

### **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. PS sent a great many readings via Dropbox before the class, but formally assigned only de Hamel and selected biblical readings. Both of these were relevant to class discussion.
2. Yes, though they didn't give me as many book recommendations as they could have. Folks in the course did, though.
3. They were! I didn't, but I've taken two courses with PS before, so they are top notch!
4. Yes, most useful. It's a complicated subject, but the scope of the course was appropriate, even extraordinary!
5. The main text, *The Book: A History of the Bible*, was an excellent foundation that prepared me to get as much as possible out of the course.
6. Definitely useful, but I don't know if I would ask people to bring de Hamel's book as it is so heavy—one reference copy on the spot would have been enough.
7. Yes. I read a good deal of older commentary on the biblical texts assigned.
8. Yes, the readings were very useful. de Hamel was tedious (though enjoyable), but very useful, especially for the early/medieval history.
9. I enjoyed the pre-course reading, which struck a good balance between setting us up to cover a broad topic and not being crazily onerous. I wish I had known I didn't need the de Hamel book (I wouldn't have dragged it from home).
10. The readings—especially de Hamel's book—were useful and relevant. I didn't read any other material prior to my arrival.
11. The readings were useful for the course; a background in biblical learning and the history of material text is helpful, but none of it was necessary for this course, which successfully appealed to students from a broad range of professional and institutional interests.
12. Yes, very useful. I enjoyed all of them and also delved a little into the suggestions for further reading before the class. I would have been lost without the de Hamel book.

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 two workbooks were difficult to use in terms of (in places) lack of pagination, poor-quality photocopying, and lack of clarity about how the two worked together.
2. Workbook content was all good. I'll use the notes on my research.
3. The book materials were detailed and keyed in to the course. All of it was useful, and I plan to keep using it!

4. Very useful, even for future lessons.
5. Very useful.
6. Materials are definitely useful. A table of contents could be most helpful for the second volume.
7. Yes. Yes, some parts, I expect, will be more useful on rereading.
8. The workbook, handouts, and Dropbox materials are all useful. I will use them in the future.
9. Very helpful! Honestly, I know I will spend the next few weeks debriefing and leafing through the rest of the materials. It is very generous of PS to be so open-access with his teaching materials!
10. Some of the material will be useful for me also in the future. We didn't cover all of the material in the workbooks.
11. Yes—I plan on adapting a lot of the pedagogy and materials into my own teaching.
12. Yes, I will use the workbooks and online materials for years to come. They will have a place of prominence and easy access near my desk.

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

1. This course, while having value for my work, was overall not as good as my other courses.
2. N/A
3. N/A
4. The best one!
5. N/A
6. PS is one of the most enthusiastic teachers I've ever had: he has a great "happiness in expounding." It was great fun. Still, I wonder if his distrust of teleology is not a little confused with a distrust of purposiveness; I would have liked to have a stronger sense of direction.
7. N/A
8. This was probably my second favorite course, behind Will Noel & Dot Porter's course in 2015.
9. N/A
10. N/A
11. N/A
12. This one was more intellectually stimulating. I enjoyed the variety of exercises, the singing and reading aloud in class, and the instructor's level of enthusiasm for the material.

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. I did come away with a broader understanding of how the biblical texts have been transmitted and used over time and place.
2. Personally, I loved talking/viewing Midrashic visual commentaries and exegesis. I narrowed down a lot of research goals.
3. We all plan to work further on the Matthew Bible and the Bee Live!
4. Too numerous to mention. The bible and its study is limitless.
5. I really enjoyed looking at a variety of books and learning how better to navigate their contents—images, Psalms, notes, &c..

6. Came away with a much stronger sense of the kinds of passions Christians bring to their texts.
7. I'm always looking for new things, and kinds of things, to look for and notice in books; I'm always seeing things that make me wonder, "How did they do that? Why did they do that?" My questions have been honed, my curiosity sharpened, and I even got some actual answers.
8. The general emphasis on how people across time periods engaged with biblical literature was very useful to me. I also really liked the emphasis on material circumstances that control/influence the way texts circulate and are used.
9. I have several research avenues I plan to follow up as a result of this week. The discussion of continuous/discontinuous reading, as well as indexes, common placing, and miscellanies all relate to questions I have about literacy.
10. PS is bursting with ideas. Above all, I gained a lot from observing him "in action" analyzing books and interpreting such evidence.
11. The course provided many big ideas and demonstrated how to teach them; it also pointed me towards many more specific texts and archives, some of which will fold into my research.
12. I especially enjoyed working on research projects such as the Matthew Bible, and the Pastorious Commonplace book. I hope to continue with these projects, and with my own reading. All the material covered will help me in my teaching.

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. The course description indicated that basic familiarity with the bible and its history would be sufficient, and that describes my background, but I struggled at times to make connections—more biblical knowledge up front is, I think, more appropriate.
2. Yep! I would have liked more medieval work (as a medievalist), so that's a suggestion I'd make. I wanted more medieval sociopolitical relevance.
3. Yes, no, and yes.
4. Yes, but it's hard to include every aspect of bible study in one week.
5. Yes, absolutely.
6. We never did get to George Herbert's shaped poems! More time on the text of the Gospels would be useful.
7. Yes. No. Yes.
8. Yes, I think so. I really thought there would be more discussion of the medieval bible/biblical books and how they were used/how people engaged with the biblical materials with and without books. I was disappointed that so much of the 1200 years between New Testament formation and scrolls, and the Wycliffite Bible, and then print was just skipped over.
9. Yes! PS's knowledge and preparation is vast, only matched by his welcoming personality and ability to draw in the entire course. His zeal for the material helps keep focus over long days. The class was almost precisely what I had hoped, but special credit also to Lynne Farrington who added (quite literally—textually, through her insights) more than I can say.
10. I can't compare the class to its description since I hardly remember what was in it. For me, this was an opportunity to learn from a master more than a class about

the history of reading the bible.

11. We actually didn't spend as much time engaging with rare books and the materials drawn from the collection, and arranged throughout the classroom for the class.
12. Yes, definitely. Nothing was left out.

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

1. I hope to better interpret the bibles in our collections and connect them with other materials.
2. Research, research, research for a thesis!
3. I plan to use them in my transcription work, and in other RBS courses.
4. In class. I teach a course on book history.
5. Both in teaching, and in research at libraries.
6. I will use them to teach and impress the minds of visitors in my collection. But truly I was taking this class for pleasure and my own edification.
7. By "looking better."
8. Whenever I'm reading the bible or engaging with a text that is engaged with biblical material.
9. Immediately, when I return home, to hone my dissertation prospectus. I also hope to follow up on some research that this week has inspired.
10. All is very relevant in my Ph.D. research.
11. Mainly for pedagogy, but also for framing more focused work in archives.
12. I will use many of these ideas in my teaching with religious materials, and I'll share some of what I learned with my colleagues as well.

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

1. The course comprised quite a few subject areas so someone with facility in history, art, literature, and religious studies would benefit.
2. Academics (especially book studies and archivists), and eighteenth-century Americanists.
3. A grad student or Ph.D. holder, or someone in library sciences.
4. Those interested in the biggest selling book in the world! No other book compares. The bible is simply too big to ignore.
5. I found this course accessible, and intellectually engaging for all levels.
6. I wish it had been more demanding. Upper-level undergraduate?
7. High and demanding partly because of the various backgrounds, therefore the very diverse questions and "leading answers" of participants. A curious person would benefit, more foxy than hedgehog-y.
8. It was very intellectually demanding, though the atmosphere was always casual and unpretentious, and open to people from all backgrounds. Someone with an interest in early modern literature and religion would benefit most.
9. Not an easy course—best to have some experience with paleography/rare books. Curiosity is a must, otherwise we had a great mix of professionals.
10. I think it was a high level university course. I can't really estimate who would find it useful.
11. As a Ph.D. student I benefitted a lot from the class, but it was accessible and useful, I would think, to everyone from undergraduate students to professors.

12. It was intellectually stimulating, but I believe that it would be suited to any level. I have very little expertise in this area, and I didn't feel left behind or like I was in over my level.

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. I really liked working with the Book of Hours as we have no specimens in our collection.
2. A codex allows horizontal reference!!!
3. The way that PS related his lessons to other materials outside the course.
4. Bible salesmen pedaling their wares!
5. David Stern's talk about how habits of reading shape interpretive practice was excellent. Also, the recognition that Wycliffite Bibles include theological glosses was remarkable.
6. I hadn't realized quite how peculiar Christianity is.
7. Too many for recital, and/or I don't have any honey neatly stored yet in findable "cells."
8. {no response}
9. Too many to share, but I have a notebook full!
10. There were many "aha" moments. PS's whole intellectual persona (as far as I see it) is a big "aha" moment, in fact, of traditional historical and literary scholarship.
11. The ongoing comparison between the forms of thought produced by interacting with a codex vs. interacting with scrolls was fascinating.
12. I especially enjoyed the analysis of illustrations and artwork that must be read in conjunction with the texts. I never before thought about the way the words and images communicate with each other and with the reader/viewer.

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

1. Staying more in line with the syllabus would help; also a brief recap at the end of each day would help tie together various threads of discussion.
2. As mentioned, more medieval content.
3. N/A
4. Not certain. Maybe make it into two weeks?
5. I really thought the course was outstanding.
6. See Q3 regarding purposiveness. But this is a wider problem (if that's the word) with RBS classes—it's the nature of the beast to some extent. This is why "DesBib" is so rewarding.
7. "Improving" it would spoil it.
8. More medieval.
9. Can't think of anything.
10. It could be more systematic and structured, but that would have been a different course altogether.
11. More engagement with rare materials. Small projects that required some final reporting of results.
12. No suggestions.

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

1. I think I got my money's worth. But, I would only recommend the course to colleagues with qualification.
2. RBS was quite expensive. I'd rate the experience as totally worthwhile, but not quite at that value.
3. YES, and YES.
4. Yes, absolutely.
5. Yes, certainly.
6. Yes, and yes.
7. Yes.
8. Yes, and yes.
9. Yes, and yes!
10. Yes.
11. Yes, and yes.
12. Yes, and yes!

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

1. We went to the Philadelphia Museum of Art and that was splendid.
2. Conservation—yes! Very neat.
3. Yes! Seeing Penn's conservation lab was a great experience.
4. Yes.
5. The art museum was fantastic, and the class prepared us to make the most of our time.
6. N/A
7. Very much so. Our trip to the art museum was eye-opening.
8. Yes.
9. Yes! We went to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. It reinforced our discussion of iconography, and was a real highlight.
10. Yes, we went to the museum. I don't know what is time well spent in this sense. It was after course hours, and it was a privilege more than a time investment.
11. N/A
12. Yes, absolutely. We went to conservation and to the art museum. The museum was especially lovely as an addition to what we viewed in the classroom.

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. {no response}
2. N/A
3. N/A
4. {no response}
5. I did attend the evening lecture even though it wasn't clearly relevant to my work, but I really learned a lot!
6. I wished I could have attended, but had to work on another project in the

evenings.

7. I did not get to attend the Tuesday lecture.
8. Yes. I really enjoyed the “Rare and Radical” talk on Thursday afternoon.
9. Yes! I was really happy to hear about the Data Refuge Project from Laurie Allen.
10. PS was very generous with his time and the after-class outings were mainly fun and an opportunity to socialize outside of class.
11. N/A
12. {no response}

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

1. {no response}
2. Learn your manuscript lexicon beforehand!
3. N/A
4. Just be aware that there’s lots of information to ingest!
5. PS is incredibly generous with his time, conversing with us during breaks, and initiating happy hours. This extra time made the course invaluable.
6. It’s OK to bring an iPad with a keyboard.
7. Do it. Bring a sweater.
8. If you don’t do circa 1500–1880 stuff, possibly consider another course unless you have an interest in the bible for other reasons.
9. Bring more warm clothing!
10. Nope.
11. PS is an excellent person to listen to for a week. I learned a tremendous amount from him. His enthusiasm and iconoclastic spirit make book history feel like the most vital kind of literary-historical work.
12. Bring a sweater, rest up beforehand, and prepare for information overload in the best sort of way.

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

1. {no response}
2. EAT the book!
3. Simply put, outstanding!
4. God save the ~~King~~ Stallybrass!
5. Excellent pedagogy and exciting network of colleauges.
6. My book and heart  
Must never part.
7. Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good!
8. All bible, all the time...but fun!
9. Rare experience—peak academia.
10. Master classes are rather rare, and aren’t always well represented in such course evaluations.
11. Indexing holy books  
You leave your fingers behind  
A lyre of pearled string
12. It will take me years to digest this knowledge.

## **Student Data**

*Number of respondents:* 12 (of 12)

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

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 5 (41.67%)

I am self-employed, and can arrange my own schedule: 1 (8.33%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule:  
6 (50%)

*Who paid your RBS tuition costs?*

I paid 100% myself: 2 (16.67%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 7 (58.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 3 (25%)

*Who paid your RBS housing expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 2 (16.67%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 5 (41.67%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 1 (8.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; my institution/employer paid the rest:  
3 (25%)

*Who paid your RBS travel expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 4 (33.33%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (33.33%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 2 (16.67%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)

I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 1 (8.33%)

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

### **Library disciplines:**

Curator: 1 (8.33%)

Public services librarian: 1 (8.33%)

Special collections librarian: 2 (16.67%)

### **Student working toward a/n:**

B.A./B.S.: 1 (8.33%)

Ph.D./D.Phil: 5 (41.67%)

### **Professional educator:**

Assistant professor: 1 (8.33%)

**Book trades:** Antiquarian bookseller: 1 (8.33%)