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H-90: Teaching the History of the Book
23–28 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. Yes!
 2. Yes, the readings provided an excellent foundation for the course discussions and activities.
 3. The pre-course readings allowed me to start thinking about the course before it began and to attend the first session feeling prepared. The Howard book was especially useful as an introduction, as were the McKenzie lectures.
 4. I found the quantity a bit overwhelming. It would have been helpful to have had a clearer sense of what I “really should” read.
 5. We didn’t discuss them directly, but I think the variety of scopes of the books did an excellent job of preparing me for MFS’s discussions and questions.
 6. I did a huge amount, and it didn’t translate much into classroom use. Please add Febvre’s *The Coming of the Book*, which is a classic.
 7. Yes. Very. However, to have them assembled in a more orderly fashion would have been helpful, instead of many files on Dropbox.
 8. Yes, they were very useful, even though they were not discussed in detail during the sections.
 9. I would put Sarah Werner’s book in the mix now that it is out. It’s a very useful book for people working with undergrads in particular, I think.
 10. The readings were useful, but there was limited discussion of them in the class. I think having a “live” reading list that can be updated as the course moves along would be helpful—a Google doc with resources for each class.
 11. Very useful.
 12. The pre-course readings were interesting, especially Howard’s *The Book: The Life Story of a Technology*. But we didn’t really discuss them during the seminar, which suggests the reading should have been “strongly recommended” but not required.

- 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 wealth of resources is truly staggering. I have not had time to thoroughly digest them all, but I look forward to making ongoing use of them.
 2. The content was outstanding, though assignment descriptions for some of the materials won’t be useful.
 3. I have all the materials I can imagine needing to design a book history course.
 4. Yes, except I am having trouble accessing some of it.
 5. Extremely useful! There is much that I will use in developing the class.

6. The content was good and will be vital. Having this earlier electronically and provided in print would help.
7. N/A
8. Excellent! E-workbook full of syllabi, possible exercises, and literature. It will definitely be useful for both my future research and teaching activities.
9. It's a lot of material, and I am still working through it. But I especially appreciated the syllabus collection and assignment ideas.
10. Perhaps more variety of examples—not just literature.
11. A great wealth of material that I will certainly use.
12. I received the workbook about a week or two before class and didn't have time to go through it closely. I'm looking forward to doing so after the course.

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 develop a new course on book history and information literacy. The book pairings and thumbprint demonstrations will be particularly valuable in cultivating critical ways of seeing.
2. A great deal of this course will directly inform my teaching. Describing a book from the "outside in," teaching books in pairs, and understanding a book as the "conscience of human intention" are all wonderful takeaways. The whole week as an "aha" moment.
3. The course has inspired me to rethink the way I lead students through the study of the book as an object. My future students will encounter a new depth in material.
4. I'll need to digest all this and get back to you.
5. Harlequin romances—start with what is familiar to them. Pairing books. Questions: what is a book? How did this particular book get here?
6. I have some great ideas for two new modules I'm writing.
7. In my teaching I will work to highlight with clarity the physical conditions around the book's creation and what are the limits and potentials that allow a book to come into being.
8. I plan to offer a course on book history to our library staff.
9. I'm going to think about ways to pair artifacts/books from my library's collections. I'm also really excited to try the "Biographies of a Book" assignment, which I think my students would really get into.
10. Yes!
11. I feel very much inspired by the instructor's approach to the history of the book, particularly the focus on how the book came to be the way it is. I have also acquired some ideas for my own research.
12. I walked away with a week's worth of "aha" moments! I'm looking forward to revising my course to include many of the strategies we discussed during the seminar.

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!

2. Yes! I wish the course lasted two weeks.
3. I learned as much and more than I had anticipated to learn. Perhaps more importantly, I learned what might be possible in teaching the book in a classroom.
4. Yes.
5. And even more. This course gave me a much greater foundation from which to explore and teach the artifacts of human endeavor.
6. MFS has an astounding depth of knowledge and shares this generously and without ego, as any educator should.
7. Yes. Very. He did a great job of inspiring; however, at times it felt somewhat unstructured. A schedule would have been valuable, as well as closer examination of required readings to frame the conversation.
8. Definitely yes. I learned much more than I expected/hoped to learn, since we were focused not only on teaching related topics but also on the history of the book itself, with lots of Q&A moments.
9. I did. We covered so much material that I need to take time to synthesize it. But all in all, I'd say this was very helpful.
10. Yes.
11. Yes, absolutely.
12. In some ways this was more of a "master class" on the history of the book, which is fine. But I expected more explicit discussions about pedagogy early in the course. We did have more of those discussions midweek, however.

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

1. {private response}
2. {private response}
3. {private response}
4. {no response}
5. No.
6. {private response} It would have been great to be able to buy some of the cool RBS swag!
7. More structure. More hands-on work with books.
8. If so, only with one more whole week. ☺
9. I would have liked even more time to hear about what my classmates are doing in their courses—or perhaps to try designing some activities or assessments.
10. Yes. Beginning the course with an acknowledgement/discussion of the whiteness/privilege of the profession and field would have set a tone for a more inclusive, even global book histories course. At this point in 2019, I do not think we can afford not to have this conversation or the inclusion of global south examples.
11. I would have liked to spend more time with the books and for longer periods. Perhaps, more use of the hover cam could be helpful.
12. {private response}

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

1. Teachers and librarians, as well as those working with the public.

2. Early career scholars who want to think about pedagogy as much as subject mastery.
3. Librarians, bibliographers, faculty, rare book curators, collectors, historians of the book, and most everyone in the bibliosphere.
4. {no response}
5. Those who will be new to teaching book history; librarians; archivists; and those who have public outreach responsibilities.
6. {private response}
7. Educators.
8. Professors, librarians, and museum curators.
9. Professors, for sure. Also I think librarians at universities/colleges.
10. English faculty as is, although I wish there was more inclusion of history, art history, and archival/special collections insights and professionals.
11. Educators on all levels.
12. Faculty, librarians who know/are already comfortable with their understanding of book history and who want to focus on teaching book history.

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

1. Yes!
2. Absolutely!
3. Yes. I'd recommend this course and any other RBS course to others.
4. Yes. Yes.
5. Yes. Yes.
6. Had I paid my tuition, yes; I think the cost of doing this in Manhattan is unjustified, in truth.
7. Yes and yes. (If RBS provides a day-to-day breakdown).
8. I had a scholarship. But the money is worth it!
9. Yes.
10. Yes.
11. Yes, absolutely.
12. Yes!!

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

1. Yes!
2. {no response}
3. Yes. Our trip to the Met was enriching and helped to build community.
4. The Sunday evening reception and lecture was very far away (\$30 cab ride) and not particularly interesting to those of us not interested in the mid-twentieth-century artist's book scene. If that is the usual sort of event, it should be more clearly optional.
5. N/A
6. {private response}
7. N/A

8. N/A
9. I'm not sure about the trip to the Met . . . maybe if we'd done something there in the afternoon session?
10. No. (Strange in a city like NYC with the Schomburg, Morgan, Columbia, &c. . . . all around).
11. Yes.
12. Somewhat.

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

1. Set aside a significant amount of time before the course to prepare.
2. {no response}
3. MFS's generosity and knowledge is inspiring.
4. {no response}
5. Be open, explore, examine, look and then ponder and wonder.
6. I would read the essential texts and then more specialist titles (e.g., on paper-making).
7. See 4.4.
8. Do not miss the chance of learning how to teach book history with someone who does it with love and wonder.
9. This was a great experience, and I'd highly recommend it.
10. Be prepared to listen—a lot. Father MFS is a storyteller on steroids.
11. Not sure.
12. {no response}

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

1. I learned to ask how this book came to be the way it is.
2. This course has forever changed how I will teach—not only book history—but all my classes.
3. Enriching and thought-provoking.
4. You'll meet great people
handle fascinating books
head home super dazed.
5. {private response}
6. This was very positive ,and I have enjoyed the time to reflect and engage on my practice. The luxury of doing this was wonderful.
7. {no response}
8. I have learned to see how a book came to be the way it is!
9. I can't wait to take more courses because I love RBS.
10. Ding Dong.
11. Wonder, awe, and humility.
12. Great course for book history teachers!

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%)

I am self-employed, and can arrange my own schedule: 2 (16.67%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 3 (25%)

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

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 2 (16.67%)

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

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 4 (33.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive part; my institution/employer paid the rest: 2 (16.67%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 3 (25%)

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

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

I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 2 (16.67%)

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 live locally, and had no travel expenses: 2 (16.67%)

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

Library disciplines:

Special collections librarian: 1 (8.33%)

Other: 1 (8.33%)

Professional educator:

Lecturer/adjunct: 2 (16.67%)

Assistant professor: 3 (25%)

Associate professor: 1 (8.33%)

Full professor: 2 (16.67%)

Book trades:

Appraiser: 1 (8.33%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Independent scholar: 1 (8.33%)