

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. Some were useful. I would suggest that for a course with a broad background of students, they might be broken up differently, i.e., “basic background,” and “further readings.”
 2. They were useful, but could have been more productively engaged with by the professor. It would have been nice to discuss some of the readings as a class. {private response}
 3. Yes, all good. JH has a great way of delving into the details though, so have fun!
 4. All of the pre-course readings were helpful in approaching the materials.
 5. Yes.
 6. Somewhat.
 7. The assigned readings were interesting and useful. Their connection to specific course events was not often clear, though.
 8. The readings were useful and gave background to the topic. They were not essential; without them one could still understand and participate. That said, they did enrich the experience.
 9. Medium-level utility of readings. More general historical overview to situate materials would be advised. Technical/materially-focused readings did not match course content.
 10. Readings were helpful, and laid a good foundation for the course. The Aztec Metaphysics book was recommended reading; a selection from this as “required” reading would be great.
 11. The readings were useful, but a little more advanced direction would have been useful, e.g., I am not a specialist in this area, and it would have been helpful to know to read the Vail overview before plunging into some of the more technical and specific readings.
 12. The readings were drawn from a number of different disciplines, so they exposed me to scholarship outside of my area of expertise. I think a general overview would have been useful as a foundation. Assigning readings to each individual day on the syllabus would have been helpful as an aid to bringing the materials under discussion to class.
 13. I thought the technical articles were less useful than the survey-of-the-field articles. The two monographs were interesting. We might have spent more time linking the readings with the class content—we didn’t discuss them as much.
- 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. I would have liked to have a selection of the images in front of me when we were doing deep study, such as a small workbook.
2. There was not a course workbook. One might have been helpful. I found the Maya number/calendar handouts useful. I may refer to them after the course, though I will likely scan them.
3. Pretty nice, I always prefer organization, which could've been improved, but content and helpfulness = A.
4. Some of the handouts were duplicates of pre-course readings. Very much appreciated the syllabaries!
5. Teaching materials were helpful.
6. Great.
7. The approach of focusing on specific documents with historical context was effective, but could be improved. In addition to close reading, a more systematic overview of document form—not just materiality—would be helpful.
8. All were very useful and pointers to the online versions were also helpful.
9. It felt a little thrown together. A more step-by-step introduction to materials and a better sense of literature in the fields would have been appreciated.
10. Yes, the handouts in class were useful when working through glyph transcriptions. I will continue using this material.
11. I liked the focus on lecture (with appropriate visual aids and time for discussion) and appreciated not being overwhelmed with printed material during class. I look forward to receiving more material electronically.
12. Course workbook = N/A. Teaching materials: the handouts relating to glyphs and syllabaries were helpful in class.
13. The handouts were interesting. They could be assembled into a course pack for future reference with some additions (i.e., info on Maya glyphs, bibliography for future study, &c.).

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

1. Alternating between lecture/discussion and close examination of objects/surrogates was (and is) a good way to keep the class flowing.
2. Relative to other courses, this one was less demanding of students, lecture-based, with time less rigorously planned. We also engaged with objects (specifically books) less than in other courses, but we did have access to facsimiles. I would have liked to work a bit more with them.
3. Different. More “speculative.” Cool stories, great art theory, and advanced archaeological study.
4. This course was slightly more free-flowing, but most of that openness is due to the subject matter and scholarship on it.
5. It was great!
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. It was different as there were very few books to interact with. Very useful to have introductions to the languages and the writing system. Nice that it was not entirely art focused.
9. This was less rigorous and a less thorough/structured course than other RBS courses taken. Non-western focus was greatly appreciated.
10. N/A

11. More structured, less hands-on, and more informative.
12. N/A
13. It was a little less hands-on in the sense that we spent less time handling objects directly, but had more interesting content than some other courses I've taken.

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. Exposure to new writing systems and gaining some facility at decoding/interpreting them—stories about the history of the discipline and the objects studied.
2. Getting a better grasp of how the languages and numbers worked. That said, I would have liked a few assignments to practice reading/generating, for example, numbers, and {illegible} information.
3. Relevant to me were the antiquities trade information, provenance, histories, and philosophies.
4. Learning how to read some basic glyphs and numbers was wonderful. Also, learning about the calendric cycles and Aztec philosophy was great.
5. The construction of the objects was a part of the class I found particularly useful.
6. Very interesting course that introduced me to new, {illegible} material.
7. Access to primary sources with guidance of an expert was most useful. I did leave with many ideas and leads for research.
8. A desire to learn Mayan and learn more about the topic. Had an amateur interest before, but now have a much more directed and informed interest.
9. Material focus was great. Time with Huexotzinco codex and conservators (Sylvia Aibro and Betsy Haude) was a highlight, for example. Maya glyph intro was useful, though perhaps could be condensed to a more general overview.
10. Calendar and glyph translations were fascinating. All of the material gave me a more in-depth understanding of Mayan and Nahua text culture. I have left with plans to follow up on historical texts, specifically the interplay of texts and non-textual sources (monuments, &c.). I plan on following up with continued exploration of Nahua sources specifically.
11. As someone trained in European book history, I was excited to explore codices in a new historical and cultural context. I will definitely include some of this material in my future teaching.
12. The introduction to reading Maya and Aztec glyphs, the hands-on activities with the Kislak collection, and the insights from conservators about materials.
13. Covering the basics of approaching the codices was helpful—knowing how to look at an object to start understanding its meaning.

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. This being a new class, I think we were able to touch on very many areas inviting further exploration—it left me wanting more, in a good way.
2. I would have liked to explore book structure and I would have liked to learn the papermaking process.
3. It did help in an area I'm not familiar with. If I can offer a criticism, make it more

Euro-centric. Help with understanding how the world's advanced powers thought of the native peoples.

4. Everything we learned touched on the course description.
 5. Yes! I think we covered a good amount. Yes.
 6. And more.
 7. It is very difficult to learn all that one wants to learn on such a topic in a week, but I am left wanting a bit more detail on the specific codices we viewed and discussed. {private response}
 8. Yes.
 9. Generally matched the broad overview promised. Less hands-on and less materially focused than imagined, and promised, and modeled by other RBS courses.
 10. Yes on all of the above. I would enjoy more time on glyph translation if possible. I learned more than I hoped, but I didn't really know what to expect coming in.
 11. I did, although I did a lot of Googling and checking Wikipedia the first few days of class to familiarize myself with names, places, and events that were assumed familiar by both the readings and the class lectures. A suggested historical overview for students new to Mesoamerican studies would be a welcome addition to the advance reading list, I think.
 12. Yes, the course provided coverage of all major topics outlined in the course description.
 13. I most enjoyed learning Mayan numbers and glyphs and about linguistic conventions, &c. The material qualities of the objects and how one might analyze them was explored in less depth than might have been...I wanted to know more about paper, ink, &c..
- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. New skills at interpreting old objects in our collections.
 2. I may use some material in a history of the book course, or possibly in an article I'm working on.
 3. Reading, reasoning, and perhaps giving tours in the future!
 4. I hope to incorporate the knowledge acquired here into my teaching.
 5. The knowledge will certainly contribute to my future studies, and my understanding of books.
 6. Research and teaching.
 7. I plan to develop an XML schema (perhaps in TEI) to prepare digital critical editions of the codices.
 8. Further self-education.
 9. Mostly for teaching purposes.
 10. Teaching and research (if I can get the time!).
 11. I teach classes on book history and on the global Middle Ages, and I hope to include material on Maya/Aztec books in both classes when I teach them in the future.
 12. I will take away a deeper understanding of how to analyze and interpret Mesoamerican writing.
 13. For teaching and personal enrichment. As a starting point for research perhaps.
- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might*

benefit the most from taking it?

1. I always feel like a dunce on the way in, but a well-made roster brings in many different perspectives, and I feel that this is a great benefit. A relaxed demeanor helped, too.
 2. The intellectual level seemed appropriate for all involved, but was focused more on writing and books. Some of the philosophy/linguistics stuff might have been rather dense for some.
 3. Good God, high level. JH and Graham Atkinson get very high marks. The speaker on the video re: Aztec theology was a little airy and numb.
 4. The course was appropriate for a beginner that had never been exposed to these materials, but also good for experts.
 5. It was geared so beginners could understand the subject, but background knowledge was very useful.
 6. The course is for postgraduates.
 7. Beginner to intermediate. Historical background knowledge will add to one's experience.
 8. It was a little higher than my previous two courses. Need a willingness to work through the calendrics and numbers.
 9. Non-specialist, interested in seeing if this area is of interest for research or teaching.
 10. Advanced intellectual level, yet accessible to non-experts.
 11. The intellectual level was quite high. As someone new to this field, but with a solid book history background, I think I was in a position to gain a lot from this class.
 12. It was oriented to a general audience, which makes sense as we had participants from a range of backgrounds.
 13. It's a fair introduction to the material for someone with no knowledge and for those hoping to get a foothold on or introduction to a new field of inquiry in Mesoamerican studies.
- 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. Aha! I can read the date on this Mayan cave mural!
 2. Reading the Venus table in the Grolier codex and looking closely at the Huexotzinco codex with Sylvia Aibro, the conservator who worked on it.
 3. I'm Euro-centric, so I marvel at the moment the Europeans, Cortez, met the Mayans. That banner was super cool!
 4. I really enjoyed learning about the "unsolved mysteries"—mostly related to provenance—surrounding the codices.
 5. Learning how to read the codex—where to start and how to move from page to page.
 6. Learning to read codices.
 7. Hard to say, not that the learning experience was not original or powerful.
 8. Too many to enumerate.
 9. Conservation lab discussion with Sylvia Aibro and Betsy Haude was fantastic. Thorough introduction to material elements and discussion of differences between maguery/amate papers.

10. Venus tables in codices.
11. {no response}
12. {no response}
13. Learning the basic history of the Mayan calendric systems was the most interesting. Also the histories of collections.

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

1. We had an unplanned excitement on the first day, so I'm sympathetic to having to rearrange on the fly; however, I was somewhat unsure of the arc of the week, and felt that we talked about what we would be talking about...also, some of the deep study might be better accomplished as small group exercises.
2. Cut the YouTube video; discuss readings as a class in conjunction with discussions of the objects that they engage; add an exercise or assignment on reading an inscription/numbers/table on own or in pairs; more hands-on engagement with facsimiles.
3. Bigger room. Jefferson building. Free coffee and snacks.
4. Perhaps spending more time with the codices and really analyzing the features. It might also be helpful to have a mock demonstration on their construction.
5. We kind of jumped right in. An intro to the codex, and how it was seen through history would have been nice.
6. N/A
7. A bit more focus and deep diving into codices, giving a complete reading and overview of at least one case. {private response}
8. No idea.
9. More focus of historical/social context of objects and some introduction to geographies associated with objects.
10. {no response}
11. I always felt comfortable asking questions, but there wasn't a lot of actual discussion in the class. I know it's a hard thing to cultivate, but there were issues on which I would have really welcomed other students' perspectives. Also, spend more time talking through the facsimiles. One more thing: I still want to know how paper and pigments were made (not just what they were made from).
12. I would have appreciated more class discussion of the readings and some additional opportunities to pursue our own lines of inquiry.
13. More attention to the social/cultural context of the codices—especially for the Aztec, which was explored in less depth. More hands-on, close study of objects, even if they are only facsimiles.

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

1. Yes, and yes.
2. It's important to have a course on these books. I would recommend it to a non-expert, but perhaps not someone well-versed in Mesoamerican/pre-Columbian material.
3. I think so, yes. By the way, Graham Atkinson, Mayan calendar: AMAZING.
4. Yes—I would 100% recommend this course to others.
5. Yes!

6. Yes!
7. I would recommend this course.
8. Yes. Yes.
9. Course was a little light on content. Several days ended early. I would recommend this course with reservations.
10. Yes, and yes.
11. Yes (but I had a tuition waiver); yes.
12. {private response}
13. Maybe.

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

1. Yes, the optical lab, the vault, and the conservation lab were all worthwhile.
2. Yes.
3. Yes, cool visits to conservation and imaging.
4. We made several trips to the vault, preservation labs, and imaging services that enhanced our understanding of the physical objects.
5. Yes! The trip to the imaging lab and the trips to see the objects were amazing, and really helped build understanding.
6. Yes!
7. Yes.
8. Yes. We went to the vaults and labs. Very worthwhile.
9. Trips outside the classroom were the highlight. Oztoticpac map and Huexotzinco codex could have been even more highlighted.
10. Yes! I loved seeing the artifacts and conservation aspects.
11. N/A
12. Yes.
13. We visited the vault a number of times. This was very interesting, but the show-and-tell quality might have been better spent with more interactive, observational exercises.

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. I was too worn out after class days, but it's always nice to have the option.
2. N/A
3. {no response}
4. N/A
5. It would be nice to have more evening events here in D.C.—Air & Space Museum did not appeal to me.
6. N/A
7. Yes—loved MFS's talk.
8. Reception was good to meet classmates. MFS's lecture was very enlightening.
9. N/A
10. N/A
11. N/A
12. {no response}

13. N/A. Independent socializing was fun.

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

1. Don't sweat it if you don't know any languages.
2. No.
3. Have what to do with the history and codices.
4. This is my first RBS course in D.C., and it was surprising to find the differences in "evening life." Much more individualized in D.C.
5. The course isn't strictly about books, which makes it nice.
6. {no response}
7. {private response}
8. No.
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. It's a great opportunity to explore a non-Western indigenous textual tradition.
13. {no response}

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

1. Will Mayan studies always be "controversial?" Someone should write a book!
2. {no response}
3. My impression: Vi victa vis -Tullius Cicero.
4. Very eye-opening and informative.
5. Wonderful!
6. Great!
7. The codex is a mirror of culture.
8. Very useful and worthwhile.
9. {no response}
10. I thoroughly enjoyed this course, and left with a deeper, more meaningful understanding of Mesoamerican texts.
11. {no response}
12. {no response}
13. {no response}

Student Data

Number of respondents: 13 (of 13)

How did you arrange for time off to attend this course?

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 3 (23.08%)

My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days:
4 (30.77%)

I am self-employed, and can arrange my own schedule: 1 (7.69%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule:
4 (30.77%)

My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (7.69%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 2 (15.38%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (30.77%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 5 (38.46%)

My situation does not fit any of the options above: 2 (15.38%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 3 (23.08%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 3 (23.08%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 2 (15.38%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 1 (7.69%)

I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 3 (23.08%)

My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (7.69%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 6 (46.15%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (30.77%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 1 (7.69%)

I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 2 (15.38%)

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

Library disciplines:

Special collections librarian: 1 (7.69%)

Student working toward a/n:

M.L.I.S./M.L.S.: 1 (7.69%)

Professional educator:

Assistant professor: 3 (23.08%)

College/university administrator: 2 (15.38%)

Other: 2 (15.38%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Independent scholar: 1 (7.69%)

Post-doctoral fellow/researcher/scholar: 2 (15.38%)

Other: 1 (7.69%)