

Roger Gaskell, assisted by Caroline Duroselle-Melish
I-40: The Illustrated Scientific Book to 1800
21–26 July 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 pre-course reading was useful, but it may have been useful also to have included shorter articles on Renaissance and early modern science and visual methodologies instead of exclusively focusing on the histories of the book and printing on the required reading list.
2. The Gaskell was very helpful for orienting me to the letterpress process. The Griffiths felt more like review, and I find the value judgements/aesthetic assessments he provides less useful than some other texts on technique, for example, *The Printed Picture*.
3. Gaskell was essential. {private response} The recommended readings on the *History of Science* provided nice background for some of the contextualization discussions around scientific illustrations.
4. Yes—extremely. Gaskell on bibliography is essential but opaque unless you’ve collated or have been exposed—not necessarily adequate to ensure familiarity.
5. Yes. Very reasonable workload and all helpful.
6. The readings assigned were excellent. I wish Kusukawa was easier to obtain, as I would have liked to have read it.
7. The pre-course reading was helpful, but perhaps knowing the syllabus in advance would help me determine where to focus. We had hundreds of pages to read and I didn’t finish all of it before class began (unfortunately).
8. YES, pre-course readings were useful. {private response}
9. All readings were helpful for successfully completing the course.
10. Course readings were very useful. I knew little about this topic beforehand and have no other suggestions.
11. They were 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. The course workbook and other teaching materials were deeply useful and will continue to be useful after the class.
2. Very much appreciate the advanced reading list and its organization by topic. The layout of the SC objects could be expanded to provide even more space for note-taking, but that is very minor and completely a personal preference.
3. The information in the course workbooks, especially the thematic bibliography, was extremely helpful. The workbook could be arranged more chronologically to more closely match course work. There was a lot of flipping back and forth on any given day. I will be making good use of my workbook at work.
4. Workbook—truly a wonderful resource. I expect to use it for as long as I work with

- visual material.
5. All appropriate. All useful—will definitely use it as a guide in my research and teaching.
 6. The workbook was splendid. It was very useful for the course and for using what I learned in the future.
 7. Loved the workbook. I will hold on to it as a valuable reference.
 8. Course workbook—very useful. Would be even more useful if it was chronological (less to more). Context was appropriate and useful (though it felt like too much at the beginning of the course). It will be useful but will require some time to absorb and reflect upon.
 9. The workbook was extremely helpful, and I will definitely reuse it in the future. I might add more notes or guiding questions to some of the “speed dating” book lists.
 10. Workbook contained a lot of information. Very glad RG emailed us a PDF version for easy reference!
 11. I wish the workbook were more detailed. But the content was appropriate and very useful.
- 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 incorporate a significant amount of visual strategies specifically related to illustration in early scientific texts in my research, even though my primary material deals with literary fictions, because I was able to spot broader and critical areas of connection and influence due to this course.
 2. The printing practicums provided great insight into the relationship between print production and labor that will apply directly to my research. I’ve also been keeping a running list of ideas at the back of my notebook of ideas that will prove useful in teaching upcoming courses on the history of print and art/science in the early modern period. I added to it multiple times a day this week as new themes occurred to me in the course of our discussion or new objects cropped up that I hadn’t seen before.
 3. I’ll be adding in discussions of illustration techniques and identification tips into class visits. It was particularly helpful to focus on the relationship between text and images, and I think that discussion will be interesting for students. This week involved a lot of repetition and attempts to identify illustration techniques. It was a slow (but interesting) build to feel like I was looking for the right things in order to identify a particular technique.
 4. To some degree—this class gave me a lot of ways to frame research pursuits around formal/production issues, which could be revelatory. For me, exposure to classical scientific texts/arguments was also inspiring and orienting.
 5. I do think a modified version of “speed dating” books with guide questions could be a great way to familiarize students with books on a theme. The common press/rolling press exercises were revelations.
 6. I will (have begun already to) use the skills and knowledge for my current book project. I’ve had several “Aha!” moments, one of which will require reconceptualizing several chapters for the better. I feel sufficiently inspired to keep learning (to put it mildly), and I’m sure this course will shape my research in ways I cannot anticipate.

7. I came in with a blank slate, and am early in my career, so this expanded my mind to realize how other librarians, as well as researchers, work. It also opened my eyes to an even bigger appreciation for books. It pulled some former experiences together as well.
 8. {private response}
 9. The course provided me with a great deal more context for how readers engaged with scientific books.
 10. I can incorporate a lot of what I learned about illustration techniques into my catalog records.
 11. Cataloging rare book images, particularly.
- 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—the course was extremely useful in giving me the opportunity to interact with rare materials.
 2. Yes. I particularly appreciated the range of discussion in class and that CDM and RG could carry discussion of a single object from the technical/material all the way to the theoretical and/or historical.
 3. Absolutely. I am leaving learning more than I hoped, which has made the week feel even more cohesive.
 4. I did—though more sustained work on possibly fewer texts would have given me more of a chance to exercise knowledge, I feel like I have a broad grasp of the technical, substantive, and bibliographical issues.
 5. Yes and yes and then some! They drew my attention to things I had never noticed before and also indicated what is at stake in those observations.
 6. I would have liked more in-class discussion, but I learned more than I hoped, & I had high hopes. The instructors were wonderful—never a non-teaching moment, even during breaks, and brought attention and expertise to class ad to us individually.
 7. I think I got a lot out of the course. As a cataloger (not of rare books) I still found it useful to learn a little about rare book description, e.g. bibliographic formula.
 8. Instructor was very helpful and open to suggestions. All skills and information were learned (that were in the course description), but it might help to present/describe these skills early in the course. (e.g.: critical bibliography or practical familiarity with the press.)
 9. Absolutely. Both instructors are brilliant and I particularly enjoyed/learned from one-on-one discussions with each.
 10. Yes—exactly as described. RG and CDM are lovely and have near-encyclopedic knowledge!
 11. I did—only I was overwhelmed by the amount of information. Maybe narrow down a few topics.
- 5) *Are there other ways in which the course could have been improved?*
1. I think it may be interesting to see if an orientation towards depth rather than breadth is useful. Also, one class session might be dedicated to allowing students to browse the books in the room that may have relevance to their presentations.
 2. The balance between “speed dating” books and close looking/inquiring seems like

it could use some tweaking. Perhaps one session a day devoted to a single text that can collect/synthesize the issues we otherwise look at individually in a later “speed dating” session?

3. The speed dating sessions in special collections were useful, but also overwhelming. I’m not sure if the pacing quite works— maybe a break included during a speed dating rotation.
 4. All I can think of is more chances for class conversation (but when?) and, perhaps most critically, technical coverage of cutting, engraving/etching, and formal composition of plate(s) up front (e.g. M and T).
 5. Not that the instructors can change. It feels like we could have maybe used one more period for a longer wrap-up conversation, or perhaps we could have selected relevant books from the small library for one session.
 6. Condensing relief and intaglio printing to the first day would allow more discussion time. I’m going to use all this, and getting started here would have been welcome.
 7. I think, as a beginner, it was fine. It was an intense and rigorous introduction to the topic. We were not babied, and I had to read-up after classes.
 8. Either genre-or thematically organized readings or days (not just mediums)? I think if the course outline could include an illustration/iconographical emphasis that might also help.
 9. Speed-dating does not provide enough time to really get to know a book, so more time at the end to revisit particular books would be especially helpful.
 10. Would have loved to have some hands-on illustration experience, but not sure I’d want to cut anything to accommodate that!
 11. Perhaps a field trip to a more local library, or make the field trip optional—too much wasted time in traffic. Also way too small a bus for 13 people.
- 6) *Who might benefit the most from taking this RBS course?*
1. Special collections librarians, researchers in early modern studies, art and visual culture, book history, history of science, print culture.
 2. Equally useful (although in different ways) for those with a great deal of familiarity with scientific texts and/or illustration techniques and those new to the field. I found the mix of backgrounds to be rich and fruitful.
 3. Anyone involved in teaching/studying book history, catalogers, special collections librarians
 4. Historians and science (professors), graduate students in art history, literature, &c.—with new emphasis on transmission and practical knowledges, this course should be imperative.
 5. I think anyone with an interest in illustrated books period would benefit from it.
 6. Everyone?...Anyone with an interest in book history, history of science, and visual arts comes first to mind.
 7. Anyone working in libraries, art, or booksellers...also instructors.
 8. Someone who already knows what formal analysis of the book/bibliography is. Also, in order to be most useful, it would be good to teach through examples (e.g. pick a book—or three—to focus on in the class and do formal, historical, functional analyses. Teach through mistakes/errors made in cataloging or printing.
 9. History of science instructors, printers, students of the early modern period.

10. Special collections librarians and professors/scholars of the history of science, especially graduate students.
11. Academics/rare book librarians/professors.

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

1. Yes, absolutely.
2. Absolutely.
3. Very much so and most definitely.
4. Yes; yes.
5. Yes and yes.
6. YES and YES.
7. I had a scholarship. I do think it was worth the tuition since meals (breakfast and breaks) were included and our field trip. No complaints. Would highly recommend.
8. Yes. But I would have liked to spend more time with either the books or a collection. It felt rushed most of the time except towards the end.
9. Absolutely! This course provided access to some of the most important and valuable texts of the "scientific revolution." Entire week was incredible!
10. Yes! I learned so much by seeing so many different books this week.
11. Yes. And I would recommend the course to others.

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

1. Yes, the trip to the Smithsonian Libraries was wonderful.
2. The trip to DC is ambitious and requires some stamina, but I appreciated the introduction to the librarians and the opportunity it provided to see a wide range of materials in close proximity.
3. The Smithsonian trip is a long day, but it was an unbelievable experience. The day at two other libraries helped crystalize much of the information we were discussing.
4. For me, yes, because I hadn't been exposed to these two collections, and I plan to return to one of them. It's an arduous day but a fairly incredible experience, which I do think is key for students new to the field of visual studies/book history.
5. Yes, though it is a long day. I can't really see a way around it or an obvious fix.
6. Absolutely. Mind blowing and mind broadening.
7. Yes. Amazing and valuable. Thank you.
8. Yes and no. I loved the trip to DC to rare book libraries there. But it did feel like an imposition in just five days. I don't have a better solution; this is merely an observation.
9. Yes! Trip to DC was incredibly productive, fun, informative, &c. I might consider moving trip to Thursday instead of Wednesday, but otherwise great!
10. Yes—the collections at the Cullman and Dufner libraries are excellent. It just made for a very long day.
11. Not particularly. Too long a drive there/back and too rushed with the books.

9) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course*

in a future year?

1. Read more about early modern culture because it will be hard to locate the importance of visual methods of scientific study without that awareness.
 2. Come prepared to think out loud. This class involves a lot of group and paired looking, which works best if you are willing to really talk through what you're seeing.
 3. Be sure to do the required readings and pay particular attention to signatures and collation. Gaskell builds an excellent case for its importance and any head start will help.
 4. Come in with articulated questions re: technique, your field of images, &c. Be prepared for inevitable frustration with "speed dating" system of rapid exposure to rare books.
 5. No, but I think you do get more out of it if you have seen some of these books before/or at least books of this sort before.
 6. Do the assigned reading, and as much recommended reading as possible.
 7. The Griffiths work is helpful in identifying methods of printing. Read in advance. Come prepared to have fun and work hard, and learn a lot.
 8. Do your readings. Come with a specific bibliographical problem in mind. That way you can apply every day's learning to the same issue so there is accretion.
 9. Familiarize yourself with book structures and descriptive bibliography to get the most out of the course.
 10. Do it! Just beware that your brain will be very tired.
 11. Know there is a presentation because after a long day you still need to work. I think this should be included in the course description.
- 10) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or haiku, what would you say?*
1. Illuminating.
 2. This week was a whirlwind of images, works, and people that left me feeling energized and exhausted at the same time.
 3. {No response.}
 4. Principles of Scientific Illustration is engrossing, revelatory, and sometimes exhausting—but always an invaluable experience.
 5. A whirlwind experience of the most exhilarating kind.
 6. Wow. Thank you. Wow. (That's more than one, sorry)
 7. This experience has been so unique and special towards both my personal and professional development, and I appreciate the instructors, students, and staff at RBS.
 8. Illuminating (given that the topic was the illustrated scientific book).
 9. Start with the books and work your way down from there. :)
 10. The only way to learn about books is to see lots of books—and you'll definitely do that here!
 11. Another very useful/productive week.

Student Data

Number of respondents: 11 (of 11)

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

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 6 (54.54%)

I am self-employed, and can arrange my own schedule: 1 (9.09%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 3 (27.27%)

My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (9.09%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 1 (9.09%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (36.36%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 2 (18.18%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 3 (27.27%)

I had an RBS course tuition credit from a previous year: 1 (9.09%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 2 (18.18%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (54.54%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (9.09%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 2 (18.18%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 2 (18.18%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (54.54%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (9.09%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 1 (9.09%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 1 (9.09%)

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

Library disciplines:

Archivist: 1 (9.09%)

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 2 (18.18%)

Curator: 1 (9.09%)

Special collections librarian: 1 (9.09%)

Student working toward a/n:

Ph.D./D.Phil: 1 (9.09%)

Professional educator:

K-12 teacher: 1 (9.09%)

Assistant professor: 2 (18.18%)

Full professor: 2 (18.18%)