

Kelly Tuttle
M-85b: Introduction to Islamic Manuscripts
25–30 July 2021

Narrative Evaluations

- 1) *Do you have any practical suggestions for improvements to RBS's online logistics?*
 1. I got a little confused with all the different online platforms
 2. I would deeply appreciate at least 45 minutes for lunch. I don't know how other people managed to shove down their food in 30 minutes, but it was frantic for me every single day!
 3. Not at this time.
 4. Perhaps there are too many platforms in use right now—might be good to pare down to just a couple.
 5. The preparatory information was a bit overwhelming, but manageable. I REALLY appreciated that the course had its own administrator who was responsible for handling all the course logistics while the class was in session (so that the instructor didn't have to handle those things in addition to teaching). It made the class run super smoothly!
 6. No—I think the technical support and training was excellent and made it easy to multi-task. I need a new computer and a second monitor but that's not RBS's problem! I found Gather.town interesting, but didn't use it much. I think one social session just with our class using Zoom might have been a good idea—we were small enough to make that possible.
 7. Perhaps having one centralized place where one could access all relevant materials and links for a class could be helpful—we got a lot of great material linked on the syllabus or in the online Drop Box folder, but I did note that the assistant started emailing the course link after the first day, which suggests to me that others, like me, had a hard time sifting through various links to find the right one for the Zoom classroom for the day.
 8. Very thoughtful. Having a wonderful Session Assistant really made things go smoothly both in communication before and then running during the week.
 9. I was overwhelmed by the platforms that M-85b used—google drive, dropbox, padlet, slack, zoom! I never understood why all 5 were necessary and to me it was a cold welcome to the course when I found myself having to navigate so many links—especially since some seemed to reduplicate content.
 10. I was confused by the usage of both Dropbox and Google Drive. It would have been a little easier to only use one of those tools. I also found the interplay between the syllabus and the schedules for each individual day a little confusing—I was always worried that I was missing a reading or other assignment.
 11. Not at this time.
 12. The course was excellent.
 13. {no response}
 14. {no response}

2) *How would you describe your encounters with RBS staff?*

1. Very positive
2. The RBS staff is, as always, one of the best parts of the experience.
3. Very efficient and expedient from the time I inquired about the course registration to this week when I was actually in class.
4. Always excellent! Helpful and accommodating.
5. Kind, helpful, and efficient.
6. All excellent—responsive, helpful, knowledgeable.
7. Everyone was very nice and helpful! I can't say that I had a lot of in-depth conversations or questions to ask, but the presentations by RBS staff that I went to were engaging and informative.
8. RBS staff have been delightful and knowledgeable
9. positive
10. Positive, professional, knowledgeable
11. Great so far. Everyone has been enthusiastic, helpful. I've really enjoyed my time in the course.
12. Excellent
13. {no response}
14. {no response}

3) *If you attended any of our optional evening events, do you feel that they were a good use of your time? Were there any that were particularly important to your RBS experience?*

1. {no response}
2. I very much enjoyed the Tuesday lecture; those lectures are a key element of cross-disciplinary enrichment for courses.
3. I wasn't able to attend any of the other events. I did attend the orientation and thought that was interesting and a good way to be introduced to RBS.
4. I was unable to attend evening events this year due to my location/connectivity issues during the week of the course.
5. {no response}
6. I didn't, but really because I'm outside the field and it would have been awkward. I can see the value for those who know people, or need to know them.
7. I did not attend evening events, due to external commitments.
8. I tried Gather.town in the orientation session. I could see the care that was put into the design. At the same time, I didn't reorganize my schedule to be able to spend more time in Gather.town. The Tuesday talk was very good and I appreciated watching that live. I will catch some of the other recordings. The Sunday introduction to the week had a lot of information (names of instructors and courses) that was better for me in written program. Since I missed some family things to attend Sunday intro live, that was a bit disappointing. But overall I appreciated the week.
9. I didn't think the online orientation was necessary
10. I really enjoyed the Tuesday night lecture.

11. I was not able to attend the evening courses due to time constraints.
12. {no response}
13. {no response}
14. {no response}

4) *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 all great. I could have used more perhaps
2. The pre-course readings were useful and reasonable; it wasn't overwhelming but provided a good context for the class.
3. Yes.
4. The pre-reading was useful, and oddly, I think perhaps more would have been better—including optional 'beginner' level readings for those who do not read Arabic.
5. The assigned readings and additional bibliography were wonderful additions to the course.
6. "It's a long list—I learned from the last time that reading two or three of those recommended on the website is enough. I think you might make that clearer and suggest two or three that would provide a general background, especially for those not in the field. In the case of this course, I found *Island: A Thousand Years of Faith and Power* (Bloom and Blair) and *The Koran: A very Short Introduction* (Cook) very helpful and accessible."
7. I did find the majority of the readings very helpful. Some of the optional readings for the illustration day were a bit "inside baseball," as it were, and difficult for a nonexpert, but that's to be expected with academic writing on a specialized subject.
8. Course materials were very helpful. Reading before the course enhanced the class sessions and I'm also very grateful to have these to return to, since the week went very quickly.
9. {no response}
10. Yes! The Roper chapter was a very helpful basic introduction. I thought the amount of pre-course readings/videos was great—it did not feel overwhelming.
11. Yes, they are definitely useful, as well as a great place to continue with my personal research.
12. The readings were excellent.
13. Yes. I could even have gone for additional pre-course readings, but I have no specific suggestions.
14. {no response}

5) *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. Yes all the content was great and I have saved everything in a folder for future use

2. The workbook was super helpful; I referred back to the page on scripts almost every day and will no doubt use the bibliography extensively in any further work I do on Islamicate MSS.
 3. Excellent. The class content was great including the "guest speakers" and virtual "show and tells".
 4. I think the workbook info may be even more useful after the course, as I can reference my notes and memory to use the resources better (because I understand more now than before).
 5. I thought the distributed content was excellent. The instructor made great use of short-form videos, workbook/vocabulary materials, and scholarly texts to give us a great range of materials to interact with as we got our feet wet with this topic. I thought the assigned preparatory work for each day was completely manageable (time-wise) and prepared us well to ask thoughtful questions and have good discussions during class-time. I think all the work Kelly Tuttle did in preparation for this course really paid off and allowed us the most learning possible within the short, 10-hr time frame.
 6. Just enough, all good, will refer over time. The extensive bibliography is most helpful. Would be good to have course assistants put together a downloadable document of all the references and links provided in the chat and/or on slack.
 7. I liked the non-article course materials a lot—the workbook has a lot of useful reference points, having videos or podcasts was a great way to break up the readings, and the materials themselves were useful and informative. Some of my favorites were the videos digging into particular illustrations, which used specific examples to illustrate larger issues in book preservation and study very vividly. I definitely plan to consult the course materials in the future.
 8. Yes, the workbook and course materials are all very useful and extremely valuable for future readings myself or for integrating into my own teaching.
 9. {no response}
 10. The course workbook was helpful, especially the section with the different types of scripts. Since this is not my current subject area of work I will probably not refer back to it for now.
 11. Definitely! I appreciated all the supplementary links to help elucidate points in the class.
 12. Useful.
 13. The content was useful and not too much, and will certainly be relevant in the future. The biblio provided in the student handbook is useful and comprehensive, but as a beginner to the field I think having more of an annotated bibliography would be helpful, so I know where to start and what the standard studies are.
 14. {no response}
- 6) *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. It's hard to say exactly but I found the course invaluable and I expect will greatly aid my research in the future

2. I try to work material culture information into the general education literature classes I teach. I am excited to have some knowledge of Islamic manuscript culture to incorporate into my World Literature class, and now I even have burnished paper and a reed pen to pass around to my students!
3. At this time, I am not professionally involved in the class material but I do plan to use it in some capacity in the future. It was also a personal goal of mine to learn more about Islamicate manuscripts so this class certainly gave me that background. There were many "a ha!" moments. Learning about the different script styles was one of them because it had always perplexed me. The variety of texts that we looked at e.g., science/math, devotional, poetry, commentaries. But the ultimate "a ha!" happened when the instructor mentioned that some European papermakers made paper for Islamic manuscripts and talked about their watermarks. I had a vague memory of reading about it somewhere but this really made me understand it as the instructor also provided many examples. I also appreciated that the instructor did not waste any time on telling us about the history &c. of the subject.
4. I will feel less inadequate when confronted with Islamic manuscripts in my everyday conservation work, and that does mean a lot. I will understand the terminology better, and have a better eye for identifying scripts and layout styles.
5. I can't wait to take the skills I learned in this course back with me into the classroom (especially in teaching introductory courses to Islamic art and architecture)! The way we learned in this class sparked my thinking about how to introduce more interactive course modules in my university undergraduate courses when it comes to teaching MS from the Islamic world and I really honed my vocabulary for talking about these ME through this course that I'll carry forward into my own teaching.
6. It was wonderful to feel immersed in a culture that I really don't know—the variety of skills and backgrounds in the class was very helpful and inspiring. I hope to continue this immersion in other ways. Also to use the Islamic styles in my personal bookmaking.
7. I plan to bring in the knowledge about non-European book production to the next world literature class I teach. I always like to begin a discussion of medieval literature with a compare-contrast between medieval book culture and modern book culture, but looking back now, I can see that some of my intro material has been very Eurocentric, and there are a lot of really interesting differences between the manuscripts and manuscript production techniques I'm familiar with and those in the Islamic world which I want to bring up the next time I try to set the literary scene for my students.
8. I'm excited to integrate my new skills in my teaching: I hope to develop a new course on Islamicate Manuscripts. I also have the foundation and confidence to continue to study scripts, manuscripts, bindings, &c. myself. Finally, there are two folios in our institution's Special Collections that I had been asked about and I feel prepared to take a stab at cataloguing them now.
9. for comparative purposes in my own research. I had a few ideas pop into my head but nothing that I could immediately connect with a new research topic/project

(a lot of my thoughts were more along the lines of, I wish we had those kinds of sources in my field!)

10. I do not currently work with Islamic manuscripts—I was interested in taking this course to learn something new. However, I do work in digitization of books and manuscripts and I found the ways that the course utilized digital materials was informative towards my current projects.
 11. I will share some highlights from the course with my colleagues so they can learn a few things about Islamicate bindings. I plan to continue personal research to expand my knowledge and also visit local collections if possible to use what I have learned in the class.
 12. I have access to a number of manuscripts in the college collection that I intend to look at and do something with.
 13. I will continue to read and study the sources provided, and hopefully implement much of what I learn as several upcoming projects will be dealing with Islamicate manuscripts. I should hopefully have the chance to work with them in-person, and have a much better idea now of how to proceed.
 14. {no response}
- 7) *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. I did indeed learn what I had hoped to learn; it was as thorough an introduction to the subject as could be achieved in 10 hours!
 3. Absolutely yes!!!
 4. Yes, actually, I learned more than expected, especially about the scripts.
 5. Absolutely! I think Kelly Tuttle used every moment of the 10 hours to educate us about Islamicate MS and did a great job of focusing on the elements that we could learn about in a short period of time (especially for those without prior knowledge of Arabic, Persian, and other commonly used languages in these MS). I also loved the group work toward the end of class that allowed us to try our hand at cataloguing and describing Islamicate MS.
 6. She was excellent - as we went along we amassed a lot of information and the class exercises helped cement and demonstrate that in a way that was collegial and encouraging.
 7. I do think I learned what I set out to learn. I probably would have learned more if I read Arabic or Persian, but Kelly did a great job of ensuring that those of us unfamiliar with the languages and texts in the books could still learn about the physical features and production of those books, as well as the significance of some of the features we were seeing.
 8. Yes!
 9. Sort of. I'd really hoped to learn more about the sociocultural history of what we talked about (who developed and used the script/book technologies, how they changed and spread over time, &c.) but that was barely addressed alongside the straightforward materiality. I'm sure the course would have been more

interesting in person, but if I had the choice again I'd probably sign up for something different.

10. I do not speak Arabic or the other languages we encountered in this course. I was really surprised and excited that I was able to follow and identify patterns laid out by Kelly regarding different types of scripts or characteristics of prose/poetry and the Qur'an. I thought the guest lecturer was really interesting and I enjoyed looking at the books from the archives in Pennsylvania through the document cameras.
11. Yes. I only wish I could continue learning from them.
12. Yes. Perhaps a little more about illuminations would have been good. Symbolism analyzed, &c.
13. Yes and yes.
14. {no response}

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

1. Of course it would have been great to do it in person, particularly since we discussed materiality so much
2. {deleted response}
3. A bit more time. I felt 10 hours was just not enough.
4. Would love to have another version of the course that focuses on illustrations. I also very much hope that the resources will continue to be available. I think beginner level Arabic terms, &c., would be quite helpful for non-Arabic reading students.
5. {no response}
6. See above comment about a Zoom social session just for the class.
7. As I said earlier, probably having one "home base" where all the useful links were located might have been helpful—there might have been a bit of a "too much of a good thing" factor here, where there were tons of fascinating links and resources, but I wasn't always sure where to find what I was looking for.
8. Although it would have been lovely to see one another and the works in person, the remote access was really appreciated for childcare ease, reducing cost of travel, and since CDC guidelines changed in the middle of this course, it would have been extremely stressful to be in person. All to say, I know how much work goes into transforming course materials for online instruction and I am grateful that you all did!
9. Use of online platforms—I found that there were way too many. 2-3 maximum would have been less overwhelming
10. I found the digital organization of homework and resources a little confusing.
11. Not sure yet.
12. I'm not sure the presentations at the end were very useful. I appreciate practice but perhaps time would have been better used with additional lectures, &c.
13. Other than having it be in person of course, I don't think so. I think an additional lecture day would have been useful as opposed to group work, but the group work was beneficial in any case.
14. {no response}

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

1. {no response}
2. Librarians and cataloguers, especially those who might encounter Arabic manuscripts without being able to read Arabic, would benefit greatly from getting an introduction to identifying what their libraries have in their collections.
3. Anyone who is involved in manuscripts/rare books in any capacity. I took a rare books class from another institution and was very disappointed that it did not mention Islamicate manuscripts at all!
4. it's designed for the use of cataloguers and librarians, but as a conservator, I have found it very useful as well.
5. Scholars with tangential knowledge about Islamic manuscripts, special collections librarians/archivists, artists, and collectors.
6. A wide variety of people - as an introductory course it wouldn't satisfy scholars in the field but it seemed to be very helpful to people who wanted to extend their knowledge and skills into this new area.
7. It seemed that it might be most helpful for cataloguers trying to describe Islamicate manuscripts in their collections, though as someone who works in an English department rather than a library, I felt that it was helpful for me as well.
8. Having a variety of people/professions/backgrounds in the course was such a bonus. I would encourage conservators, librarians, teachers, and researchers of different backgrounds to apply and hope that a broad variety again make up the participants.
9. rare book curators, Islamic/Arab regional studies specialists
10. As someone who does not specialize in this topic, I honestly think that anyone interested in the library world could learn things from this course. Obviously people who do work in this area will probably gain more.
11. Anyone with an interest in manuscripts, or who might need to understand book history as part of their profession.
12. Librarians but also people who teach humanities courses.
13. Both total beginners to Arabic and Islamic manuscripts who already know something about Arabic literature or Islam, and people working in other traditions who want to gain comparative knowledge.
14. {no response}

10) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth?*

1. {no response}
2. Absolutely. I have the tools now to pursue further study on my own, but I would take this course again and probably learn just as much from it the second time!
3. Yes!
4. Yes! But then, I always do with RBS :)
5. Yes!
6. Absolutely....
7. I do! It's obviously a different experience, online Rare Book School rather than in-person Rare Book School, but it was a fun and positive one, and while

someone interested in more in-depth study of these manuscripts might have benefited from more time examining specific manuscripts, for a novice to the field I think the online seminar/discussion/group work format worked well.

8. Yes!
9. n/a
10. Yes.
11. Definitely!
12. Yes.
13. Seeing as I was on a scholarship, it was more about 'time's worth', but the answer is yes.
14. {no response}

11) *On a scale of 1–10 with 10 being most likely, how likely are you to recommend this course to others?*

1. 10
2. 9
3. 10
4. 8
5. 10
6. 10
7. 10
8. 10
9. 5
10. 8
11. 10
12. 10
13. 9
14. {no response}

12) *If your course had any virtual field trips or guest speakers, do you feel that they were time well spent?*

1. Yes
2. The show-and-tell sessions from Penn and the Free Library of Philadelphia were probably my favorite part of the course. I also very much enjoyed the presentation on illustration and would happily have sat through another hour of the same!
3. Absolutely!
4. {no response}
5. Yes! Working with special collections librarians to view MS in real-time with document cameras was really fun as it allowed us to better view different elements of the papers used in the Islamic world, especially (and Kelly was exceptionally well-prepared for these sessions with everything bookmarked in advance) & the session with Yael Rice was the best crash-course in Islamic manuscript illustrations I could have hoped for.

6. Yes - to the point, well-prepared and well-integrated into the course without being repetitive.
7. Very much so! Dr. Yael Rice, who talked to us about illustration, went through some really interesting examples and gave insight into the workshop production process for illustrations that I found really valuable.
8. Dr. Yael Rice, guest speaker on Islamicate illustration, was great. The day with a document camera in special collections was great too. Dr. Kelly Tuttle was also extremely knowledgeable and gave a wide range of specialized lectures throughout the week.
9. yes, talk by Yael Rice was interesting
10. Yes
11. Yes. There was a guest speaker on illuminations in manuscripts. She provided a lot of insight that was really helpful. There were also two sessions with librarians who used the IPEVO document camera to show us manuscripts from their collections. In lieu of seeing these texts in person, this was really the best way to get a better sense of MS structure.
12. Yes
13. Yes
14. {no response}

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

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. I would say this particular course with this particular instructor is definitely worth it.
4. Pay attention to additional resources, and be sure you have proper connectivity to do so.
5. {no response}
6. This is more than a scholarly course in manuscripts - it provides a view into another culture, religion and way of learning.
7. Though the course is very much aimed at beginners to Islamicate manuscripts, some basic knowledge of Arabic would actually have been very helpful—my Duolingo-sourced introduction to alphabet didn't hold up super well when faced with handwritten examples, and I think someone with a solid background in Arabic but not much knowledge of manuscripts would probably come away with a different set of takeaways than I did.
8. Take it! I especially appreciated the mix of participants in the class and learning from one another.
9. I felt that the folks who were either scholars with relevant regional specialization or rare book curators got the most out of the course, so I'd mostly recommend it to them. I didn't really find my intellectual niche in it and wouldn't recommend it to someone interested in the sociocultural history of Islamic manuscripts.
10. It would probably have been more rewarding in an in-person format, but the online version was honestly really great.

11. {no response}
12. {no response}
13. Take it!
14. {no response}

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

1. {no response}
2. Opened a new world / for one in a different field / So glad I could come
3. In 10 hours, over 5 days, Kelly Tuttle took us on an amazing journey!
4. The Islamic world has a lot to say, and I wish I could read it. Thanks for introducing us to the script and manuscript design!
5. It was a joy!
6. It makes me happy.
7. In my dim study / A gilded, distant Qur'an / Brought near, illumined
8. Edifying and delightful, useful and funny
9. {no response}
10. Surprised and excited by how many new things I learned about previously unfamiliar topics.
11. Exciting and inspiring!
12. An excellent experience.
13. {no response}
14. {no response}

Student Data

Number of Respondents: 14 (of 22)

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

1. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.
2. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.
3. My situation does not fit any of the options above.
4. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.
5. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.
6. I am retired, and can arrange my own schedule.
7. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.
8. My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used vacation or unpaid leave days.
9. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.
10. My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used vacation or unpaid leave days.
11. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.
12. My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used vacation or unpaid leave days.

13. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.
14. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

1. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
2. I paid 100% of my tuition costs myself.
3. I paid 100% of my tuition costs myself.
4. My institution/employer paid 100% of my tuition costs.
5. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
6. I paid 100% of my tuition costs myself.
7. I paid 100% of my tuition costs myself.
8. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
9. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
10. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
11. My institution/employer paid part of my tuition costs, and I paid the rest.
12. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
13. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
14. I paid 100% of my tuition costs myself.

Not including this year, how many RBS courses have you attended?

1. This is my first course.
2. 8
3. This is my first course.
4. 3
5. 1
6. 1
7. 1
8. This is my first course.
9. This is my first course.
10. This is my first course.
11. This is my first course.
12. This is my first course.
13. This is my first course.
14. This is my first course.

Which of the following best describes your current occupation?

1. Student working towards a/an: Ph.D./D.Phil.
2. Professional educator: Associate professor
3. Library discipline: Library administrator
4. Library discipline: Conservator/binder/preservation librarian
5. Professional educator: Lecturer/adjunct
6. Other Occupations/Vocations: Retired
7. Professional educator: Lecturer/adjunct
8. Professional educator: Associate professor
9. Professional educator: Assistant professor

10. Library discipline: Digital collections librarian
11. Library discipline: Conservator/binder/preservation librarian
12. Professional educator: Full professor
13. Professional educator: Assistant professor
14. Student working towards a/an: Other