

Richard Ovenden  
I-45: The Photographic Book since 1844  
30 July–4 August 2017

**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. Very good comprehensive bibliography.
2. The reading assignments were useful and the instructor was open to suggestions for additions. He updated the list and distributed it in the last class.
3. The course reading was very helpful and appropriate.
4. Good selection of material from a massive literature. My only additional prep was my daily work. I have no suggestions for change.
5. While the reading list was quite extensive and exhaustive, it would have been useful to have select pages or sections identified.
6. Yes, the pre-course readings were useful as they provided a wide overview of the history of the photobook, while also touching upon photographic processes, and the history of photography. I wish that there were more critical theory texts on the current scholarship of the history of photography as it related to the photobook, works by Geoffrey Batchen and Douglas Nickel, but these do not seem crucial to add as the course covered the general scope.
7. I am fortunate in that my institution had all of the material suggested. My guess is that others found it more difficult. The pre-course readings were useful and I felt prepared.
8. {private response}
9. It was a good list.
10. Would have been if I had been able to devote the time. I'll be reading after the class.
11. They were useful, though a wee bit excessive. It was nice to have the required vs. suggested lists made available. Trim the list for future years, and/or suggest chapters of note when assigning the book. Possibly annotate each with a sentence explaining why the book is important.
12. The reading assignments were useful. The bibliography will be extremely useful in the future as well.
13. Yes.

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 with all slides included.
2. The workbook is useful as an *aide-mémoire*, but could use some editing as some images don't reproduce well.
3. The workbook was convenient for note-taking, but I found I had a lot of excess space—it could probably be condensed without losing a lot of its functionality.

4. I wrote few notes in the workbook; the only useful part will be the bibliography. The graphic presentation on screen was mediocre at best.
5. The workbook was a very beneficial tool, especially the slides with summarized text. The one downside was that some slides used in the actual class were out of order or not present.
6. The workbook and lecture slides were very useful during class and will continue to be helpful to me after the class.
7. The booklet was great in that it provided a place to take notes. I don't know if it will be useful as it is, just as a series of images. Its usefulness depends on my notetaking.
8. Workbook was essential. Space to take notes was appreciated. {private response} I will definitely use the workbook later. All my notes are there.
9. I will keep this for reference.
10. Perhaps somewhat repetitive. Bibliography will be consulted.
11. It was nice to have the PowerPoint slides and space for notes as a workbook. {private response} Perhaps other faculty could do this as well!
12. All of the course materials are extremely useful.
13. Great.

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

1. N/A
2. I took "The Art of the Japanese Book" at the Freer|Sackler Galleries in D.C. which has an amazing collection of materials. If we had not had our trip to the LC collection, the course experience would have been different. RBS needs additional primary source material on the topic of the photobook.
3. N/A
4. They have all been great. The previous two knocked time off my learning curve, and I expect this one will also.
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. Much better.
10. Can't remember.
11. This was better. Primarily because the professor really prepared for this course.
12. This was one of my favorites, if not my favorite course. It was extremely well planned out.
13. One of the best.

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. Inspired to work further in photobooks. The trip to LC was a highlight.
2. I have a new perspective on the evolution of the photobook through history. The course is successful in giving this. As a book artist I was inspired creatively by what I saw in the instructor's examples.
3. Professionalization was a strong area—learning about what book professionals do and talk about, making connections with people in the field, &c.. I am walking

away with at least two new opportunities to connect with materials that might be useful for my research.

4. Most interesting for me was meeting people in the course—an accomplished and enthusiastic group. Yes, I did get some new insights.
  5. Gaining a broader understanding of the development of photography books was extremely valuable, especially as it pertains to its early history. Additionally, learning more about the photo-reproduction processes was an important aspect.
  6. Covering the broad breadth of the history of the photobook was helpful and insightful for me as my knowledge of mid-twentieth- and twenty-first-century works is much less extensive than nineteenth- and early twentieth-century. Also being able to view some of these photobooks in person was huge, as many of the works I have never seen in person.
  7. I came away with a greater understanding of photomechanical processes, especially, and the photographic book as an object with its own artefactual value. I have new ideas for research from some of the comments and conversations.
  8. Darkroom tour was insightful. The arc of the photobook across 175 years was enlightening. Hands on review of books at RBS and LC much appreciated. Learned very much about photomechanical processes.
  9. Good conversations, and good selection of materials.
  10. Loved interaction with instructor and class. Got an idea for an exhibition.
  11. I did—overall. I knew very little about the history of photobooks, as such I learned a lot.
  12. The course gave me a different perspective on early photography and the development of the photobook.
  13. I was totally new to the field.
- 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. Course concentrated on older western books. More time on more modern and books from other cultures would be appreciated.
  2. I did learn what I had hoped to learn. I am confident that the course will evolve as the collection here is built to use in the class.
  3. I acquired most of the skills I'd hoped to. One of the things I wanted to talk more about—identifying processes in illustrations—is covered in another course, I believe.
  4. I wasn't looking for any particular skill set. This was more an effort to upgrade my connoisseurship. This course was perfect for that. The time was well used.
  5. Yes. The one suggestion I would have is to broaden the focus to include other geographic regions (e.g., Japan, Latin America, Russia, &c.).
  6. Yes, I was able to answer several questions I had prior to the course through the lecture discussions, and RO's course was very helpful in making my skills with identification of photographic processes, book production, and the small and minute details more fine-tuned.
  7. Yes. The course met and exceeded promises and expectations.
  8. Course delivered the promised content. Would have appreciated having the week's topical agenda in advance.
  9. Yes, good suggestions.

10. Would have liked a bit of an introduction to the technology, i.e., what's special about a Leica.
11. I learned what I hoped to learn, and more. Insights and discoveries came out in lectures, discussions, and group discoveries.
12. The instructor was excellent and he generously shared his knowledge. I learned more than I hoped to learn. It was an incredible experience.
13. Yes.

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

1. Making and teaching photobooks.
2. I will share with colleagues in my department. I feel I will make better informed decisions as I work in a research library about documentation of these books and preservation.
3. I'm going to utilize the skills and knowledge gained here to enhance my research.
4. I'll be able to buy better material for my business.
5. I'll be able to integrate them into future installations, teaching, and scholarship.
6. In my research as well as future profession within this subject.
7. I plan to work with collection development to encourage more photobook collecting, and possibly embark on a new avenue of research.
8. Writing articles, writing a book, and teaching students.
9. Yet to be seen.
10. Continue reading and poking around in my collections.
11. Primarily for scholarship, teaching, instruction, and collection development.
12. I will use what I learned in my daily work.
13. Selling books.

7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*

1. This course would be good for anyone interested in photobooks. RO is an engaging and encouraging teacher.
2. We had a range of student levels in the class, from recent college grads to seasoned professionals, and I think everyone brings something to the table which is what I enjoy about RBS.
3. Someone who works directly with physical books—archiving or selling, for example—would benefit the most. People who primarily conduct research with the materials will have a little less to chew on. Theory and social history were touched on, but were not a primary concern.
4. Not for beginners. You need a moderate knowledge of photo history and processes.
5. Appropriately challenging for a range of attendees including graduate students, information professionals, booksellers, &c..
6. I think the intellectual level was quite high, and someone with a basic and somewhat broad knowledge of the history of photography, illustration, prints, or art books would benefit most. It's great for a wide range of professions.
7. Librarians in art/photography collections, curators of museums that deal with photography, catalogers, bibliographers interested in photography, and booksellers.

8. Advanced professional; academic (faculty/Ph.D.). Perhaps less suitable for lower level students.
  9. We had all levels.
  10. Good for a relative neophyte. Don't know if the more knowledgeable in the class felt it was too elementary.
  11. Anyone new to photobooks. Intermediate knowledge of the genre, too.
  12. The information is presented in a clear, comprehensive way. I believe anyone with an interest would learn a lot from the course. The students are sharp and offer a great deal of insight as well.
  13. Specialized.
- 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. RO's linking of social history to photography in its day.
  2. The instructor has a great depth of knowledge on the topic and brings a British perspective to the historical record. The students bring their rich and varied backgrounds to the dialogue and teach us all.
  3. I would say spending considerable time with people outside my discipline was very powerful and beneficial. It helped me to see my discipline more clearly and better understand my work.
  4. No.
  5. The opportunity to simply engage with a group of sharp minds and with world-class collections, both at UVA and LC, was powerful.
  6. We were able to figure out that many nineteenth-century albumen prints and sometimes collotypes were mounted/printed on what's called a "printer's plate" which therefore means this special paper for featuring photographs within books was commercially produced. This happened at the LC visit.
  7. This course provided an opportunity to see unique and rare materials. The trip to LC was especially wonderful. RO's deep knowledge of the subject was astounding, and drawing connections between the earliest photobooks and things recently published was so interesting.
  8. Physical handling emphasized the importance of variable sizes of books. Beauty of reproduction is awesome. Several case studies on book production were major "aha" moments.
  9. All day, each day.
  10. Too many to recount.
  11. The visit to LC produced "aha" moments for us all, even LC staff, who did not realize they had some special materials—identified by the group.
  12. I enjoyed the trip to the LC, particularly viewing the Walker Evans material. I also enjoyed the archival material RO provided on book production.
  13. LC.
- 9) *How could the course have been improved?*
1. {no response}
  2. UVA and RBS need to build their collection to have more examples to study in class.

3. Maybe adding more of a “big picture” question to focus on throughout the week (or just emphasizing it more). I also might suggest a few activities that give structure to our contributions. Maybe asking everybody to share work with the class.
4. Better onscreen presentation.
5. I would suggest narrowing the number of items viewed and focusing solely on the best representative genres/types.
6. I wish there were more photobooks that we could have examined in person—that’s the only thing that I felt was slightly lacking: the amount of photobooks RBS had for us to study.
7. {no response}
8. Deeper case studies; more theory of the word/image relationship; a bit more recognition of digital issues of reproduction. Lectures could connect to readings a bit more directly. The sources of important quotes in the lectures could be located on the slides.
9. Longer.
10. {no response}
11. Please cover Japanese photobooks as part of the next course. Omitting them this round was a bit disappointing.
12. {no response}
13. Great.

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

1. Yes. Definitely.
2. Yes, and yes.
3. I think the tuition is very reasonable, but adding travel and lodging makes it tougher to swing as a doctoral student. I would absolutely recommend this to the right colleague.
4. Yes, and maybe.
5. Absolutely. Absolutely.
6. Yes, absolutely.
7. Yes. I do plan to recommend the course.
8. Yes. Yes.
9. Yes.
10. Yes.
11. Yes. Yes, without a doubt.
12. I highly recommend this course.
13. Yes.

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

1. Absolutely.
2. We visited the collections of LC, and UVA SC, and it was time well spent rather than in the classroom for five days. We were able to see a lot of items.
3. Yes, time well spent. LC was a highlight.
4. The trips were great.

5. LC was incredible. That experience alone, along with the passion of our faculty member, made it entirely worthwhile.
6. The LC visit was incredible, something I will always remember.
7. The trip to LC was a highlight, as were the trips to UVA's SC. The trip to the darkroom was interesting and provided context.
8. Yes. LC was well prepared for our visit. In the prints and photographs area, we should have been able/allowed to handle the books.
9. Yes, definitely.
10. Yes.
11. Yes, owing to the fact that the books relevant to this course were not all in the collections here.
12. The trip to the LC was great. Viewing the materials was an important part of the course.
13. Yes.

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 loved the paper museum. Would come back if I could, when visiting Charlottesville.
2. The lecture was worthwhile and well attended.
3. {no response}
4. I was too tired to draw much benefit from the later events.
5. Paper museum and Booksellers' Night were both appreciated.
6. I really enjoyed the lecture that was scheduled for our week.
7. The week's lecture was wonderful and I'm very glad I went. Everything put on by RBS was well run, useful, and fun.
8. Not essential to the overall experience. Talk was good, but not great. Booksellers' Night was interesting, but not highly relevant to the course.
9. No.
10. Yes.
11. I missed Movie Night—probably due to the field trip. Also, I won't take a class in the future when "DesBib" is taught. It reduces networking.
12. {no response}
13. Lectures, and ice cream.

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

1. {no response}
2. Do as much reading on the history of photography as you can. Spend time looking at exhibitions of photobooks and researching in collections so that you have much to offer to the dialogue in class.
3. {no response}
4. Do as much of the advance reading as possible.
5. Be sure to add to the dialogue!
6. {no response}
7. Dress warmly, and bring a blanket.

8. The course is very valuable and relevant.
9. No.
10. {no response}
11. If RO teaches it in the future, I recommend it. He was delightful, informative, encouraged discussion, and was well prepared.
12. The course will teach you a lot on the history and evolution of the photobook. It will give you a greater appreciation for the genre and the important figures that use this medium.
13. Do it.

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

1. Wonderful experience!
2. Thought-provoking and inspiring.
3. {no response}
4. This experience keeps me from sleeping—but that's not so bad.
5. Bookishly brilliant!
6. Absolutely brilliant!
7. Exhausting, but fulfilling. I leave with so much more than I brought with me.
8. It was great to spend a week with twelve people who share such passion for and commitment to the photobook.
9. Well worth the time, thank you.
10. {no response}
11. An interesting/excellent course taught by a knowledgeable, enthusiastic, curious professional; recommend.
12. Meaningful and memorable. The course will make a mark and a lasting impression.
13. Summer camp for book nerds.

### **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: 6 (46.15%)

My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days: 1 (7.69%)

I am self-employed, and can arrange my own schedule: 2 (15.38%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 2 (15.38%)

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

No response: 1 (7.69%)

*Who paid your RBS tuition costs?*

I paid 100% myself: 7 (53.85%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (30.77%)  
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.69%)  
No response: 1 (7.69%)

*Who paid your RBS housing expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 6 (46.15%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (46.15%)  
No response: 1 (7.69%)

*Who paid your RBS travel expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 5 (38.46%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (46.15%)  
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.69%)  
No response: 1 (7.69%)

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

**Library disciplines:**

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 1 (7.69%)  
Conservator/binder/preservation librarian: 1 (7.69%)  
Curator: 2 (15.38%)  
Library administrator: 2 (15.38%)

**Student working toward a/n:**

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

**Professional educator:**

Associate professor: 1 (7.69%)  
Full professor: 1 (7.69%)

**Book trades:**

Antiquarian bookseller: 3 (23.08%)