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H-15: The History of Book in America: A Survey from Colonial to Modern
July 28–August 2

Narrative Course Evaluations

- 1) *Were the pre-course reading assignments useful? Are there any readings that you would like to see added or removed in future years?*
 1. The best readings were on alternative publishers and the readings for the first class. I also appreciated the inclusion of online videos as options.
 2. I thought the pre-course readings were useful. The class didn't provide that many and I thought the instructors did a good job explaining them. My favorite was "The Black Press and Radical Print Culture" and "Reading, Writing, and Resisting: African American Print Culture."
 3. Yes...I thought the three best/most useful readings were the Robert Darnton "What Is the History of Books?", Joan Shelley Rubin "What is the History of the History of Books" and Underground Press Syndicate.
 4. The reading assignments were useful. I particularly liked the ones that covered minorities because it is not as easily accessible to find that information. I think some things covered in the class were better taught in the class than from readings like some of the readings for the first couple of days.
 5. Yes they were! They provided a great overview of the course before setting foot in the classroom! Abbott was particularly long though.
 6. Yes. I particularly enjoyed the readings that focused on the less mainstream segments of US populations.
 7. The readings were useful—particularly the material that provided a bird's eye view of the changes in the book trade (Casper, Groves, Winship). {private response}
 8. For the most part I really enjoyed the readings. I personally found the Joan Shelley Rubin article to be extremely interesting and useful. Some of the HBA readings felt a bit dated and employed dated language—perhaps these might be swapped out for more contemporary work.
 9. For the most part, I found our readings very helpful. My favorite reading was on the creation of zines, though I found Abbott's explanation of Harper and Brothers incredibly useful. I didn't love the reading on middlebrow culture, mostly because of the format.
 10. Extremely useful and covered details that, even with background knowledge of the subject, offer a full picture of the history of the book in America.
 11. The course readings were a pre-seminar opportunity to begin the immersive experience. While I appreciated the additional links to videos, these were listed as optional and may be more valuable sequenced into the assigned readings.
 12. The readings were spot-on.
- 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 will continue to use it after the class.

2. The breakdown of the workbook was perfect. It provided space for notes related to each day so that you could keep your thoughts together. It made it so that it wasn't too overwhelming.
 3. Workbook was good—maybe a prompt or two less for each of the materials.
 4. Yes, I thought all of the materials were great.
 5. The content was extremely helpful, as were the examples provided to work with and take with us. It will continue to be of use.
 6. Yes and yes.
 7. The course workbook and teaching materials were useful – I particularly enjoyed the hands-on approach of the course.
 8. The workbook was very helpful—I appreciated having all of the materials, exercises, bibliography, &c. in one place. I also really appreciated the wide range of materials we were able to engage with in class. This hands-on experience really helped to make clear the concepts or histories we were covering.
 9. The workbook could stand to have 2–3 extra pages for notes! I have marked my copy to death! I am very glad I have it as a resource going forward, especially the list of additional sources.
 10. It was very helpful to engage with each other in discussions prompted by group work or the workbook. Materials complimented what we were discussing and helped me understand (and appreciate) items that are not necessarily rare but certainly significant.
 11. The workbook was useful, and I plan to continue to use it and add to it. As a note-taker, I'd have liked blank pages after each session.
 12. The materials circulated during the course were so in line with the topics that they brought the readings to life and allowed the students to take home “physical” memories that will likely remain well after the readings have faded.
- 3) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your RBS course? Did you walk away with any “aha!” moments, new ideas, or project plans?*
1. I plan to immediately use some of the readings for my thesis. Also, being able to say I have operated a press (even just one time with assistance) is great to have as an anecdote during the job search.
 2. I learned a lot of new information that I'll be able to relate to books at my job as well as explain to researchers what they are looking at with background information.
 3. Mostly in terms of interfacing with students and faculty. Particularly helpful descriptions of printing (and working with the presses was very helpful) and in business of books.
 4. This knowledge will definitely help me better understand our collections and will better prepare me for instructions and marketing our collections to faculty and students.
 5. I walked away with many aha moments! I can use what I learned in my research and in my classrooms. It also allows me to put knowledge to a practice of which I knew little about.
 6. I hope to be able to use what I have learned when I encounter book/research projects in my profession. “Aha” moment—was the hands-on printing experience, a field I know little about.
 7. The insights provided in this course, without a doubt, have equipped me with the

- skills and knowledge to perform thorough research in my personal projects.
8. Yes! I came to RBS because of the intersections between this course and my dissertation topic. I am leaving with an exciting and fresh perspective on my research. I am also planning to use the knowledge I've gained in this course in an undergraduate class I will be teaching in the spring.
 9. I came to RBS with the knowledge that our reading room and instruction area will expand over the next two years and we will have a donation of two printing presses that none of us know what to do with. I am leaving here with an understanding of how they—along with other objects in our collection and other technologies we have around the library—could put together a viable print shop and history of the book course for students.
 10. It will help to identify significance of items in my institution's collection and aid in assembling teaching collections. I'm interested in proposing to teach a light history of the book lesson to visiting undergrads and, maybe, look into setting up and obtaining a printing press for class visits.
 11. During the course I found myself making notes about how I could include content or otherwise introduce an idea in my work. I hope that my examples from using printing presses make it back safely, as I have plans for them as samples during class visits.
 12. I left this course with scores of "aha!" moments, new ideas, and project plans to bring into the curriculum of my home institution, and our students will be the better for it. Likewise, my own personal research will develop in new paths as a result of this course.
- 4) *Did the instructors help you to acquire all the skills and information promised in the course description? Did you learn what you had hoped to learn?*
1. I learned more than I hoped to learn. Moving seats each session allowed me to better learn from the other students and the instructors complimented each other.
 2. Yes.
 3. Yes.
 4. Yes.
 5. Yes! They most definitely did! I learned way more than I thought I would; it was very extensive.
 6. Yes.
 7. Yes.
 8. Yes and yes.
 9. Yes. I also learned so many things that I didn't even know I wanted to learn!
 10. Yes—I have a much better understanding of the history of the book in America and feel comfortable in proposing class instruction on the subject to my department/institution.
 11. The instructors managed to present a massive amount of information in a short time period. They did so with a remarkable blend of lecture, hands-on, pair-and-share, and small-group work. They fostered discussion and a comfortable collegial atmosphere.
 12. SC and JG were amazing in both the depth of their collective knowledge and their pedagogical skills. I acquired a broad range of American book history, which is exactly what I hoped to gain.

5) *Are there other ways in which the course could have been improved?*

1. More information about how books were used in the home by women and children.
2. No, I think this course was the perfect mix of lecture, and hand's-on aspects that kept the course entertaining.
3. It might be useful to talk some (half hour?) about teaching a history of the book. JG made the case for teaching printing but talking pedagogy would be useful for those of us trying to knead this into what we do. (I do realize that there is a whole course on this that I will likely take.)
4. Maybe replacing some of the introductory readings with readings that were not covered as much in lectures would have given students more information to pull from.
5. More study into the history of the book during both world wars.
6. {no response}
7. The note I have for improvement is small. Not all the questions in the class exercises were answered. I would have liked a greater adherence to the assignment structure. In addition, several of the recommended videos should be included in the required readings, particularly those that showed the process of printing.
8. I would have enjoyed slightly more seminar-style class discussion, though I also understand that we needed every minute of lecture to get through more than 250 years of book history in five days!
9. I would like to see a bit more about print history since the onset of desktop publishing, which has changed so much about publishing.
10. It is so helpful to see printing in action. Understanding lithographs (as well as other more advanced printing technologies) would be better facilitated through demonstration.
11. Hmm...no.
12. The course is perfect! I might recommend a session on American book history in the West given the expanse of America (we focused primarily on the East Coast) but only if the addition does not subtract from a near-perfect syllabus.

6) *Who might benefit the most from taking this RBS course?*

1. Teachers looking to include elements of book history in high school/college classes.
2. People who are new to this field and are looking for an overview of what book history is.
3. Special collections people, graduate students in literature and American studies, curators, booksellers/collectors, anyone who has cause to design a program to encourage people to think about books.
4. I think this is a really good starter course so really anyone who deals with books but would like a good starting point to feel more comfortable working with books could really benefit.
5. Anyone who is new to book history and those interested in the Book in America.
6. I felt that every student in the course was able to benefit (graduate students, archivists, librarians, and booksellers).
7. Researchers interested in the broad history of the book in America, specifically the changes in the book trade and the book's relationship to American culture.

8. This course is an excellent introduction to book history for anyone broadly interested in the topic, and of course particularly useful for those with a specific interest in the history of the book in the US.
 9. I think the mix of archivists, librarians, and scholars of literature and history is a good mix, but I think it's also beneficial for those in the mass communication discipline.
 10. Specifically, those with an interest in American studies or the history of the book, but really all Americans, especially American librarians.
 11. Anyone interested in the value of the book in America would benefit from this course.
 12. Those just entering the study of book history, whether instructors, students, librarians, &c.
- 7) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? Would you recommend the course to others?*
1. I have recommended the course already.
 2. Yes and yes.
 3. Yes! Yes!
 4. Yes. Yes.
 5. I would definitely recommend the course to others! It was absolutely worth it.
 6. Yes.
 7. Yes.
 8. Yes, I would definitely recommend this course! JG and SC are incredibly knowledgeable about the subject matter, and they were extremely generous with their time and expertise throughout the week.
 9. Yes, and yes.
 10. Yes, I always do with RBS. Highly recommend!!!
 11. I'd recommend this course and will encourage my colleagues to attend!
 12. Absolutely. I wholeheartedly recommend this course.
- 8) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*
1. The printing workshops were time well spent.
 2. N/A
 3. {no response}
 4. Yes. The hands-on printing experience added a lot to the class.
 5. Yes they were time well spent! I absolutely enjoyed getting hands-on experience with the various printing presses.
 6. {no response}
 7. Yes. The printing demonstrations were particularly useful.
 8. Yes! Our site visits to the special collections library here at UVA to use the common press and the iron press were excellent. Not only were those unique and exciting experiences, but it was extremely helpful to actually use these printing presses that we had been learning about.
 9. Our course topics outside of the classroom were both for printing with presses, which reinforced what we were learning.
 10. Yes, printing demonstrations are so so so helpful! Must be included in the course.

11. Yes! The hands-on experience revealed elements related to production that would not have been truly understood otherwise.
 12. The trips to the printing presses were crucial to understanding the print technologies that we studied in the readings.
- 9) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*
1. It will be an intense but productive use of your time.
 2. It's a great introduction for learning about the operation of a book.
 3. I think some time spent on book collecting, or archival collection development, would be useful. half hour? Twenty minutes perhaps or a "catch-all" (though the improv copyright talk was very good).
 4. You end up learning and understanding a lot more by the end of the course than you initially expect. Don't hesitate to ask questions and engage with others in the course. It really changes the whole experience.
 5. Take the class! It is amazing and provides new and old book historians with a breadth of knowledge.
 6. {no response}
 7. I highly recommend this course to any scholars interested in American print culture.
 8. {no response}
 9. No.
 10. Familiarize yourself with well-known printers, publishers, and printing techniques.
 11. {no response}
 12. Just take the course!
- 10) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or haiku, what would you say?*
1. Useful to spend a week focused on a single subject.
 2. It was a great experience to network with like-minded scholars and to enjoy UVA Special Collections.
 3. Grain of the paper,
Knowable to the touch, one
week, book reclamation
- Grain of the paper,
reposeful decisiveness
all week, well taken.
4. Exhausting yet refreshing and invigorating.
 5. Unforgettable and provided so much academic growth.
 6. A tremendous learning experience, as well as a rare opportunity to mingle and learn from a variety of people that treasure the book.
 7. See you again soon.
 8. Wow, do I feel lucky to have been here!
 9. I have learned so much and been inspired to teach others much of this material.
 10. Wash your hands and be FEROCIOUSLY BRILLIANT!!

11. RBS is very thoughtfully arranged, with collegiality and evening events that complemented the immersive experience.
12. An amazing experience that is impossible to wrap up in a single sentence!

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: 8 (66.67%)
I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 4 (33.33%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

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 pay/waive 100%: 4 (33.33%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 3 (25%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (50%)
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 2 (16.67%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 5 (41.67%)
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 cover 100%: 2 (16.67%)

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

Library disciplines:

Archivist: 2 (16.67%)
Special collections librarian: 5 (41.67%)

Student working toward a/n:

M.A./M.S.: 2 (16.67%)
Ph.D./D.Phil: 2 (16.67%)

Book trades:

Antiquarian bookseller: 1 (8.33%)