

Michael F. Suarez, S. J.
H-90: Teaching the History of the Book
7-12 January 2018

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. Reading list was quite useful.
2. What I read was useful but I honestly wasn't able to do much of it.
3. Abundantly useful. No changes.
4. At first the long reading list struck panic in my heart, but I realize it is a "life list." So valuable.
5. The wealth of information presented in the course packet will be a great resource in the future. The reading assignments definitely set the tone for the course.
6. Yes, the assignments were quite useful. [I would have appreciated a bit more direction as to what we were to do with them for the course.]
7. Yes, I liked them. Some of the bibliographical texts felt repetitive. I especially liked *The Book: The Life Story of a Technology*, and the MLA Volume.
8. I enjoyed the readings and will revisit them.
9. Yes, they were good texts. It would have been helpful to know that we only needed to familiarize ourselves and not study them closely.
10. Yes, the readings were helpful in establishing a common baseline.
11. I read some and saved some for later. I'll be sure to consult them again when I prepare to teach again. Useful to have the materials beyond the course itself.
12. The list was extremely extensive and I wasn't able to complete all of it, only the "required" portion and some of the "recommended" portion. I will use the lists as reference for continued study.
13. We didn't discuss the readings much during the course, but it was very helpful to read a range of texts that I might assign to my students.

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. Very valuable. A primary take-away from the course. I intend to make much use of these materials.
2. Useful, and will be especially so after the course as I go back and seek to apply what we've learned and discussed.
3. I enjoyed the electronic format. Great for teaching ideas.
4. Very useful. I will refer back to it for years to come.
5. Content was very appropriate, and will continue to be useful after the course.
6. The workbook is amazing. It's basically a "greatest hits" anthology across the RBS curriculum. Highly useful.
7. I might have liked more references to these materials throughout the course of the sessions.

8. I am excited to revisit the workbook and additional materials as I prepare my course. Wonderful resource!
9. Content seems useful. I liked the Dropbox delivery, except that it was sometimes hard to match TOC and file.
10. The workbook seems incredibly useful and I am grateful for the generosity of those who made their work available.
11. Yes. Looking forward to using materials when I teach the history of the book again.
12. I'd offer a similar answer to the above. The "workbook" in Google Docs will be an extremely useful reference manual moving forward.
13. The workbook is WONDERFUL! I've already started using it to revise my syllabus. I'm so grateful to all the instructors who allowed their materials to be shared.

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

1. Have always had wonderful experiences at RBS, but this course was something special.
2. Excellent, as they all are.
3. This course and "I-20: Book Illustration Processes to 1900" with TB are tied for the best.
4. It exceeded them, largely due to MFS.
5. Spectacular; every RBS course has been fantastic, and this wasn't an exception. I truly appreciate MFS's teaching style, enthusiasm, and deep knowledge in the field.
6. This was more free-flowing than my previous course—lots of discussion, lots of book-as-object time, we went where the conversation went (with guard rails courtesy of MFS).
7. Wow! The course and MFS were great. This was equally good, if not better, than the one I did with Mark Dimunation and John Buchtel. This was more professionally useful.
8. Both were excellent and top notch.
9. Better, but that's probably because the subject matter is of more interest to me.
10. N/A
11. N/A
12. It was happily comparable in terms of the quality of the experience and (as it should be) different in that we were not studying a book history topic, but rather how to teach. It was very practical. That said, we were still able to enjoy playing with books!
13. This was the best RBS course I've taken, easily—it will change my teaching, but also my approaches to my own research.

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. The books, of course. Too many insights and plans to be specific, but learned many, many new things every session.
2. Focus on process and on the practical how-tos of it all. The expertise of the instructor and of everyone in the room, and the discussion format.

3. Concrete pedagogy advice assignments we did and discussed in class.
 4. The “meta” lessons on how to inspire students and how to design classes.
 5. I personally enjoyed the discussions on process (printing processes), but appreciated the thoroughness of conversation regarding other aspects of book history. Hopefully I’ve truly learned how to look at a book!
 6. Getting to hear MFS’s stories, and watching him set up book pairings was excellent.
 7. MFS modeled a wonderful pedagogy. It was organic, yet he clearly accomplished what he set out to do. I admire the way he didn’t feel rushed or overly beholden to coverage.
 8. I appreciated thinking about how to include and use the sources (both textual and human) that are available to me, and have new ideas for bringing in speakers and specialists.
 9. Sharing ways to engage students/specific exercises. Wow—yes! Too many to list here. Some include how to tell a story with the object, importance of money/economics, and how to see.
 10. How to put objects in conversation was most useful and I will certainly make use of these methods. I also plan to make use of a number of exercises suggested both by the instructor and by fellow students.
 11. I wanted to refresh my teaching by getting new ideas from others and trying out new texts, examples, and activities. MFS and the other seminarians modeled new ways of presenting the history of the book, and I’m glad for it.
 12. MFS’s discussion on the meaning and importance of allowing ourselves to become possessed *by* history/artifacts/beauty, rather than “to possess” these things, was deeply meaningful.
 13. I have so many new ideas for classroom activities and for items I might add to my university’s collection.
- 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. {no response}
 2. Yes. No. Yes.
 3. Not that I can think of.
 4. If anything, I am overwhelmed with the task to reproduce what MFS does in baby steps.
 5. The course met all expectations.
 6. Almost—I’m not 100% clear on key differences in teaching different levels of students (first year, advanced undergrad, grad, &c.), but I learned a lot about books, resources, and pedagogy this week.
 7. I might have liked a little more attention to nineteenth- and twentieth-century books.
 8. I had thought we would spend more time on logistical aspects of course creation and assignments, but much of that is in the course pack, and depends on each person’s institution.
 9. I expected more specific discussion of pedagogical theory but I’m not sure if that was really promised. I have new ideas, and feel inspired and that’s the best outcome I could hope for.

10. Yes, absolutely. The course offered everything I had hoped and a great deal of valuable interdisciplinary perspective.
11. {no response}
12. I learned so much! I need to let it marinate in my mind a bit as I made decisions on where I proceed from here.
13. I learned some new ways to present materials to students, but more importantly, I learned new ways of looking at materials that will allow me to develop my own classroom activities in the future. I'm not sure what I expected to learn, but I know that this wasn't quite it, and this was better.

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

1. As often as I can and in as many ways as I can.
2. I'll use aspects of what I learned in my daily work and in my ever-increasing number of instruction sessions. I also hope to use it to insert myself more and more into the planning stages of the existing "History of the Book & Printing" class on campus.
3. Integration into courses in future semesters.
4. Propose a history of the book program and improve my classroom sessions.
5. I hope to incorporate the knowledge into my work as a librarian at a university.
6. I'll use some of this in literature courses for English majors right away. Later this year, this will help me design a first-year-level intro to book history course and a senior capstone on scholarly editing.
7. I'm not sure where to begin—in my teaching, research, thinking, life.... I gained insights on how to teach students from beginners to advanced.
8. I am going to teach a course next fall on book history.
9. Develop a syllabus for a semester-long course while new ideas are fresh.
10. I would like to incorporate a number of exercises mentioned and particular texts into my own teaching, and will also share them with others in my institution.
11. I'm looking forward to revising my syllabi and classroom repertoire.
12. {private response}
13. I will design a new book history course for my university, but I'm also going to redesign my current teaching in light of what we've done this week. This course will help me for a long time!

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

1. {no response}
2. Intellectual level was high. Anyone interested in the history of the book would benefit, but especially anyone with any sort of a teaching role.
3. High intellectual level. Perfect for those with some book history background, but new teachers fit perfectly.
4. Not for novices, but not for experienced professors? It was perfect for me.
5. Faculty members looking to develop a course on the history of the book.
6. Someone who wants to think and learn a lot about books, the humanities, and collaboration between librarians, and classroom faculty.
7. MFS did a masterful job of dealing with sophisticated bibliographical concepts and approaches, while almost always starting from a basic level: "What do you

- see?" I never felt lost and yet it really made me think.
8. The course was fascinating and engaging. I am more of a manuscript person, but I learned loads about printing and communities that will be immensely helpful. Grad students, professors, and librarians would enjoy this course!
 9. Young professors.
 10. This would benefit anyone teaching in a university as faculty or librarian.
 11. {no response}
 12. Anyone who wants to develop skills for formal teaching, academic collaboration, or even informal teaching (e.g., by scholarly book sellers or collectors), would benefit from the course. The intellectual level was sufficiently high to offer discussion on complex issues, but was still accessible.
 13. MFS was great about explaining the various areas that not everyone specialized in, and at getting students to share their expertise about particular items, so although the course was easier when dealing with objects in my field, it was never confusing. Perhaps best for people who already teach book history in some capacity, whether as a professor or in a library.
- 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. The phrase "teaching in the presence of books" when said had {illegible}.
 2. Lots! I learned so much! Seeing the 1504 Aldus Homer. Learning so much about the business of the book. Learning about the credit system, and that people didn't have to pay for the books they purchased until Christmas. Crazy! Also, follow the money!
 3. The presentation of book history knowledge by the instructor was powerful and stunning.
 4. Too, too many. MFS is an intellectual tsunami.
 5. MFS's insights were incredible; it was a pleasure to have the chance to spend a week learning from him.
 6. I greatly enjoyed MFS's "homily" on the aims of education at the start of day five. The index/censorship exercise was mind-blowing.
 7. I loved the session on business practices and the attention to capital flows.
 8. The emphasis on community and networks in the book world (both past and present) gave me a lot of confidence since I don't now feel the pressure to teach only collation formulas in isolation from other experts.
 9. Always provide more than one object. The difficult choices of the many ways book history could be approached: social, economic, technology, and the difficulty of figuring out how to use what to get across what you want to teach.
 10. It is too difficult to single out any moments, in part because the instructor's enthusiasm was contagious and extended to everything. But also because we were shown so many wonderful things.
 11. It was, in its entirety, a great occasion to learn with MFS and others.
 12. Among others, powerful moments included discussion on knowing as an act of (and precondition to) love, with books being seen as seductresses and not whores (!); discussions on millenials' perspectives and values; conversations of how collectors might work more collaboratively with academics; and of course the "being possessed by" discussion noted in Q4.

13. I loved the opening exercise with romance novels—it really framed my thinking for the rest of the week, both in terms of how to encourage students to look closely at material, and in terms of how to draw out the individual significance of a single, very approachable object.

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

1. Would have liked a little more discussion of nineteenth- and twentieth-century book history.
2. Besides keeping better to the schedule, I can't think of anything.
3. More assignment instruction.
4. More examples of non-Christian texts: Islamic, Jewish, Hindi, &c.
5. It was great as it was!
6. {private response}
7. Traffic flow while looking at books. There was "dead time" when one had had their turn. As a result, those were some of the least lively times for me.
8. No response.
9. Knowing in advance the trajectory of the course, ideas to cover, or even just for each day. What came next was a mystery.
10. Perhaps some time could be spent discussing ways in which a variety of disciplines could use the history of the book, with the focus on co-teaching outside obvious disciplines.
11. One thing I noticed over the course of the week is that MFS tends to cite the research of men at the rate of about 2:1 over women. Women's teaching or librarianship was more likely to be mentioned than women's research. I'll grant that bibliography and the history of the book was dominated in the first half of the twentieth century by Oxbridge men, but since the 1960s this has not necessarily been the case. Dorothy Porter Wesley, Mary Kelley, Meredith McGill, Lisa Gitleman, Frances Smith Foster, Christine Pawley—the list goes on—were/are tremendously important book historians whose work could have illustrated some of our discussions in the class. Of course we can't cite everyone, but as citation is a political act, striving toward parity of attention and recognition is important for the diversification *and* thriving of the field. It's also important to model for our women students so they see a place in the field for themselves. Relatedly, referring to cheaply illustrated books as "tarted up" did not sit well with me. I know it's well intentioned and jocular, but it signals a kind of respectability politics that is, ultimately, anti-feminist. I say this from a position of friendly criticism.
12. Just a little more coffee?
13. It was wonderful already! {private response}

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

1. Yes, and yes.
2. Yes, absolutely.
3. Yes. Yes.
4. YES! I would recommend it.
5. Yes, definitely!
6. Yes, and yes! I'm already telling colleagues to sign up.

7. Yes!!! Yes!!!
8. Absolutely, on both counts!
9. Yes. Yes.
10. Yes, and yes.
11. {no response}
12. Yes, absolutely on both fronts.
13. 100% definitely.

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

1. {no response}
2. Visiting The Grolier Club library and learning more about the institution was very interesting.
3. The library trip in The Grolier Club was good, but I wish we had had a real field trip.
4. {no response}
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. I enjoyed the time in the library and the tour. Learning more about The Grolier Club was a nice break.
8. The trip to the Grolier's catalog room and the tour were not especially useful.
9. N/A
10. N/A
11. {no response}
12. The tour of The Grolier Club by Meghan Constantinou was time very well spent.
13. Yes, our visit to the Grolier library was really interesting. Looking at library catalogs introduced a whole new way of approaching the material.

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. They were excellent additions (the 2 out of 3 I attended). Very informative and collegial.
3. {private response}
4. No response.
5. Yes, definitely appreciated Glen Miranker's hospitality.
6. Yes; Meghan Constantinou's lecture was fascinating and proved useful as the course went on.
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. The reception at the collector's apartment was nice, but did not add to the learning experience.
10. They were enjoyable and contributed to the conviviality of the course.
11. {no response}
12. Yes, definitely; it's always a part of the experience to continue conversations outside of the classroom, and these events allowed that to happen even more.

13. I didn't attend the lecture because I had to meet people, but I wish I had—they've always been good in the past.

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

1. {no response}
2. Do it!
3. Perhaps not as first RBS course. Take a survey or two first.
4. Concentrate! Give all of yourself. Turn your phone off and dive in.
5. If you are thinking of teaching a course, MFS has some great insight into how to approach the topic.
6. {no response}
7. I wonder if it would be better in Charlottesville...with a more capacious collection. Although it was really great to spend so much time thinking about pedagogy.
8. No response.
9. Think about your aim in teaching before you come, then hope to have that exploded.
10. No.
11. {no response}
12. Start your reading as early as possible because there's a lot of it, but don't worry if you can't finish it all in advance because you will use it afterwards as well.
13. This course is great—take it!

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

1. The generosity of everyone involved...
2. Beautiful books, fascinating books, all kinds of books, and their admirers.
3. {no response}
4. MFS, I cower before his greatness. Lo! A better teacher leaves.
5. As always, a valuable and humbling experience.
6. You live with the books and some delightful people for a week—yes, please!
7. "What do I see?"
8. Addictive!
9. all books are mysterious
unravel the tale
to set hearts and minds on fire
10. A stimulating, collaborative, wonder-full week.
11. Love and knowledge!
12. To know is to love.
13. On day one Michael said "let me mention
Books are coalescences of human intention."
He said it eight times
So I've put it in rhyme
To show I was paying attention—

which was easy, because Michael's course
was a triumph—a real tour-de-force!

It was worth every penny.
I leave with so many
ideas—what a marvelous resource!

And to top it all off, he would bring
out rare books that would make my heart sing!
And so the one fly`
In the ointment—the lie:
“Take Home Tuesday” is not really a thing.

`vel “leonine mon.’

Student Data

Number of respondents: 13 (of 14)

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:
3 (23.07%)
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: 2 (15.38%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 5 (38.46%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 8 (61.53%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 5 (38.46%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 5 (38.46%)
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.69%)
I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 2 (15.38%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 5 (38.46%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 5 (38.46%)
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 2 (15.38%)
I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 1 (7.69%)

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

Library disciplines:

Library administrator: 3 (23.07%)

Special collections librarian: 2 (15.38%)

Student working toward a/n:

Ph.D./D.Phil: 2 (15.38%)

Professional educator:

Assistant professor: 2 (15.38%)

Associate professor: 3 (23.07%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Book collector: 1 (7.69%)