

Tony White
H-155: The History of Artists' Books since 1950
16–21 July, New York, New York

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. Yes, very useful. I would have liked a little more discussion in class regarding the international fairs and publications. We received videos separately—getting those in the first batch would have been helpful.
2. Extremely useful. There were a good number of readings I was unfamiliar with.
3. Yes, there was a solid cross-section of readings to give a perspective on the field.
4. Yes.
5. Excellent readings. Would like to see more about the theory and range of artists' books. More about women and small publishing from women.
6. Yes, very helpful.
7. Yes, absolutely. They provided necessary context to both the content and subject, and prepared our class for the intense week to come.
8. Very useful and well-chosen. Excellent context/grounding for the week.
9. Yes.
10. Yes, although as someone with little background in the topic, I would have appreciated some contextual guidance about how to proceed through the readings/what to focus on.
11. Yes, the readings were helpful—a good range of materials of digestible lengths. I felt that they gave me a sense of the conversation I was entering.

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. Course workbook was great. Some more tombstone information would be useful to mitigate questions on quick things during the presentations.
2. The workbook with lists of titles was certainly a helpful resource.
3. It was most helpful, although there was an addenda that was later updated that would have been ideal to have bound in as part of the volume for future reference. I will most certainly consult my notes within going forward. Perhaps having the student roster bound within would be useful for future classes.
4. Yes. Could add website information on acquisition? (Ex. book store, press website,

- &c).
5. Good. A small photograph or link to work in a public collection would be helpful, otherwise hard to contextualize all of the books shown.
 6. Yes, useful.
 7. Yes, 100%. I used the workbook throughout the class to make notes and comments for future reference.
 8. Really appreciate the workbook as a place to keep notes and follow the schedule. Content was appropriate and useful and I have taken away many sources, approaches, ideas that will be extremely helpful for my future collection development work.
 9. Workbook and materials: helpful for course and future.
 10. The course workbook was a list of the items we saw. It might have been useful to have had access to the slides we were shown.
 11. Super useful. Instructor wrote out a list of (most) of the books covered so that we could annotate them. It will be something that I return to.

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. I really enjoyed seeing the quantity of books. I have kept a running list of types of materials to be on the lookout for, so that if I can't afford the "exceptional" example of a particular type or form, at least I can buy an acceptable example of it. I like the idea of file cabinets for hanging small/thin works—that may be something I implement at my school. I also have some programming ideas, like for flip books.
2. The exposure to so many examples, the vast majority of which I was unfamiliar with, was most interesting/useful. The studio visits and the visit to the dealer's collection were absolutely wonderful.
3. Having deeper discussions about the field with a diverse range of viewpoints was particularly valuable. Also, simply seeing a broad range of materials—both iconic and little known—was particularly useful.
4. Yes. What I didn't expect but learned a lot is also the community of artists, scholars, collectors, and librarians who are interested in artists' books.
5. Lectures—formal content, studio visits, NYPL, collectors.
6. It was a great course. I enjoyed everything—it had a good mix of discussion/show and tell time plus hands-on opportunities and visits of different kinds of collections, (library, private) and spaces (artists' studios, printing press).
7. Yes. I enjoyed the studio visits and getting outside the classroom. I especially enjoyed our visit with the collector, which I found to be extremely relevant to my art practice as an artist and my professional work as a librarian.
8. Studio visits, seeing so many actual examples of artists' books.
9. All interesting, many insights.
10. The artist studio visits were the most engaging parts of the class. There was space for us

to ask questions and handle some materials.

11. Loved the zine workshop & experiential site visits at NYPL, with artists, and with collectors. It was great to understand artists' books from multiple angles of production with these visits. I gained a sense of the literature and discourse space and how I might enter it with my research focus.

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. Yes, absolutely. We covered a lot of material and it was a very busy schedule, but the result was a fully well-rounded understanding of the basics.
2. The course description states that we will examine questions such as: "Why is it a book? Why this medium? How is it a book?" We did this to some degree, but a bit more theoretical discussion of the concept of the book could be interesting. I also expected that the class would include more on the livre d'artiste, which I would have enjoyed. I don't think the class needs to per se, but it might be useful to specify a bit more in the course description what is meant by "artist book" (since some, like myself, may assume that the term and thus the course covers a wider range of phenomena). I also expected we would learn a bit more about printing techniques, but I understand that this is covered in the RBS course on reproduction/duplication techniques.
3. Yes. It was particularly beneficial to have an overview and understanding of the early history of the field, as well as the shifting viewpoints over time. The changing semantics for the field were also particularly useful.
4. Yes. The course is very accessible. We got to know a great variety of book objects.
5. I would have liked to learn the history of artists' books—more content and less book examples. Showing 50 books and contextualizing them in movements and medium—slowing the pace rather than showing so many books would create opportunity for more content. Would like the opportunity to see and handle books—to experience books—not possible in personal collections—more public libraries?
6. Yes, I have a much better understanding of the artists' books' world, as well as knowledge of how to talk about and present artists' books to my students and faculty.
7. Yes. TW filled in the gaps—and then some! I learned so much about artists' books, bindings, and printing—along with a history of artist publications since 1950 (exactly as described :)).
8. 100% YES.
9. Yes.
10. I appreciated seeing (though, sadly not handling) a variety of artists' books to get a sense of the genre. However, I am not sure I learned how to do things with these objects (e.g. compare them, critique them, describe how they were made, &c).
11. Yes, though I had hoped we would touch more on zines, esp. as there were

recommended readings about it. Even so, I found what we covered valuable.

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

1. I will be doing some informal programming with these ideas in mind, and am looking to develop more formal class sessions with our Book Arts faculty.
2. In my research, in teaching with special collections.
3. I will be teaching a related course in the future and plan to use elements in this course. Further, I will use this for collection development purposes at my institution.
4. I'm more open to the multivalent nature of artists' books after this class.
5. Research lists of artists. Visit Black institutions. Re-visit readings and websites. Maybe make risographs.
6. I will use it in building collections, acquiring materials, teaching classes, and curating exhibits.
7. I will implement the knowledge acquired in my artistic and professional practice—from working in the studio with materials to teaching students in the classroom.
8. Apply them to discovering and thinking about and collecting artists' books/publications in my subject area.
9. Lectures and writing.
10. I will use a risograph to make zines.
11. I plan to use my new knowledge to figure out how to incorporate the subject matter in my teaching and research, including finding artists' books that speak to my current research interests.

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

1. Librarians looking to do collection development or instruction.
2. People with an interest in getting broad exposure to the artist book phenomenon.
3. Librarians, academics, collectors, and those simply looking to have a better understanding of the field of art production beginning in the mid-twentieth century.
4. Students who are interested in the medium of artists' books.
5. Book buyers. 1980's scholars, interest in offset.
6. Anyone interested in working with/engaging with/making artists' books.
7. Anyone—the course is designed to be of interest to a broad range of folks, but if I had to choose, I would recommend it to Fine Arts librarians and special collections librarians.
8. Librarians, researchers, artists.
9. Educators.
10. Collectors and people who work in acquisitions.
11. Folks interested in: print production, artist interventions, connection between art and

book worlds, contemporary scholars, visual culture folks, feminist scholars, &c.

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. We had five field trips in this course and they were all great in various ways. The RISO workshop was probably my favorite as we have a RISO in my library which I haven't been able to use before, but which I am now able to make use of.
2. {no response}
3. Simply understanding how the field developed in concert with broader artistic movements.
4. Group discussions in class and during studio visits, moments that we learn from each other's expertise.
5. {no response}
6. I loved everything, but especially visiting a private collection and artists' studios.
7. Learning about bindings, paper, printing. Learning about publishers, presses, printers. Learning about acquisitions and preservation techniques.
8. Studio visits, the hands-on zine making and altered book projects.
9. Twenty-first century developments in book arts.
10. Making a class risograph zine was really fun.
11. Really loved seeing the visual range of how folks played with book structures and image and text—gave me insights for my research, teaching, and arts practice.

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

1. 1) More chairs and seating options at field trips (especially NYPL); 2) Pronouns on RBS table nameplates; 3) more water breaks/bathroom breaks throughout the class sessions; 4) Reconsider an assignment for this class. Our field trips made us go an hour + over class time several nights and my opinion is that that should substitute for any expectation of work outside of class time.
2. {no response}
3. Some of the days were quite long. So, perhaps having one fewer late night off-site visit would have been welcomed.
4. Perhaps limit field trips up to one per day. Otherwise, it can be very tiring.
5. More context and content about the history of artists' books. Time to ask questions in class. Class time for discussions—great peers in the room. Who/where are books available? A list? Contemporary? Secondary?
6. N/A
7. The 9 a.m. start time was hard. If the class could start at 9:30 a.m. that would be ideal. Maybe provide sandwiches at lunch instead of breaks? Lunch is so crazy expensive in Manhattan and it's hard to just go out for 60 minutes... I feel like the day's schedule

could be improved.

8. N/A
9. Add more courses to add depth.
10. More class discussion and opportunities for close readings and handling of the books themselves.
11. No.

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. 9
2. 7
3. 9
4. 10
5. 6
6. 10
7. 10
8. 10
9. 10
10. 5. {private response}
11. 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. Yes absolutely. We had five field trips. I do think this was one too many—moving around NYC can be stressful for people, even in groups, and it made several days longer than a typical RBS class day.
2. Absolutely.
3. Most definitely. They were quite rich experiences and added much to our discussions. In particular, the visit to the Robert Blackburn studio and riso printing were welcomed. Further, the trip to the book collector's home allowed us to touch and handle more books, which was meaningful.
4. Yes, definitely.
5. Yes - collector visits, NYPL, studio visits were great.
6. Yes, 100%, I very much enjoyed all the field trips.
7. Absolutely! I really enjoyed going out and doing the workshops, and meeting artists in their studios. The riso workshop was fun, too!
8. ABSOLUTELY.

9. Yes!
10. Yes.
11. Yes, definitely essential to the course—loved it and loved the number of them.

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

1. Pace yourself. This is a major energy commitment and being mindful of your energy allowances during the day/week will help pace through the week.
2. {no response}
3. Build in more time for Q&A on days when we'll be viewing a high volume of books. Sometimes fewer items and more time for discussion allows for a richer experience.
4. Bring comfortable shoes. You've got to walk a lot in NYC.
5. Suggest retitling and removing "artists' books" from title, or add additional phrase "artists' books and small printed publications." The scope of artists' books is so large and creative.
6. Thank you!
7. Don't plan to sleep too much (haha) in the city that never sleeps. And bring comfortable shoes :).
8. {no response}
9. Ask the Grolier Club to turn down air conditioning.
10. {no response}
11. The readings seem like a lot on the list, but they're easy to get them—do both the required and recommended.

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

1. We saw many books / We met lots of great people / Would do this again.
2. Simultaneously intense and wonderful.
3. Booktastic!
4. It is not only taking courses, but finding your community.
5. Great community of scholars, communal gift of knowledge.
6. {no response}
7. Wonderful. Really enjoyed meeting so many new people and colleagues!
8. Immersive, informative, inspiring.
9. Provocative overview, stimulating variety of experiences, finished class wanting to learn more, greater appreciation for the scale of the field.
10. These courses bring so many interesting people together!
11. What a whirlwind of a week that I will remember fondly for years to come.