

Marianna Shreve Simpson
M-85: Introduction to Islamic Manuscripts
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. Pre-course readings were very useful, but the list is long. If I were doing the course again, I would prioritize the reading MSS recommended first (the single text) and use background reading only for reference.
 2. {no response}
 3. I of course did not read all the suggested materials, but I very much appreciated how extensive the list was and will certainly keep it as a useful reference.
 4. Yes, they were very useful.
 5. Yes. They were a good introduction.
 6. Yes. No.
 7. The suggested reading list is a good resource and full of helpful readings.
 8. Yes, the readings were informative and useful.
 9. Extremely useful, especially Michael Cook and Elaine Wright materials.

- 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 content was appropriate and useful. It would be even more useful to have a diagram of a sample title piece, with the parts identified in a diagram, to facilitate learning new vocabulary.
 2. Course workbook was very helpful. Kelly's cataloguing guide handout was very valuable. Both will be helpful in the future.
 3. Helpful and yes.
 4. Yes, they were appropriate and useful.
 5. Very helpful. I will continue using my course workbook. The glossary and resources were invaluable.
 6. Course workbook was great and I will most definitely use in the future.
 7. Absolutely, I know I will refer back to it.
 8. Yes, the course workbook will continue to be a resource for me after this class.
 9. The course workbook provides rich resources that will be useful to keep for future reference.

- 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 had many "aha" moments. I hope to return to begin work on one of the fascinating manuscripts in the Lewis collection that I learned about in this class. I learned to ask better questions of the folios and as a result found myself understanding manuscript construction and reception better.

2. The skills and knowledge acquired here will help me add a more comprehensive book arts component to the course I teach.
3. Yes and yes and yes! Some of the things about Islamic manuscripts I already knew. But most importantly, this course gave me a framework, from an outstanding art historian, to look at, describe, and analyze Islamic manuscripts. New ideas, yes. I will go back to the digital images of manuscripts we looked at, and this course gave me the courage to launch a paper project.
4. Yes, there were several “aha!” moments. I’ll use these skills and knowledge for further research and teaching.
5. I was inspired to move forward with a project I had planned to abandon.
6. Teach an Islamic codicology and paleography graduate course. Answer reference questions on our rare holdings. Aha moment: I finally am able to distinguish and identify scripts.
7. I hope to incorporate more primary resources into instruction and reference, so this will help with lesson planning. I think also I could offer more help to graduate students who plan to use manuscripts.
8. This course was obviously more specialized than anything in my MLS coursework. It was good to meet practicing librarians within this narrow field.
9. I walked away with so many “aha!” moments— they are too numerous to recount here. These include realizations related to cultural history, bibliography, art and design, theology, even personal attentiveness and understanding of the way the world works.

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. The instructor helped me to acquire many skills that I had hoped to learn, including general features typical of Islamic books.
2. Everything I had hoped to learn and more. Bonus: gaining a wonderful group of colleagues.
3. Yes, and I will email MSS for suggestions of specific reading materials...
4. Yes, the instructor was very proficient in her pedagogy. She helped us explore diverse facets of manuscripts in a gentle and persuasive manner. We were able to engage with the material and improve our understanding of book arts.
5. Yes. MSS was a wonderful guide and helped us learn more than I had expected.
6. Yes. I learned more than I had hoped for.
7. Yes, the instructors covered a lot of material, and I also appreciated having a lot of hands-on experience. Also enjoyed having the opportunity to hear from Kelly Tuttle about digitization.
8. Yes.
9. Yes and yes, and then some. This course provided a rich foundation for understanding myriad aspects of the Islamic manuscript tradition, but even more expansively taught important lessons about art history and cultural history in general.

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

1. I wish there had been more opportunities to practice using new vocabulary and new ways of seeing in low-stakes environments before speaking in front of the

- entire class. Instead of silent observation of text followed by a class-wide presentation and correction, I would have liked more opportunities to try out vocabulary in small groups or one-on-one in informal conversations before presenting.
2. The course was just right in terms of material that could be covered in five days.
 3. I would have loved 1) A discussion of why we call an Islamic manuscript, “Islamic” 2) A more humanities oriented discussion on the works of artisans, 3) More historical discussions on what took place in the bookmaking workshop.
 4. I would like more sessions and worksheets. But this may not be conducive to the needs of other students/participants. I am very happy with what is already being offered.
 5. N/A
 6. Not that I can think of.
 7. {no response}
 8. Yes.
 9. I only wish we could have another week!
- 6) *Who might benefit the most from taking this RBS course?*
1. Anyone with an interest in Islamic manuscripts—this is particularly useful for those who know Arabic or Persian.
 2. Scholars of Islamic Studies, Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East.
 3. Librarians, archivists, art historians, independent scholars, graduate students.
 4. Anyone who is interested in Islamic cultures of the book.
 5. Anyone with an interest in Islamic manuscripts, but who needs a solid grounding in this conventions.
 6. Librarians, graduate students, researchers.
 7. I think people interested in/or doing Middle East librarianship, scholars working on history of the book.
 8. {no response}
 9. I’d immediately suggest that academics might benefit the most because they are so well positioned to continue the important work underway of both studying and teaching, but I am not an academic and I have benefitted greatly, so there’s a broad base of people with any kind of intellectual curiosity who would benefit.
- 7) *Do you feel that you got your money’s worth? Would you recommend the course to others?*
1. I think this course is a strong one that I would recommend. I think for the tuition amount we could receive more systematic handouts linking vocabulary to examples where we could use that vocabulary.
 2. Yes! MSS is a wonderful instructor, and is also most generous with her time. She is attentive to the interests and goals of each student in the group.
 3. Yes. Yes.
 4. Yes, I’m fully satisfied.
 5. Yes. This was absolutely worth the cost!
 6. Yes. Yes.
 7. Yes, absolutely.
 8. Yes and yes.

9. Yes absolutely, and yes absolutely.
- 8) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*
1. I think the trip to Princeton was very useful.
 2. The field trip to Princeton was most valuable!
 3. Yes.
 4. Yes.
 5. Yes. Seeing the peculiarities of this and other collections was particularly helpful.
 6. Oh yes, definitely!
 7. Yes, I think MSS made our visit to Princeton very productive.
 8. Yes, the field trip to Princeton was time well spent. I especially enjoyed the facsimiles of non-Quran Arabic manuscripts since those weren't as well represented in the Free Library's collection.
 9. Yes (we went to Princeton). That was very useful as a way to see different materials and to compare how different institutions care for and use their collections.
- 9) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*
1. For someone without any background in codicology or art history the technical vocabulary is the largest adjustment. My suggestion is to remain patient and make a list of key terms for each day, and practice using the new terms as much as possible.
 2. This course is intense: plan nothing else for the week. Bring a sweater; rare book rooms are cold.
 3. I recommend this course, but also keep in mind that your classmates will impact, positively or negatively, your learning experiences (and that could be more dramatic when the subject matter has something to do with Middle East Studies)!
 4. {no response}
 5. No.
 6. {no response}
 7. Do it!
 8. {no response}
 9. Start your reading early—there is so much to cover and it's all well worthwhile!
- 10) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or haiku, what would you say?*
1. I am a card-carrying member of "Team Shreve"!
 2. Highlight of 2019.
 3. MSS is an amazing instructor—highly knowledgeable, yet very humble. I would take more classes with her, if offered! (Re-emphasizing my point about classmates from Q9.3).
 4. Excellent!
 5. The content was brilliant and the people incredible. 10/10 would recommend!
 6. Enlightening and humbling.

7. This has been an inspiring week!
8. {no response}
9. CARTOUCHE! (Inside joke of the class.)

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: 3 (33.33%)
My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days: 4 (44.44%)
I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 1 (11.11%)
My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (11.11%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

- I paid 100% myself: 3 (33.33%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 2 (22.22%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 4 (44.44%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

- I paid 100% myself: 4 (44.44%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 2 (22.22%)
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (11.11%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 1 (11.11%)
I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 1 (11.11%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

- I paid 100% myself: 5 (55.55%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 2 (22.22%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 1 (11.11%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; my institution/employer paid the rest: 1 (11.11%)

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

Library disciplines:

- Curator: 1 (11.11%)
Subject specialist/bibliographer: 2 (22.22%)

Student working toward a/n:

M.L.I.S./M.L.S.: 1 (11.11%)
Ph.D./D.Phil: 2 (22.22%)

Professional educator:

Lecturer/adjunct: 1 (11.11%)
Assistant professor: 1 (11.11%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Book collector: 1 (11.11%)