

Bethany Nowviskie  
L-115: Community Archives and Digital Cultural Memory  
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 reading list was excellent. Should be required readings for humanities scholars and librarians/archivists.
  2. The pre-course reading list was exceptional! I've shared it with many people.
  3. These were excellent.
  4. I've shared the pre-course reading list with all of my friends because it really is a remarkable list, bringing together the most important readings on this topic right now.
  5. Yes, the readings were very useful/appropriate to the course.
  6. Yes. There are a lot of additional readings that we would love to add, but we created an extra Google doc for them.
  7. Great reading list! Though I would have liked more readings on the digital as it intersects with race, power, and representation.
  8. {private response}
  9. Course readings were essential and extremely helpful in understanding the scope of the course.
  10. Definitely. Maybe add excerpts from Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past: the Power and Production of History* and David Scott's *On the Archaeologies of Black Memory*. Either way, you can never go wrong with adding black women writers to the already incredible list of black women writers.
  11. Yes! As a non-archivist/librarian attendee, I found the readings helpful for me to understand some concerns but also created a comprehensible list for me to potentially use for teaching in the future.
  12. They have been extremely useful for stimulating thinking. I recommend setting up a course Dropbox/Canvas page so that students can get in touch with each other before and after the course: it would also be a good space for sharing additional readings.
  13. Great reading list. The black feminist and archival readings were central. Keep Caswell, Jules, Drake, Phillips, Omawale, and readings on aid (e.g., mutual aid, Architecting sustainable futures). Also, keep Afrofuturist readings.
  
- 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. All readings and trips were integral to this course and will be invaluable for me going forward. We didn't have a workbook per se, but our class trips and guest lectures offered invaluable behind-the-scenes immersive experiences of a wide range of community centers and special collections.
  2. The content was very useful, and I will use it going forward to direct philosophical

- frameworks.
3. The Google document and Slack site will enable the class to stay in touch, and continue discussions.
  4. The content was appropriate, and I anticipate continuing to use it.
  5. Make sketching optional (it didn't feel that obligatory, though, and many people benefitted from it, though!)
  6. The sketching project took a while for me to get on board with. The exercise was ultimately useful, and I'm glad that everyone's interpretation was different and that the activity was ultimately flexible.
  7. Great reading list and Google doc of resources.
  8. {no response}
  9. Sketch pad and crayons were useful during the course but not after.
  10. The course teaching materials were forward-thinking, more than appropriate, and more than useful. The materials will definitely be useful for me after the course.
  11. Yes, and I think its importance will be helpful soon.
  12. Does not apply. We did not receive additional handouts. We did, however, receive a sketchbook and crayons for some drawing activities. For someone who is not big on drawing, it was less useful, but I can understand the pedagogical point: the archives are not only digital interfaces but also material objects and experiences.
  13. Not the most relevant to this course, but the sketchbook component seems important, even if some seemed not to like it.
- 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. The knowledge and experience gained through this course will be invaluable for me in many ongoing and future projects. Not only do I feel better equipped to converse on matters of community archiving but also I feel reoriented to approach a wide range of subjects and collections with an underappreciated critical lens.
  2. I plan on using this as inspiration for my work as an organizer and my studies in library school.
  3. The course provided many ideas about ways I can get to know and work with my communities better.
  4. The project we worked on as our final project for the week will definitely turn into something. Our discussions on time have definitely changed how I view how we depict time in archives.
  5. More directly advocate on behalf of small non-institutionally affiliated community groups, with or without archives; be a better ally to non-white colleagues.
  6. I think a lot of learning will come after. I have been thinking of how to "use" this knowledge all week. This week has taught me a lot about myself and what I value. The biggest takeaway was the connections with people.
  7. Great connections with similar projects and practitioners.
  8. I was really inspired to start something new or improve on my own projects.
  9. No "aha" moments; rather a more complicated long-term feeling. I will be thinking about our class conversations for a long time to come.
  10. Yes, I plan on integrating some of the readings into a course I hope to teach next year. I plan on integrating what I have learned into my professional and personal life as well.
  11. I became more aware of an adjacent field and have thoughts on next steps, but

mostly on my own limitations.

12. The diversity of the course is its biggest strength. We are a class of students, scholars, archivists, librarians, practitioners. It was exhilarating to listen to people's projects and I'm heartened and inspired by what my classmates are doing to empower their communities through archives and research.
13. I feel more confident articulating how the funder I work for can connect resources to community archives. Or, at least, I feel more compelled to commit myself to serious work and this space.

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, although if I had less previous experience in digital collections and curation, I would have wished we spent more time on the digital components of community archiving.
2. Yes. Yes, I did.
3. BN was excellent. I wish we had more time to discuss the readings.
4. {private response}
5. Yes, great theoretical conversations and learning from classmates, more pragmatic examples from existing digital archives models and a group diversification would have helped. In the end I learned and thought more about the digital community memory realm and though I thought I might (just in a different way!)
6. Honestly, I think this is a silly question. I will never be finished learning.
7. Just wished we'd have more time to talk through some readings and talk about the digital.
8. The class was very informative and insightful in relation to interesting theories and concepts that really made me think a lot deeper.
9. The goals of the course were not clear, but that was ok because we were free to follow lines of inquiry and recurring themes as they emerged.
10. I leave the class having learned something, yes.
11. Yes.
12. The course turns out to be heavier on community engagement than digital culture. I understand why BN chose a less theoretical approach to the course, but I feel questions about digitization could be featured more prominently.
13. I received a lightning bolt of history and theory in community archives that will serve as an anchor or bedrock for future learning.

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

1. A few more sessions devoted to hands-on workshops with useful tools for digital community archiving.
2. I wish we could have spent more time debriefing all we had learned.
3. I think that more conversation time with classmates would be useful. Not all field trips were useful. A week-long community-oriented project might be useful.
4. No.
5. Not everyone has a familiarity with building/maintaining a digital collection (or physical archives collection); a brief overview of some known structures would have been helpful, even as we imagined new, previously unknown ones.
6. The pacing was not great at times. I appreciated the breaks and visits and really

- valued the conversations we had. I wish there was more time for smaller group talks and then reconvening together.
7. I would have liked to spend a little more time talking about our own projects. A co-teacher from a slightly different field/background would also be appropriate.
  8. More field trips and concrete examples of project that relate to topics.
  9. The final project was not well explained, and I don't think we got as much out of it as we did from the group work.
  10. The interplay between community archives and digital cultural memory was a huge undertaking for just a week. What would a course focusing on just "community archives" or just "digital cultural memory" look like? Would that make sense?
  11. More cohort conversations would have been nice, but the time we spent was always useful. I would have liked more museum representation since it is a related field.
  12. At some points the course feels like an activist boot camp. I appreciate the strong focus on race relations, but wish other issues/challenges about community archives could have been addressed more too.
  13. The site visits were critical. {private response} "Rare Books" because we're at RBS isn't compelling. A schedule of 1. Visitor 2. Debrief 3. Site visit 4. Debrief is nice.

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

1. Anyone working in libraries would benefit from the perspectives foregrounded by this course. More generally, anyone who works as an artist or scholar with a deep concern for the public as subject and audience.
2. All archivists and students in the field.
3. People who are just starting to think about working in community archives.
4. Anyone who is interested in imagining a different way of archiving or of community engagement that is more equitable and focused on building a future for everyone.
5. Somebody with some prior experience in community archives/organizing.
6. Anyone who's interested.
7. I like the mix of faculty, librarians, archivists, community organizers, and students. An artist or two would be great!
8. Anyone interested in working with communities to collect their stories and voices.
9. Students in LIS programs; archivists at the beginning of their careers.
10. Individuals leading community archives, community organizers, artists, educators, and practitioners.
11. Other archivists and librarians that feel that they don't need it, or everyone.
12. Community archivists with an activist bent, or anyone who's interested in mobilizing memory institutions in the service of social justice.
13. Librarians and archivists at public libraries and in special collections. Funders. Organizers.

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

1. Absolutely.
2. Yes I did, and I will recommend it. Please offer another course similar to this,

- focusing on decolonization.
3. The tuition for the course was very high. So, this is a difficult question to answer. Yes, I would recommend the course, but most community archivists would not have the resources to take this course.
  4. I will definitely recommend this course. It was totally worth it.
  5. Yes on both counts.
  6. I'm not sure. I often felt that the white folks in the room took up a lot of space. Despite best intentions, white supremacy was still upheld in subtle ways in the room, and for that reason I'm not sure if I would recommend the course to people I care about.
  7. Not my money! But yes, especially for those new to the field. I hope this money can be used to support faculty and students in this field in future.
  8. Yes, would definitely recommend for anyone interested in community archives.
  9. Yes. I recommend the course, but only to people with specific interests in community archives.
  10. Yes and yes.
  11. Yes and yes.
  12. The course is forthright about its costs: so many of our colleagues working at community archives can't afford the money or time to attend the course. I could encourage the course but would encourage RBS to make similar courses accessible to the most diverse students possible.
  13. Yes, but not to scholars unless their work or experience is directly related. This class requires practical, material connections.
- 8) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*
1. Yes, for sure. They were well-planned and well-run. I would have been happy with even one or two fewer trips and more time in our wonderful cohort to discuss what we read and experienced.
  2. Yes, all the trips were time well spent, highly informative.
  3. Some were excellent. Others were not.
  4. The conversations we had on our field trips definitely enhanced the quality of conversation within the class. They provided specific examples to use that we were all familiar with so we could tackle the big ideas.
  5. Absolutely, even the one to the Mütter Museum that seemed to crystallize so many classmates' arguments about what a community grounded digital project should not do.
  6. Not the Mütter Museum.
  7. Yes—great range of trips, though sometimes I felt we were ambushing people with questions they hadn't thought about much before. Useful but awkward at times, perhaps as it must be.
  8. I think the field trips were the highlight of the course to see things in action.
  9. Yes—they all sparked conversations we would not have had in the classroom.
  10. Sometimes.
  11. Yes—some of which confronted some of the restrictive ways of thinking that we are trying to disrupt.
  12. Yes, these field trips are absolutely the highlights of the course and unfortunately cannot be replicated in another city. Being in Philadelphia and meeting

community archivists has been an inspiring and invigorating experience. I fully support using the city as a laboratory for our ideas.

13. Yes, even to an institution {private response} that was problematic. It tapped into our critical instincts.

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

1. {no response}
2. Read as much as you can on Black Feminist Theory.
3. I hope RBS will have additional community-oriented courses.
4. Be prepared for challenging conversations that will force you to reevaluate your work. You have to be prepared to change your mind if you're going to benefit.
5. Do the readings; even if we didn't talk about them all, they were well chosen and always informed the discourse in the background.
6. See Q7.
7. N/A
8. I think this course is very important to the archive profession. I've been looking for something like this and am so glad that RBS offers it.
9. This course has the potential to be transformative for anyone working with archives, but you need to listen hard to everyone in the course.
10. Prepare to read. Prepare for discomfort.
11. Just be aware that it is very archive-focused, and this hindered some of my knowledge and what I could contribute.
12. This is the first time RBS offered a course on community archives. I will say that our cohort is also the most diverse of all RBS, ever. Everyone feels welcome and supported, and the class became a true community of peers. This is largely thanks to BN, who assembled this most inspiring group.
13. {no response}

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

1. Libraries and archives should give substance to the intersections of the margins, and be by, for, and about the communities they serve.
2. "Let us begin with the understanding that we have always been here—becoming."  
—Yusef Omowale
3. This course feels very different from other RBS courses occurring this week in Philadelphia, and I can't imagine participating in the others.
4. Growth.
5. Very different from other RBS courses (also good) but liberating.
6. RBS is a colonial institution, and it must face that.
7. N/A
8. I thoroughly enjoyed my first RBS experience.
9. Philadelphia librarians and archivists are inspirational! RBS should offer more courses like this that engage diverse audiences and students.
10. We are here. We exist.
11. Prioritize community needs over funders' desires.
12. A most diverse and dynamic experience. Unforgettable.

13. Bring your full self to the table, give some away, take some with you when you go.

### **Student Data**

*Number of respondents: 13 (of 13)*

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

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 8 (61.53%)  
I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 5 (38.46%)

*Who paid your RBS tuition costs?*

I paid 100% myself: 3 (23.07%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 5 (38.46%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 4 (30.76%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.69%)  
I had an RBS course tuition credit from a previous year: 1 (7.69%)

*Who paid your RBS housing expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 2 (15.38%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 2 (15.38%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 3 (23.07%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.69%)  
I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 7 (53.84%)

*Who paid your RBS travel expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 5 (34.46%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 1 (7.69%)  
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.69%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 3 (23.07%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 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:**

Archivist: 3 (23.07%)  
Public services librarian: 1 (7.69%)  
Other: 2 (15.38%)

### **Student working toward a/n:**

M.L.I.S./M.L.S.: 1 (7.69%)

Ph.D./D.Phil: 3 (23.07%)

**Professional educator:**

Associate professor: 1 (7.69%)

Full professor: 1 (7.69%)

**Other occupations/vocations:**

Other: 1 (7.69%)