practice oriented; less work with objects and those objects generally of less interest (with the exception of Absence and Presence lab, which was great!).
11. This one offered somewhat less in the way of concrete techniques and skills, but more in the way of higher-order conversations about applying those skills.
12. This course involved more free-flowing discussion and much less practicing of concrete skills.

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. Hearing fellow fellows' project presentations and their teaching demos.
2. {private response}
3. I greatly enjoyed hearing about other fellows' work. I wish we'd had more time to discuss. This could be a dynamic workshop rather than a series of talks.
4. I very much enjoyed talking to the other fellows and hearing about their work.

5. Too soon to judge. More reflection is required, but all the content was interesting and opened up new avenues of inquiry.
6. Exposure to object-oriented theories and methodologies in the readings and in fellows' presentations. I did walk away with a new insight into bibliography across the disciplines.
7. I really enjoyed the other fellows' presentations and, even more so, our discussions of the challenges and limitations of bibliographical methods in fields not my own. I also appreciated our discussion of pedagogy, and will apply it in my own work.
8. I most enjoyed the opportunity to have a discussion based on readings and individual projects. I walked away with a to-do list based on hearing the experiences and research of other fellows.
9. The best parts were the student presentations and the discussions of readings since those were the most highly focused.
10. Presentations, experiences, and ideas from other fellows, learning content and practices. Suggested readings for reference that came up throughout the week from fellows and MFS.
11. Yes. A couple of moments came out of presentations. Beginning to see a different way of conceptualizing and accessing the world of social relations that's not represented in print texts from my period.
12. Intellectual exchange with classmates, especially outside the classroom, was especially stimulating for me. I also met several librarians who alerted me to collections I hope to explore in the coming year.

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. The content of this course was really made by the participants. MFS is an incomparable resource, but he didn't really teach skills in this course (except the "how to fingerprint a book"!).
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. Same as above (Q4). Rich content and provoking, but I'll wait until I can reflect more.
6. Yes. I thought the course struck a nice balance.
7. I'm still not sure what we mean by "critical bibliography," but I'm also much less vexed about that fact than I was at the beginning of the week.
8. I thought we could have delved deeper into the material if a more focused conversation had been sustained around a more clearly defined set of questions.
9. I learned a lot, much of it from discussion with classmates rather than lecture.
10. Several labs left all but untouched; don't know their purpose. Since class was discussion based, we talked about many interesting things and reached some insights, but hard to assess "skill acquisition."
11. I would have liked more concrete discussions of archaeological/anthropological/art history methodologies and how to apply them to understanding book history.
12. The course was not oriented toward skills acquisition, but more toward developing a conviction that certain skills are valuable, which I do think succeeded. I had

hoped the discussion would help me attain greater mastery over the readings, and that the labs would focus more directly and intensively on applying skills. The course was less effective in those two respects.

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

1. To improve my teaching and to give me new ideas for research directions. I took tons of notes on secondary sources to read.
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. I plan to use the skills acquired in class in my work as a scholar and teacher.
5. I will continue working while I meditate on peer feedback and Gell.
6. To improve my teaching with objects and also the rigor of my research and writing.
7. I want to spend some time reflecting on the issues this week raised for me. I'm not exactly sure how it will show up in my teaching or research.
8. In developing my own research project, trying out more bibliographical methods, and seeing where they lead. Trying out teaching exercises we discussed in class.
9. {no response}
10. Enriching the methodological and theoretical precision of my research regarding material objects. Inspiring and energizing my teaching.
11. To inform my teaching. New assignments to try, new books I could teach my students.
12. No doubt, they will enrich my current project in ways I cannot yet quantify.

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

1. The level was the highest of any RBS course I've taken. Great for advanced grad students and faculty.
2. {private response}
3. This course has a narrow audience (Mellon Fellows) but I could imagine a future version centered around workshopping bibliographical work in progress.
4. Junior scholars.
5. The course is great for the Mellon Fellows. It's a pleasure to see smart people thinking.
6. Very high! Those engaging deeply with object-oriented methodologies would benefit.
7. High. Well-caffeinated Mellon Fellows.
8. This is a specialized course for fellows, but could certainly benefit academics looking to get into bibliography for the first time.
9. N/A as restricted to Mellon Fellows.
10. Early tenure track. Slightly less useful for graduate student or tenure.
11. A Mellon Fellow and, more broadly, other colleagues teaching at the college and university level.
12. I think the course is best suited to an audience of academics who wish to absorb powerful arguments for the value of a capacious approach to the study of books as material objects, and who want to learn about their colleagues' work.

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. Just learning a little about the research and fields of these classmates who examine cultures and periods very different from my own. The mix/diversity of projects (if not the ethnicities of participants) was excellent.
2. {private response}
3. {no response}
4. The two “aha” moments that I vividly remember is when the instructor explained what critical bibliography means and defined the difference and the relationship between bibliography and book history.
5. N/A
6. Too many to remember. I would have to go back to my notes. Coming from a combination of MFS and other fellows’ expertise.
7. I loved hearing the other fellows’ presentations.
8. I learned some technical terms I had not encountered before!
9. {no response}
10. There were several, mostly specific to fellow presentations. Learned most from cross-disciplinary/regional colleagues.
11. Teaching presentations on Friday. Wednesday discussion of Gell.
12. I admire MFS’s knowledge, experience, and rhetorical skill, and I will carry his stories and advice with me after the course. Perhaps even more educational was the example of my brilliant classmates’ approach to analyzing and explaining the books they study.

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

1. I know that the presentations were longer in an earlier iteration of the course and then shortened due to participant feedback, but I’d actually like to see longer presentations (30 or 45 minutes?) and MUCH longer Q&A for each. More feedback from MFS would also be nice and helpful.
2. {private response}
3. MFS is a font of knowledge, scholar, and teacher. Occasionally in this class, however, he dominated discussion when I was hoping to learn from my colleagues.
4. Perhaps just a little more time in SC.
5. N/A
6. {no response}
7. More critical reflection on the history of bibliography as a field (since it was prominent in the readings).
8. With more room for student contributions that depart from a more clearly defined question but are allowed to develop as a free-flowing conversation.
9. More focused discussions, whether structured around readings or specific questions. More object-oriented discussions (talking to other students over the lab stations was often the most instructive).
10. More thorough, earlier, structured discussions of the readings and their themes. MFS could allow more space for students to speak to one another without bouncing through him.
11. I wonder about inviting in a guest seminar leader for one day or half a session,

someone with expertise in another object oriented discipline (anthropology, archaeology, &c.) to discuss those methods.

12. Please see Q5. I suggest more intensive discussion of the readings, more even allotment of time for presentations, and more intensive and directed lab sessions.

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

1. Course is obligatory for Mellon Fellows—and free.
2. N/A
3. N/A
4. N/A
5. N/A. Yes.
6. Yes.
7. I certainly feel I got Andrew W. Mellon's money's worth.
8. I might recommend to newcomers to the field, but found the course extremely loose given how much time we had together.
9. Yes.
10. Yes, I learned a lot and feel informed and inspired both in my particular work and for professional work generally.
11. Yes.
12. I would only recommend the course to the subset of academics who match the description in my answer to Q7.

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

1. SC visits were great. Wish that the crazy long RBS days allowed for more free time in SC!
2. {private response}
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. I thought the first SC visit dragged a bit. Why not have Fellows give ten minute presentations spread over two sessions?
6. Yes, although after three RBS courses, I feel spoiled and felt some experiences were repetitive.
7. Yes.
8. Our trips to SC were helpful but felt rushed.
9. N/A (unless SC counts, then yes).
10. SC is always nice, though I didn't see much new this time.
11. Yes. Especially appreciated the assignment that pushed us into UVA SC.
12. N/A

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. {no response}
2. {no response}

3. {no response}
4. The lectures were very interesting.
5. Talks were great!
6. {no response}
7. Both lectures (Drucker and McLeod) were genuinely interesting and informative.
8. Booksellers' Night was fun. The lectures were interesting, although I was not particularly impressed by the conclusions offered by the speakers.
9. Wednesday's lecture was an interesting story about typography buried in some of the worst historical analysis I have ever encountered.
10. Lectures always interesting and provocative. Receptions generative of fellowship and intellectual discussions.
11. Enjoyed the lectures very much. They were thought provoking. Speakers were lively and engaging.
12. I very much enjoyed the two lectures I attended, especially that of Randy McLeod.

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

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. If CritBib is meant to be a more applied seminar, more time for open discussion and response among the participants should be encouraged.
4. {no response}
5. N/A
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. Don't worry as much as I did about completing the reading list in advance!
10. Good for theorizing academic profession with material focus, and for research/teaching techniques.
11. Your instructor is open to feedback, to being pushed and challenged, which is great. Take advantage of that!
12. I would suggest that such a person think carefully about whether s/he is or isn't looking for the classic RBS course that crams five full days worth of informative, experiential learning, and practice into the week. This course is very different and is likely to be less satisfying for someone with that aim.

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

1. Brilliant classmates + active and entertaining curation of discussion by MFS + omniscient and omnicompetent RBS staff = week of intellectual heaven.
2. Intellectually compelling!
3. {no response}
4. Be smart!!!
5. Wily Jesuit
Bibliographic wonder
The tired fellows
6. My brain is fried but in a great way!

7. Bibliotastic!
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. Fellows distribute
Personhood; tensions; hope of
Change in self, field, world
11. A rich exchange of ideas, materials, and practices.
12. A pleasant and stimulating experience. A bit too relaxed and unstructured for my
taste, but valuable in many ways.

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: 1 (8.33%)

My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days:
2 (16.67%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 9
(75%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

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

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 11 (91.67%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 1 (8.33%)

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

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 2 (16.67%)

I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 1 (8.33%)

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

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: 2
(16.67%)

I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 1 (8.33%)

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

Student working toward a/n:

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

Professional educator:

Lecturer/adjunct: 1 (8.33%)

Assistant professor: 6 (50%)

Associate professor: 1 (8.33%)