

Paul Needham and William Noel
H-25: Fifteenth-Century Books in Print & Manuscript
2–7 June 2019

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 readings were a bit extensive, especially the reference works. Not all of them were relevant to the material, and many were very obscure and difficult to find. It would have been great to have a Dropbox with all the PDFs.
 2. Add Sarah Werner, *Studying Early Printed Books*, 2019. More Needham publications.
 3. The readings were somewhat useful in providing some broad overviews with a few targeted studies. But I was surprised that they were never referred to or dealt with in the class.
 4. Yes, useful—no recommended changes!
 5. Yes. More on type/alphabet would have helped me prepare a bit better.
 6. Yes—although we didn't discuss the particular texts in class, they provided a good—and necessary—background for the course topics.
 7. Yes, they were helpful. Though I might have liked a more general overview of the basics of analytical bibliography.
 8. I found the background helpful for context, but none seemed critical for daily work or discussions.
 9. The readings were very helpful. I especially appreciated knowing which three readings were essential. I made sure to read those, and then read as many additional things as I could.

- 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. It'd be nice to have some printed text in addition to the pictures.
 2. Workbook was useful in class. A few pages will be useful later.
 3. The workbook was very handy—easy to follow and annotate. I also appreciate having the digital version with color images to consult later.
 4. Very useful, especially the digital PDF. We didn't use it this week, but I'm glad to have it.
 5. I really, really missed the syllabus.
 6. I wrote most of my notes in the course workbook and will continue to use it as a reference. All content was appropriate and useful.
 7. Very helpful.
 8. It was somewhat helpful in class. I expect to refer to it more later.
 9. I will keep several pages of the workbook as invaluable reference guides. I am also very glad to have an electronic copy with color images.

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'll definitely use the information in my future research. It's given me a lot of fertile ideas for research and art projects.
2. Looking at books and manuscripts as parts of a whole concept.
3. I plan to immediately start recording paper sizes in my cataloging. The class gave me much to think about when looking at books and manuscripts.
4. Yes, absolutely. This course has completely changed the methodology I'll be using when I sit down to examine a book. Taking the class with WN and PN was a gift.
5. It was a week of Eureka moments! And the bittersweet realization that I will probably never get this close to those books ever again.
6. I feel much more knowledgeable about discussing collation and paper format, which will be particularly useful in writing about manuscripts in our collections. I also feel like I have a much better understanding of the intersections between the drafts/fifteenth-century books and manuscripts.
7. I will incorporate them into my current projects.
8. I have compiled a list of things I will look for in my library—some for personal research, mostly for instruction sessions.
9. I now feel prepared to pursue two research projects that I couldn't have pursued otherwise. I finally “get” how print shops used manuscripts, and how books are put together.

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. Yes, it's very much in line with what I was hoping for.
2. Yes.
3. The instructors are extremely learned, and I gained a lot of knowledge. I have much to think about, especially how to incorporate it into my job.
4. Yes to both—PN and WN were incredibly knowledgeable and engaging instructors.
5. Yes.
6. Yes—both instructors were fantastic, knowledgeable, and really interesting.
7. Absolutely, and more besides what was promised.
8. Yes.
9. Yes, absolutely.

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

1. Arranged the topics to flow a bit more chronologically and cohesively.
2. Would like a bibliography for future reading.
3. As ever, more time with materials themselves would have been great but I appreciate how much we did get to see and handle items.
4. None that I can think of.
5. {private response}
6. Nope it was brilliant!
7. {no response}
8. No.

9. No, the course is excellent.

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

1. Students working on their theses/dissertations. People who frequently work with incunable collections and would like to know more.
2. Medievalists.
3. Academics and scholars of the fifteenth-century book, curators and catalogers who work with items from this period.
4. Anyone who works with books as material objects, regardless of period, I think.
5. Anyone trying to understand a book.
6. Anyone working with fifteenth-century books/manuscripts curators, catalogers, conservators.
7. Anyone interested in books as physical objects.
8. I think this course works best as an introduction. Some material was basic for me.
9. Anyone interested in taking a deeper dive into fifteenth-century materials.

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

1. Yes, I do. I don't know anybody in my immediate circle who I'd recommend it to, but if I come across someone who is very interested in early printed books and has a decent foundation, then I'd definitely recommend it.
2. Yes.
3. Yes. I wanted the opportunity to learn from PN and WN, and it was great. I highly recommend this course.
4. 100%, and not just because I'm here on a scholarship.
5. Yes.
6. Yes and yes!
7. Yes, absolutely.
8. Yes.
9. Yes.

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

1. Yes, I think the Princeton trip was the most exciting part.
2. Yes.
3. The Princeton field trip was wonderful. We saw amazing items that corresponded to topics we discussed.
4. Yes—our trip to Princeton was illuminating and inspiring.
5. Oh yes!
6. We took a day trip to the Princeton Library, and it was definitely time well spent—we got to see so many examples of printing and manuscript text relevant to the topics of our course.
7. For the most part. As glorious as the manuscripts at Princeton were, and as much as I loved seeing them, I think the same general skills could have been demonstrated with the books at UPenn.
8. Yes.

9. The trip to Princeton was a career highlight for me.
- 9) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*
1. Don't take it if you don't already have a solid foundation in incunabula. You don't need a laptop.
 2. {no response}
 3. {no response}
 4. No.
 5. {private response}
 6. Bring a warmer sweater than you think you will need!
 7. {no response}
 8. Enjoy the readings, but don't stress over them.
 9. WN and PN have a great dynamic. It is so great to see them work together, debate, and resolve quandaries. PN is also like a guru of scholarly life, showing curiosity, humility, and joy.
- 10) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or haiku, what would you say?*
1. Light lavender painted sarcophagus.
 2. Very worthwhile.
 3. Nearly everything you know about the Gutenberg Bible is wrong!
 4. Like being taught Platonic philosophy by Plato—immensely knowledgeable instructors who clearly know and love their work.
 5. Measure!
 6. Rare Book School is Great
Wish I could every year
Alas, life intrudes.
 7. {no response}
 8. Enjoyable.
 9. Just the beginning of new adventures in bibliography.

Student Data

Number of respondents: 9 (of 9)

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

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 5 (55.55%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 3 (33.33%)

I am retired, and can arrange my own schedule: 1 (11.11%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 2 (22.22%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 5 (55.55%)
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (11.11%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 1 (11.11%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 4 (44.44%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 3 (33.33%)
I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 1 (11.11%)
My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (11.11%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 4 (44.44%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (44.44%)
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (11.11%)

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

Library disciplines:

Archivist:
Cataloger/metadata librarian: 1 (11.11%)
Conservator/binder/preservation librarian: 1 (11.11%)
Special collections librarian: 1 (11.11%)
Other: 1 (11.11%)

Student working toward a/n:

Ph.D./D.Phil: 2 (22.22%)

Professional educator:

Assistant professor: 1 (11.11%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Independent scholar: 1 (11.11%)