

Michael Winship
H-50: The American Book in the Industrial Era, 1820–1940
23–28 July 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. Yes, the pre-course readings were useful.
2. Pre-course reading was great. I did no additional prep. I have no reading suggestions, but it might be useful to include some information on types of printmaking, paper, folding/gathering for those unfamiliar with book mechanics.
3. Very good reading, though some material was rehashed in class. Making Gaskell required might help push past basic bibliographical stuff into more course specific material faster.
4. The readings were great to prep for the course, and I very much appreciated the bibliography prepared for us by MW.
5. The readings were very useful!
6. Yes, the assignments were useful. I read the recommended and some of the suggested pieces.
7. I enjoyed the readings and they were not too much for the course.
8. Both required and recommended readings were useful.
9. {no response}
10. Yes, very useful. I also think the optional reading in Gaskell, which I read last year for my RBS course, was very useful for this course as well.
11. Yes, useful.
12. Very useful.

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 workbooks, but the documents provided were relevant and helpful.
2. Our course content was distributed via Dropbox. It is voluminous, but I'm sure it will be useful going forward.
3. No workbook, but we got a bibliography and video list. Look forward to them, but have not really looked at them yet.
4. Yes! Very much so. I was unable to read it all this week, of course, but it will be a great resource in years to come.
5. There wasn't a workbook.
6. This was all useful. I appreciate the fact that it was made available online.
7. Yes. I'd love to see more of the PowerPoint slides uploaded to Dropbox though.
8. I appreciate this instructor's decision to send the course workbook electronically a week before the course. Like any RBS course, the packet will be of use to me for a long time.
9. Dropbox worked well for the workbook content. I have printed out portions that I

- want for future reference.
10. The bibliographies and list of videos distributed before class will be very useful for further study.
 11. Should have been sent sooner than one week before class started. Not enough time to watch all the videos.
 12. Appropriate and useful.
- 3) *If you've taken previous RBS courses, how did this one compare?*
1. N/A
 2. This one had more lecture and less tactile investigation of materials. I'm not sure if that was in response to our class' needs or intentional.
 3. Felt slower. Possibly because it covers similar ground at times. A bit less contact with materials. A bit more open format-wise.
 4. N/A
 5. Both were great! They differed in approach, which is to be expected with different faculty, but they were complementary. This one focused more on process, the other more on history.
 6. N/A
 7. N/A
 8. A little better than most.
 9. High. MW has a broad perspective on the time period and can develop the changes that occurred in a meaningful way.
 10. I took H-40 last year, which covered some of the same time period and material, but I found each course very useful on its own.
 11. Not nearly as good.
 12. N/A
- 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 enjoyed the discussion of bindings, and felt the session about *Leaves of Grass* was excellent. I appreciated that MW really pushed us to think about all the unanswered questions in the field that could make for exciting and new research projects.
 2. MW's stories are invaluable. Learning about the work-and-turn half sheet and the physical methods of printing. Printing a sheet on the Washington press. Stereotyping, electrotyping explained, recognizing type, and a little about publishers' contracts.
 3. Liked the specifics when they came out. Afternoon with *Leaves of Grass* was good. Found images of archive material very interesting and liked seeing linotype/monotype pieces.
 4. Yes! I very much appreciated the broad history and introductory nature of the course. This gives me a fantastic context in which to think about my scholarship. I also learned new methods for history of the book research that I hope to use.
 5. I'll need to revisit my notes to get the full effect, there was so much material. But, I did take away teaching ideas, and MW was always ready to discuss my research projects and share his own.
 6. I loved it all! Even the stuff (say, papermaking) that isn't relevant to my work. I

- have ideas about how to approach a project in process. I can't wait to go back to work on it. I will also incorporate what I've learned into my teaching.
7. The lab sessions with *Tent on the Beach* and *Lucille* were the most interesting, and allowed application of lecture topics.
 8. I had hoped to gain a better understanding of the industrial book—and I did—but I also learned/confirmed that they are as soul-less as I expected.
 9. I was interested in plate use, publishing, distribution, and copyright issues. I found the course useful in distinguishing between innovations that were meaningful, and ones that were outliers or dead ends.
 10. MW's scholarship and wide-ranging knowledge were an inspiration. He often related information he shared to work or scholarship still needed in the field which provided many new ideas.
 11. First two days on technical aspects of industrial era typesetting, printing, and binding.
 12. An area I had not explored before. Has raised some interesting questions for me to explore in the future.
- 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. There was very little attention given to the 1900–1940 section of the course; it seems like it perhaps should simply focus on 1830–1900.
 2. I think I expected to learn more about how technology changed publishing, from paper to case binding to book stores, but I feel like we listened to a lot of stories about fiction authors, and it was hard to relate, at times. There were a lot of RBS collections materials we never looked at or touched.
 3. I wasn't sure what to expect because the course was so broad and that seems to be its main challenge. But we benefitted from MW's expertise and even though this was a brief survey he was able to provide details to illustrate every topic, which is what I was looking for.
 4. Yes! It fit the promised description! I learned all I had hoped for, but now I want more.
 5. Yes to the first and third questions. No to the second.
 6. Yes! The course description was very accurate.
 7. There was some ground covered that was a part of the assigned reading that we could have moved through quicker, but otherwise I think we covered what I wanted.
 8. The instructor is especially essential to the understanding of the industrial book. He is so knowledgeable. I think we only scratched the surface.
 9. Yes.
 10. Yes, I learned exactly what I expected about the history of the book, with the addition of many insights into American literature, which I had not expected.
 11. Expense and time to get here vs. what I hoped to get and actually got...in retrospect, I would choose another class.
 12. Yes. Too much to explore to time available. Yes.
- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*

1. Teaching and research.
2. I have new insights about books in my collection.
3. Not sure how this will apply to my future. I know a bit more about what to look for in books of this period, and a bit more about the history of certain publishers, which will help contextualize the books I see daily.
4. I will use these skills in my own scholarship, teaching, and professional service of evaluating other literary scholarship for academic publications (journals, presses, &c.).
5. To further my research.
6. See Q4. I won't be able to look at a book in the same way again.
7. Much of the production history and possibly distribution could be helpful for my current project. Otherwise, what I have learned has given me new items on my to-do list for when I am looking at rare books.
8. To better grow the collection in my care.
9. As a collector, I will use them to evaluate possible purchases. I have new resources for researching material.
10. I plan to use the knowledge I have gained to inform my further research.
11. Don't know.
12. My own pleasure in exploring American publishing.

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

1. I think one of the challenges in this kind of course is that it's covering a very broad range—this meant that parts of it were review, but other parts were new. It didn't seem to require as much background or expertise as I had initially thought.
2. RBS classes are always high-level intellectually. Anyone who has a master's or Ph.D. level understanding of literature and publishing in the United States.
3. The less you know about bibliography generally, the more you will learn. A lot is covered in other classes if you've taken RBS courses before.
4. I am disappointed in myself to say that if I had taken this course as a graduate student, I would not have been deeply interested. But because now I see how this links to my field of study—and MW purposefully linked discussion to our interests—I am very excited about print culture studies.
5. People with less knowledge of print and publication processes, or those looking for a refresher. Those hoping to get a broad view of developments in the period.
6. High. I would love to see more academics take this course.
7. It had basic components that expanded into more nuanced topics. I think this got the class (comprised of many different backgrounds) on the same page. I think even undergraduates could follow without losing any more of a track than the current class did.
8. I dunno; I understood it all pretty well, and I'm not the sharpest tool in the box.
9. It is useful for someone who hopes to look at the rapid changes in the nineteenth century in a nuanced manner.
10. The course assumed a good knowledge of American history and literature, although MW frequently created good context in that regard. The level was challenging, but very interesting.
11. Teacher was on a high graduate level; class was not at that level.
12. For those who have a good knowledge in American books and publishing.

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. {no response}
2. I had no “aha!” or powerful moments.
3. It was great seeing so many different copies of *Lucille* in one place and spending time to see differences in the printing, binding, format, &c., over a brief course of time.
4. Learning key terms and methods of book history. Linking examples (Whitman, &c.) to specific morning topics.
5. The trips to SC were great, as were the labs where we got to apply what we had learned.
6. I loved all the hands-on and SC demonstrations. I learned so much from examining *Tent on the Beach* and *Leaves of Grass*. Honestly, though, it was great to just hear MW talk about any subject to do with the book. He is so generous with his research, so well versed in the field.
7. The discussion of paper folding, collation, &c., with *Tent on the Beach*.
8. MW takes us into the publishers’ records to better identify and understand the physical book of the industrial era. This is important because of the lack of clear and unique evidence to understand what’s what.
9. I have a better understanding of plate use, and the ability to correct and alter plates in the time period.
10. MW leveraged the experience of students in the class, which made it interactive. He provided numerous opportunities to ask questions, the answers to which often provided some wonderful insights and stories.
11. {no response}
12. {no response}

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

1. I think encouraging and allowing for more participation and discussion would be useful. Some parts of the class seemed rushed, others slow—better organization and time management would help as well.
2. Teach to your class’s strengths and interests. If it’s stated that projects/interests fall outside of the group, make sure to not focus heavily on one genre.
3. I personally would have benefitted more if it started a little deeper, but many classmates seemed to appreciate time spent on foundations.
4. Perhaps if I had a photographic memory and/or could download all the information in MW’s brain into my own!
5. I can’t really think of anything. With a group of students with diverse interests it must be hard to address them all, but I think the course did as well as possible.
6. One-on-one time to pick MW’s brain!
7. Perhaps an extra lab session over another SC session (where we did not get to touch books) so we can again apply our knowledge and explore for ourselves.
8. Make it two weeks instead of one.
9. {no response}
10. Given MW’s discursive style, an outline with dates or date ranges of major

- printing milestones would have been helpful to create more context for the wealth of information he shared.
11. Long discourses and “silly stories” (his words) by instructor who took too much time. He rambled incessantly about how much and who he knew, and got easily distracted. Felt like we were a captive audience. Could have omitted a lot of opinions and gave us more practical data specific to books. Rather uncharitable with people who disagreed with him.
 12. Divided into pre- and post-1900.
- 10) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? Would you recommend the course to others?*
1. {no response}
 2. Sure. It's not a comprehensive, comparative history class, though.
 3. Yes, MW had a lot of great info to share and it felt like a little more time to have really dug into more things would have helped. I'd recommend more strongly for those with English backgrounds who need to learn about the trade, rather than the other way around.
 4. Yes! Yes!
 5. Yes, definitely.
 6. Yes, and yes.
 7. Yes! (My institution was paying, though.)
 8. Oh yeah. Oh yeah.
 9. Yes, and yes.
 10. Yes! I would recommend the course enthusiastically.
 11. Not really.
 12. Yes. Yes.
- 11) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*
1. Mostly. The lecture was useful, but the approach of showing us the items without any opportunity to handle them was frustrating. Perhaps students could be allowed to page through a few select items in cradles?
 2. We went to SC; actually had two show-and-tells. One was both of the afternoon sessions, devoted to *Leaves of Grass* (a lecture, primarily), and the other was on the last day. I'm happy to have learned more about the authors, but it was a lot of time on Whitman.
 3. The SC segments were great.
 4. Yes! Very helpful to see abstract examples in practice.
 5. I do!
 6. Yes.
 7. {no response}
 8. The show-and-tell trips to see things at SC were downright essential to this course.
 9. The trips to SC were informative and interesting.
 10. We had two sessions in SC which were fascinating.
 11. Three hours of Walt Whitman is about two hours and forty-five minutes too much.
 12. Yes (to SC).

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. The Monday lecture was excellent.
2. I usually like the Monday lecture and skip Movie Night. I had less interest in this session's Monday lecture, and she spoke too quickly, so that lessened my ability to gain much from it.
3. Yes, they broke up the week and helped us get to know each other more. I skipped Movie Night, but I have enjoyed it before.
4. Meredith McGill is fantastic! Thank you for featuring her!
5. Ornament Night was great because it complemented some presswork we had done in class.
6. I thought that Meredith McGill's talk was wonderful.
7. Ornament Night was fantastic! Booksellers' Night was fun though less attractive for grad students since there was so little that was affordable.
8. {no response}
9. The lecture was interesting. I had done Ornament Night, so I gave others the opportunity.
10. Ornament Night was an excellent experience. It gave those of us doing a course that was not a hands-on printing class a chance to set type and print. It was great fun and very helpful.
11. Booksellers' Night was good. Didn't attend the rest.
12. Yes.

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

1. If possible, come prepared with projects to discuss for the opportunity to get feedback on ideas and questions answered. It was a really helpful part of the class.
2. Do the readings. Consider the full course description. (Maybe) don't expect a lot of technical talk.
3. Socialize. It's part of the education. {private response}
4. I think it is easier if one has a background in the topic, of course, and if one doesn't, the readings would be particularly key.
5. Get MW to tell research stories. They're fascinating!
6. Do it—especially if you're interested in literary publishing.
7. Revisit your Gaskell. Keep a timeline that shows the different developments in paper, ink, printing, binding, &c..
8. Drink from the fount of MW while you can!
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. MW is passionate and enthusiastic and very opinionated. If you can handle the opinion issues, might be OK. Continually got in the way for me.
12. Do fully prepare by reading suggested material.

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. It's always good, and you'll learn more about yourself than you'd expect.
3. {no response}
4. Thank you, RBS and MW, for a fantastic week!
5. It's a best-seller, in a non-pejorative sense!
6. Exhausting, but so worth it.
7. I want to come back.
8. I hate, hate, hate having to be without my wife and kitty cat, but RBS is worth it.
9. {no response}
10. A rewarding, inspirational week.
11. Some courses are better than others.
12. An experience well worth the time and money. A great learning experience.
Unique in my experience.

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: 6 (50%)

My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days:
2 (16.67%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule:
1 (8.33%)

I am retired, and can arrange my own schedule: 2 (16.67%)

My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 6 (50%)

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

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

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

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 7 (58.33%)

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

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

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 6 (50%)

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

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

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

Library disciplines:

Curator: 2 (16.67%)

Library administrator: 1 (8.33%)

Public services librarian: 1 (8.33%)

Special collections librarian: 1 (8.33%)

Student working toward a/n:

Ph.D./D.Phil: 1 (8.33%)

Professional educator:

Assistant professor: 1 (8.33%)

Associate professor: 2 (16.67%)

Book trades:

Antiquarian bookseller: 1 (8.33%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Retired: 2 (16.67%)