

James Green and Michael Winship
H-135: The History of the Book in Antebellum America
23–28 July, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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. Very useful. The reading was manageable and very relevant to the course.
2. {no response}
3. {private response}
4. The three suggested chapters were really useful and gave me a good foundation to understand what the instructors referenced in class.
5. Yes, definitely—about 150 pages were required, which felt very doable, and an interesting list of additional resources.
6. The required readings were a very thorough introduction to the course material. I did not have a chance to look through the recommended readings.
7. {no response}
8. Yes, I found the pre-course reading quite useful. It seems like a lot of reading, but I recommend doing it as it gives context to the class discussions.

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. {no response}
2. It's convenient to have articles and images shared electronically rather than in a printed workbook.
3. {private response}
4. We had a class Google Drive with extra readings and resources. I can see it being extremely useful for the future and look forward to delving further into it.
5. Google Drive had a lot of great information from digitized surrogates, but no citation information. A bibliography would have been useful.
6. There was no workbook for this course, instead there was a Google Drive with a folder for each day. This format was better than the workbook because I have access to many more high quality images and full-length PDFs than could fit in a normal workbook. This will give me a lot more material to work through after the class is over.
7. There was no course workbook. {private response}
8. {no response}

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. Class sessions were full of insight, wonderful anecdotes, and scholarly interest. Finished the class with a number of threads to follow and feeling on much more solid ground regarding book history of the period.
2. I have a particular project in the early stages, and I came away with helpful ideas about what to read next and areas to explore further.
3. {private response}
4. {no response}
5. Yes, the course was fascinating. I learned a lot about the larger context of book-making and the American economy in the period.
6. This was a fascinating overview of how the book/publishing industry changed over the course of just a few decades. This was a useful bridge between the colonial book and the post-Civil War book.
7. {no response}
8. {no response}

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. The course was information rich and helped me hone my ability to look at books of the period. It more than fulfilled its promise.
2. The instructors bring such a vast scope of research-based knowledge that they were equipped to address almost any question that arose.
3. {private response}
4. Yes, I learned many things that I was hoping to learn and the instructors were always open to discussions on other topics we were interested in learning more about.
5. Mostly yes—I would have enjoyed a little more about ephemeral printing and gray literature, but I feel very well equipped with a foundation of book knowledge of the period, tied to major changes in other aspects of American history.
6. Yes.
7. No. {private response}
8. Yes. The instructors had a wealth of knowledge of which we only scratched the surface. I learned a lot from this class which I will use in my work at my institution.

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

1. I plan to apply the knowledge gained to my teaching mainly, but I am sure it will also influence my scholarship and collection development recommendations as well.

2. All I have learned will equip me to be a better reference librarian and steward of materials that fall within the geographic and chronological scope of the course.
3. I will be able to talk about antebellum American-made books with more authority than I have before.
4. {no response}
5. Collection development, both for reference collections and for rare materials.
6. I will bring back the skills and knowledge from this course to my home institution and colleagues so that we will all benefit from this course.
7. I did actually learn a lot in the course. {private response}
8. What I learned will help me assess and contextualize the material I catalog at my institution.

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

1. Anyone who teaches or researches the history of the book; anyone with a general interest in book history of the history of the antebellum period in America, librarians with rare book collections to develop.
2. {no response}
3. {private response}
4. Anyone who wants a better understanding of book production and distribution during this time period. This class served as a very good overview of what was going on in the publishing and printing field during this time.
5. Anyone with a generalist understanding of book history looking for a deeper contextual foundation in the transformative period of the 1820s/1830s.
6. Historians, librarians.
7. People who already knew the materials, such as subject librarians.
8. Anyone who is interested in the origin of the book trade and how it evolved, how it influenced and was influenced by society, and the major player in the book trade at that time.

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. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. {private response}
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}

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

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. {private response}
4. The afternoon sessions where we just looked at books were less useful to me. I wish we could have incorporated the looking at books more into our other lecture sessions, i.e. done both at the same time. I think that would have been more effective.
5. The instructors were absolutely experts, although I would have loved to hear more from JG. I wish Black print culture had not been totally sidelined into an afternoon session (especially one that didn't really go into the distinctions of who the audience for various "high points" were and how that varied between authors and titles).
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}

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. 3
4. 8
5. 7
6. 10
7. 1
8. 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. The "field trip" to The LCP significantly enhanced the course experience adding greatly and in important ways to the range of subjects and materials covered. One of the highlights of the course.
2. Guest speaker Lynne Farrington of the Kislak Center presented a lively and informative look at book canvassers' samples that greatly enhanced the course experience. Seeing examples of important items in early American Black book culture at the LCP was a particular pleasure.

3. Yes, we visited the LCP, and that did enhance the course experience. I really appreciated the staff of LCP and the knowledge they shared.
4. I liked going over to the LCP and being able to see some other items in a different collection.
5. I loved getting to visit the LCP and they have exceptional collections but it didn't feel organic to the course—Black print ended up awkwardly treated as a treasures display (slave narrative! Richard Allen! &c.) rather than part of changing print culture in the country. Lynne Farrington's discussion of subscription literature was fascinating and it was amazing to see such breadth from the Kislak Center's collection.
6. I enjoyed going to the LCP because it gave us access to more of Philadelphia's fine institutions.
7. Yes, I think field trips are the highlights of the course.
8. Yes, the trip to the LCP to look at materials by Black authors of the period was very enlightening.

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

1. Read as much as you can before the course week; ask lots of questions; take advantage of the opportunity to learn from the other class participants as well as the instructors.
2. I suggest changing the title from "History of the Book...." to "History of the Book TRADES....." This is made clear in the course description, but the title could be more specific.
3. {private response}
4. {no response}
5. This was a fantastic course. It was clear we missed a little bit by having it at Penn with neither instructor as knowledgeable about the collections there, but having John Pollack on hand was helpful both for materials and for his own knowledge. I think the course would be better-served at UVA or the LCP.
6. {no response}
7. {private response}
8. {no response}

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

1. A wonderful, congenial and intellectually stimulating way to spend a week.
2. {no response}
3. {private response}
4. {no response}
5. {no response}

6. {no response}
7. Don't use the word "antebellum." Just say the nineteenth century.
8. Past rules the present / Present informs the future / Future is unknown.