

Benjamin J. Nourse
H-140 The History & Culture of the Tibetan Book
12–17 June

Narrative Course Evaluations

1) *Were the pre-course reading assignments useful? Are there any readings that you would like to see added or removed in future years?*

1. The readings were stimulating but a bit difficult to track down, but RBS made electronic PDFs available.
2. The readings were very useful and gave me a reference point to go back to if I needed to.
3. Yes, the pre-course readings were abundant and helpful. It would have been an advantage to have them a little further in advance of the course.
4. Yes—very well chosen as preparation for the course.
5. Fantastic! Readings! The best one is Jesper Trier's *Ancient Paper of Nepal: Results of ethno-technological field work on its manufacture, uses, and history – with analyses of bast, paper, and manuscripts*. Maybe UVA/RBS could purchase books on Himalayan papermaking and A. Helman Wazny's *Mustang Archives: Handwritten documents via the study of papermaking traditions of Nepal*.
6. Yes. Cannot think of any I would add or remove. I particularly appreciated the introduction to Tibetan Buddhism that was sent separately a couple of weeks before class.

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. Excellent workbook! The pace was very intense but the instructor was very skilled. The fellow students were highly competent in special collections. Both the instructor and class were very prepared.
2. I am very grateful to have received such a thorough course workbook. It will be very useful to my work moving forward.
3. Our workbook was excellent and will certainly be a resource for further exploration and sharing!
4. Tremendous amount of materials I have never seen before.
5. Yes, yes, yes!
6. It was very helpful. I really appreciated the vocabulary sections. The materials that were distributed were also very useful. Something as simple as seeing the edge

decoration on a textbook and then being able to ask about its significance is a great benefit.

3) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your RBS course? Did you walk away with any “aha!” moments, new ideas, or project plans?*

1. It was incredibly stimulating and on point to my interests. I hope to review my notes and start doing research. The guidance in handling material was invaluable.
2. BN is so knowledgeable and provided so much detail and specific examples of items that are either held at—or pertinent to the materials held at—my institution. It has been an invaluable experience for me.
3. Many “aha” moments and such a rich experience that will continue to generate questions, which will lead to further study. I am considering ways to share and “carry the torch.”
4. I learned a great deal about Buddhism, Tibet and “the T. Book.” Very well explained.
5. So many fantastic moments—knowledge gained will definitely inform coming projects.
6. The things we discussed in class will directly impact my work, mostly by giving me a better framework for understanding Tibetan materials. My institution has never provided cloth coverings for Tibetan books but if I had an “aha” moment, it was thinking about how we might do that in certain circumstances.

4) *Did the instructors help you to acquire all the skills and information promised in the course description? Did you learn what you had hoped to learn?*

1. It was incredible. Much more impact than I had anticipated. I felt that my interests were addressed in class. I feel that the instructor is the top of the field.
2. Yes—and more.
3. Yes, it was definitely what was promised and more besides.
4. Yes and MUCH more.
5. Yes—and more. I didn’t expect to come away with a practical knowledge of texts since I don’t read Tibetan, but the instructor presented many pragmatic methods for identifying texts by genre that are indicated on the page. The “architecture of the Tibetan book” was EXTREMELY helpful and I feel confident now that I have a grasp of basic genres of texts and how they relate to the book form and the shape of text on the page.
6. Yes, definitely learned what I hoped to learn.

5) *Are there other ways in which the course could have been improved?*

1. The experience of the Lawn is a once-in-a-lifetime one, although the Alderman Library

might be more efficient. Pencil sharpener was lent by a class member but it might be needed.

2. I found all of the content to be so interesting and useful. The only thing I might suggest is that it could have been taught as two separate courses or focused more narrowly. It was a lot of really great information, though.
3. I cannot think of any, other than sending out reading recommendations a little further in advance.
4. It is BN's second year at RBS. He did a GREAT job, one of the best!!
5. Our guest speaker was ill—so sadly we missed that but I would love to see future iterations of the course with a guest speaker, i.e. Dorothy Wong (UVA, works on Dunhuang mss.), the Tibetan librarian at SC, &c.
6. Nothing comes to mind.

6) *Who might benefit the most from taking this RBS course?*

1. Anyone interested in Buddhism, texts, or art; anyone interested in pothi styled books of India.
2. People with an interest in book arts, religious studies, or Tibetan history would all benefit.
3. As a history course, I think it would be valuable not just to library practitioners (curators, &c.) but to history faculty and scholars, to allure them to the study of book history. I suggest recommending RBS history courses to university history departments as part of the emerging sub-discipline: The History of the Book (which is beautifully interdisciplinary).
4. People curious about Tibet or rare book dealing; library personnel.
5. Librarians cataloging this material, historians, conservators, those interested in Silk Road histories and Himalayan and Buddhist book history.
6. I think the course could be beneficial to anyone interested in Tibet or Tibetan book history. They don't necessarily have to come from the rare book side of the equation.

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

1. Yes! It is a good value for the experience. Yes! I would definitely recommend this.
2. Yes. BN is knowledgeable and generously selected and shared so many beautiful/rare/unique materials with us. The students in our course came from such diverse backgrounds and he handled every question/diversion in the discussions with such patience and good humor. I learned so much from my classmates as well.
3. Yes, definitely, and I would recommend it enthusiastically (I already have!).
4. Yes and yes.
5. YES! YES!
6. Yes and absolutely. I already have at least one colleague in mind that I will recommend

the course to.

- 8) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*
1. No trips except SC. Excellent trip—very courteous staff.
 2. Yes—both the trip to SC and our block printing exercise were very worthwhile learning experiences.
 3. We visited SC. Very fascinating items. I wish we had heard or seen more about the {illegible} here. I will investigate online!
 4. Yes, Small library.
 5. The trip to SC—definitely a highlight, though the UVA collection of Tibetan books is small. I don't think there are others nearby. It would be wonderful to have this course offered at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana (there is another course there). They have a wonderful collection of Tibetan books there and a premier scholar/practitioner of Tibetan paper and material aspects of Tibetan books, Jim Canary (head of conservation, Lilly Libraries). A co-taught class there would be excellent—with BN's incredible knowledge of the texts and printed/cultural history, and Jim's knowledge of the material aspects of the books, it would be a magical pairing—and one that would allow a more extensive visit with special collections material (and probably some papermaking too!). Loved printing; all the rich visual material, short films, and videos really brought the Tibetan culture alive! Thanks to the instructor for a wonderful course.
 6. Yes, we went to SC to see a number of texts. It was definitely worthwhile to spend a session there. We also spent one session printing, which was both fun and informative.
- 9) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*
1. The instructor is both compassionate and an expert. Books are the gateway to the treasury of Buddhist thought and medicine. Life-changing!
 2. Doing the advance readings is very useful.
 3. I wish others the good fortune of experiencing this captivating course with this engaging teacher.
 4. DO IT even if you are just curious.
 5. Do the readings—they're wonderful and enrich all aspects of the course experience. RBS needs TRAYS for manuscripts that fit these pecha/pothi-format books! The books were poorly supported and this reflects the "Western" book history that is mostly taught at RBS.
 6. I think my only advice would be to try to make it through as much advance reading as possible. I think that it really helped to pave the way for understanding and being able to digest all of the information in class.

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

1. Tibetan books carry a lot of power and karma. But the instructor really helped us navigate to the other side of the river.
2. {no response}
3. “When the student is ready, the teacher will appear”: experienced abundantly in this class.
4. LOVE.
5. The course was fantastic! Enjoyed all of it and though I don’t work in the modern historical period. I enjoyed the final day and coverage of modern Tibetan history—showing that this is a continuous and living book tradition!
6. It was great to be back—I’ll return to work better informed and inspired to continue working with Tibetan materials.