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G-65: Forgeries, Facsimiles & Sophisticated Copies
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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. A good knowledge of basic bibliographical terms and tools is very helpful, albeit not essential, for this course. The McKitterick reading is a must.
2. {no response}
3. I read some but not all of the pre-course readings. I plan on reading the ones I missed after the class and we discussed the case studies in class.
4. Extremely helpful! I think I was a bit taken aback that we began discussing many of the (suggested) case studies as though we should have known the basics of them and all the players involved. There were lots of names and cases I had to Google on the fly during the course. I think the Gaskell book is fundamental to have as background knowledge, same as the McKitterick, less sure about the Carter or Werner videos. They were interesting, but perhaps not 100% essential.
5. I liked the readings!
6. Yes, they were very relevant and useful in class. I also appreciated the suggested readings.
7. Didn't make it to the optional ones because of how my summer trajectory went, but I could easily see how the pre-reading directly related to our course discussions and objectives. Which made it feel worthwhile to have done them.
8. They were extremely helpful, and seem to be very well chosen.
9. Yes, they were useful. I found the case study of the nineteenth-century pamphlets to be the most useful and informative, but as I recall, that was only recommended. I would move it up to required reading.
10. Yes. I would be interested in seeing more readings about how forgeries have been used to attempt to add previously suppressed voices into the historical narrative, and the ethical implications of this.
11. N/A
12. {no response}
13. Very helpful for giving basic background.
14. The McKittrick book was useful but perhaps more detailed than necessary, and somewhat rambling. Maybe select specific chapters and encourage closer reading. The Werner lecture was concise and excellent, keep for sure. The Schweidler reading was very interesting and useful, maybe highlight it more to encourage pre-course

familiarity. Make more of the optional readings available as PDFs (where legal, of 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. The material handed out was less useful than the material presented in class, only because the printed material is black and white. Classroom presentations were great.
2. {no response}
3. We did not refer to the workbook much.
4. Workbook was EXTREMELY helpful. Not too much that we'd get distracted by it and not focus in class but enough to be a really useful reference and case study book. A few captions might have gone a long way but no real complaints. I will definitely continue to use it after the course.
5. I wouldn't say we made much use of the workbook, but I'm not sure that that's a problem. I think they are much more important for things like descriptive bibliography and paleography than for this class.
6. The workbook was very relevant and useful, though some more context for the materials included would have been helpful. I am keeping it and will reference it in the future.
7. It was nice to have in class to look at examples closely and at my own speed; I will likely use it for reference in the future but not constantly.
8. The coursebook is a bit haphazard, and wasn't actually referred to very much by NW. It might be helpful to give all of the sections headers and titles, explaining what the images show. I fear that it won't be very useful later on, as I won't know what I'm looking at in six months time.
9. We did not use the workbook much, but I anticipate I will consult it upon returning. However, for this class in particular, the photocopies of forgeries in the printed workbook are simply not good enough in quality to be very useful. I believe the shared Google drive, especially with other participants' contributions, will be even more useful.
10. The content was very useful, and I will definitely be using our shared Google Drive after work. I would suggest adding descriptive captions to the images in the workbook for the next class.
11. The teaching materials were a great supplement to the class, very useful.
12. {no response}
13. It was useful. Image quality could be better. Some of the readings could be linked or labeled in order to give more context.
14. The packet was not terribly useful, but it didn't need to be—we mostly directed discussion well amongst ourselves.

3) *Which aspects of the course were most intriguing and relevant for you as an individual? Did you walk away with any new insights, ideas, or project plans?*

1. To inhabit the "mind" of the forger through the case studies is perhaps the most useful element of this course. They heighten one's awareness as to what could be "wrong" in a particular item, and help to develop the sixth sense of things that are, but should not be, or should be, but are not.
2. I appreciated the hands-on activities and the visit to the Virginia Center for the Book.
3. It made me a bit more paranoid about the authenticity of what we have. It also really demonstrated the value of provenance which I will focus on more in my future catalog descriptions.
4. I found our discussions about print history, provenance, NW's personal experience, the different categories of forgery, facsimile, sophistication, replica, &c. to be helpful to think through from an ethical point of view.
5. I was particularly interested in the more conceptual aspects of our discussions. I don't necessarily have new plans but the material supported plans that are already in the works. The course also reminded me how important it is to speak with people outside of my field!
6. Seeing in person examples and even talking through digital examples as a class was the best part, I learned and retained a lot more than just reading information. I plan to look up a lot of the articles, books, and reference materials we discussed. It was also an excellent mix of people from different backgrounds I hope to keep in touch with.
7. I loved the way NW adapted his pedagogical approaches on the fly to reflect class interests; things sped up or slowed down depending on how we were reacting. Seeing descriptive bibliography in action as a useful skill was likely the best part. All of it was relevant to my curatorial work and I will definitely be taking some of the printing demo techniques away with me. Thank you for no homework.
8. Overall the course was fantastic, and extremely intellectually stimulating. All of NW's hints, tips, and experiencing identifying forgeries will be of great practical use as I return to the library and museum worlds and encounter books and print matter that I need to critically assess. I was so enthused during the course that I started writing a long-planned paper on forgeries in the evenings. So I have lots of project plans now—some academic, some very practical.
9. The close looking of forgeries and the real-life case studies were by far the most useful. Having NW guide us through the things he considered, research he does, people with whom he consults, &c., was incredibly helpful. A couple of insights I noted: having studied printmaking as an undergrad is still proving useful (I never anticipated those would have been my most valuable and enduring college classes), and my estimate of booksellers and bookseller organizations has been shaken a bit. As a curator, I have, in the past, been willing to pay a premium expecting that I am doing so for their expertise

and ethical standards, but I now question some of those assumptions.

10. I was most intrigued by the investigative nature of detecting forgeries and how it is connected to the very physical work of early printing. My most unexpected takeaway from the course was the idea that the line between facsimile and forgery can be very fuzzy, and that a particular object's designation as one or the other may change depending on decade or context.
11. All of the course's content was new to me, and therefore, all of it was intriguing.
12. {no response}
13. The print demo was a real eye opener! Handling "real" forgeries and facsimiles was also very educational.
14. Most relevant was discussion of sophistications—most intriguing of course the grand forgery/true crime/ontological and philosophical discussions of forgeries and their roles/meanings.

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. NW is the Indiana Jones of the world of forged books, including the signature hat, but minus the bull whip. He is the consummate "fellow traveler" through the materials.
2. Yes. I especially appreciated the varied level of expertise among the class participants.
3. I had hoped to learn a bit more about handwriting/signatures but it's a bit out of scope.
4. Yes, definitely! And, more. The shaking things up with the print demo and special collections visit were a real treat.
5. Definitely! I learned a lot about the making/detecting of forgeries. I would have loved even more academic-ish discussion, but I recognize that's not necessarily the goal of the course.
6. Yes, I learned what I expected and more than I even realized I would. The breadth and depth were appropriate in terms of time periods and materials we discussed and what I encounter in my work.
7. I think so! Might have benefited more from reading all of my materials, but that's not on the course.
8. Yes, the course certainly delivered on its promises. I perhaps had hoped to learn a little bit more about the use of analytical techniques to assess forgeries—but this is mostly beyond the scope of RBS so it certainly isn't anything I expected.
9. Yes, I think so. Having a chance to look at real world examples and consider hypotheticals was both informative and entertaining. Working backwards to engineer how we would do our own forgery was a really good challenge, and it led me to suss out some key elements (authenticity, viability, marketability, believability, &c.) that I will keep in mind when making future purchases and reviewing works in my library collection.

10. Yes. I learned far more than I expected to learn!
11. Yes.
12. {no response}
13. Yes, I have come out of the course with a deeper knowledge of materials. But more importantly I now know what questions to ask and what to look for next time I'm doing research in an archive.
14. Did not have strong specific expectations—very happy with what I have learned.

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

1. As a private collector, my sensitivity to sophisticated or forged aspects of a book have been heightened.
2. {no response}
3. Writing better descriptions and deauthenticating books before spending money on them.
4. I think I will investigate certain works up for auction and in my institutions' collection but more importantly I will use what I learned to inform my understanding of the history and mechanics of print and also spice things up pedagogically and teach students about forgeries and false imprints.
5. In my dissertation! Since I now have a better sense of how forgeries are produced, I'll be more equipped to write about historical forgeries.
6. They have already improved my understanding of books, especially early ones, and given me the ability to accurately describe known forgeries and facsimiles, and maybe even detect one one day.
7. In classroom teaching! And personal research. And as a party trick. Also advocating for the development of the collection.
8. I plan to look more critically at books in our collections; and I plan to write some research papers on forgery and its impact on my discipline. I also hope that some of the skills I learnt here are transferable to my work with museum objects.
9. See above. I expect I'll be in touch with NW and others in the class about potential questions. We have many perfected/sophisticated copies that I am aware of, and I want to review those and think about some of the ethical implications around these: why were they perfected, by whom, to what end, &c. I am also interested in pursuing an exhibition on this topic that will appeal to undergrads and really dig into the question of "can we believe what we read," not just from a textual/content point of view, but from a mode of production, artifactual perspective.
10. Since my current role involves actively digitizing (creating digital facsimiles) of printed objects, I'm happy to have discussed the ways that different types of facsimiles affect the experience of studying an object, especially how digital facsimiles lack some forms of evidence while offering new angles or methods of studying the object. In addition to assisting my colleagues with assessing possible acquisitions, I plan to use this knowledge

to make sure that the digitized objects we produce are created and described in a way that adds scholarly/instructional value to the object, rather than flattening it.

11. {no response}
12. {no response}
13. Even though my own work directly relates to manuscripts, knowing how to look at books as objects has been greatly helpful.
14. Cataloging rare books → most specifically, spotting and analyzing sophistications.

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

1. Just about anyone engaged with the world of print would benefit from this course, but particularly people in the book trade, as well as collectors (both private and institutional).
2. {no response}
3. Rare book cataloguers and people interested in early modern books and crime.
4. Anyone really! Academics, students, librarians, curators, printers, &c.
5. Primarily librarians, archivists, and collectors, but academics as well!
6. Librarians and archivists who work with material culture, as well as museum workers, booksellers, and scholars working in related fields.
7. People who are comfortable looking at very specific details and want to be able to take descriptive bibliography beyond cataloging. It is helpful to have a grasp of book production in the hand press period already.
8. Our class had a good spread of the key demographics: librarians who want to handle and buy books with more confidence; academics who work on forgery; dealers who want to make sure they buy and sell legitimate stock; and collectors who want to know more about what they're buying.
9. All librarians who are developing collections, for sure, but also humanist scholars whose work is based on textual evidence.
10. Anyone who works with facsimiles and high-value printed materials regularly. Also, library school students who have an interest in book history and how it can be studied through the lens of forgery.
11. {no response}
12. {no response}
13. Institutional librarians, book historians, art historians.
14. Financially, booksellers, but I think librarians need it even more—I feel they encounter fewer such items in their day to day and are not as aware of/on the lookout for disingenuous books.

7) *If applicable, what were the most powerful, or otherwise noteworthy educational moments in the course? Were there any “aha!” moments you’d like to share?*

1. Forgery thrives when the intent to deceive collides with the willingness to believe.
2. {no response}
3. The really well done examples of manuscript imitating type were very interesting.
4. The real-time exercise in which we considered the whole array of sociocultural possibilities of the life of an item before deciding if it were real or not and in general going through the research steps of what it looks like to identify a forgery.
5. The best thing for me was really the group experience and the opportunity to talk things through with other people. NW is also such a great and fun teacher!
6. Discussions of motivations, social context, and culture around forgeries and why people might make them was an extra level of depth I really appreciated.
7. Being able to have a significant discussion related to a thing related to a lecture the night before without any prep work was fulfilling and showed how our skills might translate to real world situations. I also loved the mix of skills my classmates brought to the classroom.
8. Some of the case studies were fascinating, and expanded my understanding of how and why forgers do what they do. All of the examples that NW gave of his own work were fascinating and really illuminating.
9. Again, reminding me about the value of having made fine prints in my past was a big one; shaking my faith in book dealers, in a healthy way, was another one. I also feel more confident to review my holdings and have a sense of what to look out for in terms of questionable productions.
10. One of the most powerful moments was when we all worked together to assess the validity of a document that had been mentioned in one of the evening lectures. It was a great way to apply what we'd learned in class to a question that hadn't been answered yet.
11. {no response}
12. {no response}
13. Studying and familiarizing myself with different kinds of paper.
14. Not in particular, but many minor "aha's!" every day in class as a reproduction reveals itself.

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

1. More hands-on comparison of genuine and fraudulent articles.
2. More opportunities to compare real and fakes/forgeries side by side; perhaps more exercises making these comparisons sprinkled throughout the week.
3. I would have liked to see how a photopolymer was made.
4. Potentially incorporate non-European (or American) items. Unchangeable, but UVA SC's policy about not touching books is a bit ridiculous.
5. More hands-on materials/fewer SC visits.
6. Only with more physical examples to see, otherwise wonderful!

7. I would love to do more close reading of the books in small groups if possible.
8. It wasn't always clear why we were doing things in the order that we were. Each session was always really informative, but I felt like the overall structure of the course could be more coherent.
9. Having access to digital high powered microscopes.
10. {no response}
11. No.
12. {no response}
13. Maybe more hands-on comparison between originals and fakes/facsimiles.
14. More hands-on with books.

9) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? How likely are you to recommend this course to others? On a 1–10 scale, 1 would indicate that you disagree that you got your money's worth, 5 would indicate a neutral response, and 10 would indicate that you agree that you got your money's worth.*

1. 10
2. 9
3. 9
4. 10
5. 10
6. 10
7. 10
8. 10
9. 10
10. 10
11. 10
12. {no response}
13. 10
14. 10

10) *If your course made any (virtual) field trips outside of the classroom or had guest speakers, do you feel that they enhance the course experience?*

1. We made two trips to SC, of which one would suffice. The material was interesting, but sometimes not directly germane to our classroom topics.
2. {no response}
3. Print shop field trip was fun and informative for myself as someone not familiar.
4. YES! Amira Hegazy and Suzanne Glèmot were truly great. The visit from Deirdre Stam was helpful, too.
5. I think for people without experience printing a letterpress demonstration would have

been really useful!

6. Yes, I loved the print shop visit.
7. Yes, though the printing was better than the SC visits.
8. Yes! The printing demonstration at the Virginia Center for the Book was fantastic!
9. The field trips to SC were of limited use since we were not able to handle the physical items to look closely.
10. Yes, printing our own "forgeries" was very informative.
11. Our off site visit enhanced the course.
12. {no response}
13. Maybe guest speakers or guest makers: more hand-on experience would be great.
14. Yes—though most noteworthy extracurricular was the fortuitously timed Craig Welsh lecture.

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

1. Bring a healthy dose of skepticism and intrigue.
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. Not particularly! Come in with an open mind, no matter your background you have something to contribute.
5. Take it! You learn a lot and it's also really fun.
6. I thought it was great, definitely do the readings and understand the focus is on material forgeries not literary.
7. Start reading earlier than you think you need to! It's pretty dry stuff and lots of indexes.
8. {no response}
9. We were going to talk about case studies at our own institution but got sidetracked. Maybe we could upload things in advance and NW could pick an example or two to weave in ... or we could workshop on the fly.
10. {no response}
11. No.
12. {no response}
13. {no response}
14. Nope—take it!

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

1. Every class I have ever taken at Rare Book School enables me to better answer the question, "what is this thing in front of me, and how did it come to be?"
2. Engaging!

3. Anything made once can be made again.
4. Understand much, forge little.
5. It's hard to "ye-olde-ify" documents.
6. A wonderful community of curious, bookish people happy to share ideas.
7. This is one of the only rare book places with space to think and people to help you do it more effectively.
8. Rarely as an adult have I learnt so much in such a short space of time.
9. Thank you for an amazing week and giving me the space to learn, think, and grow.
10. I feel lucky to have been surrounded by so many fascinating people.
11. A great experience.
12. {no response}
13. Getting lost in rabbit holes and emerging having learned new things.
14. Everything's fake / Do real books even exist? / Suspicions abound.