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H-180v: Six Degrees of Phillis Wheatley
17-22 July 2022

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. {no response}
 2. Super useful. Comprehensive, interesting, just all-around great.
 3. All of the readings were incredibly valuable—and I also really appreciated the transparency about the role of the readings in the actual classroom space.
 4. Very useful—thanks!
 5. {no response}
 6. {no response}
 7. The pre-course suggested reading list was very extensive, and I was not able to complete it prior to class. However, I did do some of the reading—primarily the journal articles—and found it helpful. And I’m going to be returning to the list to continue my learning. TB organized the class in such a way that everyone could participate effectively whether or not the suggested reading list was completed, so there were no problems.
 8. I found the pre-course reading assignments useful. While they weren’t required, it provided me a glimpse into the topics that would be discussed in the class as well as background knowledge on a subject that I’m not familiar with. No, I would not like to see any readings removed.
 9. {no response}
 10. Yes, they were useful.
 11. They were useful although more readings could be added as well.
 12. {no response}
 13. Yes.
 14. I didn’t get to most of them, but those that I did read I found very useful. There was a lot to read in the suggested readings which I hope to return to at a later date. What we needed to read or view for class discussion was in the Google drive. It was good to see them in advance, even without context.

- 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. {no response}
2. Excellent content. I loved the in-class activities and all of the primary sources we worked with. The secondary readings were illuminating.
3. Yes, all of the materials associated with this course were useful and will be integrated into my teaching.
4. Very engaging!
5. The content was very useful and I plan to use some of the readings in my syllabus.
6. I wouldn't have minded having more substantial reading assignments between class sessions.
7. Yes, yes, and yes! This was a beautifully designed course, with "just right" content that I will be returning to time and again.
8. The class started with a See, Think, Wonder exercise. During the breakout session, each group would look at the same documents, described what we saw, what we thought, and what stories we wondered. The materials shown were related to Wheatley and her community. I thought it was useful because of a lot of the material put into perspective the time period and what was happening around in their area and how they coped with everything going on. It also provided more insight on the Black community.
9. The course workbook and teaching materials were very useful. We utilized an effective tool to examine primary documents which led to discussion enriched by storytelling, lectures, and recorded conversations with the course facilitator and leading scholars in the field.
10. Yes, the abundant materials will be VERY useful after the course. Thank you for giving us such a rich spread.
11. Yes, it was and will continue to be very useful.
12. {no response}
13. N/A
14. Yes. We mostly looked at primary sources or transcriptions of primary sources. Said always brings history to life!

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. {no response}
2. I'm going to develop some new classes to teach at my institution, and I plan to incorporate (with attribution) a version of the "See, Think, Wonder" exercises into class periods. This course has given me some new ideas for working with archives in classes as well.
3. TB and the class participants all offered incredible new perspectives for considering Black print culture, communities, and Wheatley. I will be bringing the deepened knowledge, pedagogical approaches, and a greater sense of joy and wonder with me.

4. I plan to incorporate the ideas, scholars, and approaches covered in this course into my undergraduate courses—my students will definitely benefit from what I’m now able to offer them.
5. I walked away with new information that I will use in my classroom.
6. This course has definitely informed the ways that I will be teaching Wheatley in future courses.
7. This was such an amazing course—both in content and as a demonstration of effective pedagogy—that I am still absorbing all that I learned. But I will be incorporating what I learned into my fall semester teaching and beyond.
8. Putting in perspective that Wheatley and her community lived through the American Revolution in areas that were heavily attacked, wasn’t something I necessarily thought about but definitely needs exploring. Also, understanding that documents only explain but so much and there’s a lot to be left to one’s imagination. Also, the importance of researching multiple people because you never know how they fit into one’s story. The See, Think, Wonder really helped me understand that.
9. I came away with a renewed sense of wonder about eighteenth-century Black writers which I will take into the classroom. We also discussed some effective means to create community in the classroom, to prepare students for meaningful engagement with archival materials and other published writings by eighteenth-century Black writers.
10. I plan to use the skills and knowledge directly in my graduate supervision and my undergraduate teaching. Fully plan to crib some of TB’s exercises (with hat-tips).
11. I feel like what I learned is very applicable to my day-to-day work.
12. I hope to use what I learned in primary source instruction sessions for undergraduates.
13. Yes. I plan to use this knowledge in my work.
14. I mentioned in my application this notion of mine for a “retirement” project developing an African American bibliography/union list. This course has helped me understand the importance of community (really, not just lip service) in understanding writers’ worlds and not just the writings themselves.

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. {no response}
2. Yes! TB is awesome. I learned so much from her and am so grateful that I had this opportunity.
3. Absolutely! TB is an incredibly generous scholar and educator—her enthusiasm, energy, knowledge, and curiosity elevated the experience beyond what I had imagined in a Zoom atmosphere.
4. Yes—this was a wonderful experience!
5. I learned valuable skills for archival work and the course expanded my knowledge about Phillis Wheatley’s community.

6. Absolutely.
7. I walked into this course with an awareness that there is lots that I didn't know about the lives of Black folks during the eighteenth century, and this course helped me understand where to look in archival sources and beyond. What I didn't expect was to learn so much about effective pedagogy—how to teach these materials to students—and that was a definite bonus!
8. Yes, I learned everything I hoped for and more!!
9. I gained new insights into community building strategies used by Black folks in the eighteenth century that are often connected to nineteenth-century Black writers and activities.
10. I wasn't quite sure what exactly we'd be studying—my mind was fairly open and I was pleasantly surprised with the results.
11. Yes I did.
12. Yes, I wish I could take a full class with TB! She's very engaging. My work is primarily twentieth-century U.S. and I never thought I'd want to learn more about the eighteenth century until now.
13. Yes.
14. Very much so. I feel I got a small peek into what scholars of African American culture are doing, what they are interested in, and their scholarship. All very intriguing.

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

1. {no response}
2. No. It was honestly perfect.
3. 10/10, no notes, would attend every week if possible.
4. {no response}
5. TB did a great job teaching and exposing the class to new materials. I left the class with renewed inspiration for doing research in my own areas. I would have liked to focus more time on specific activities that help undergraduates understand the process of archival research.
6. {no response}
7. This was probably one of the most thoughtfully designed online courses I have ever taken. TB designed the course in a way that built a very effective learning community. This is hard to do in an online class, so I was furiously taking notes on TB's pedagogy along the way.
8. I think the structure of the course was perfect. It involved See, Think, Wonder exercises, story time with TB, and a recorded lecture.
9. The recorded interviews were very interesting, but I find it hard to watch videos longer than about 10 minutes. Thus, I would like to have had more variety in the course activities.
10. {no response}

11. I felt like the course could have been longer and that there was more to explore, especially since it was so discussion-based. Longer breaks between the day's sessions might have been helpful as well.
12. A bit more lecture. I would have also wanted to learn more about how TB came into this area of study. I would have also enjoyed learning more about her scholarship.
13. N/A
14. It could have been longer! ☺

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

1. {no response}
2. Definitely professors who teach the eighteenth century (and, let's face it, also the nineteenth century!). Also people who teach African American literature more broadly. I think this also would be an excellent class for graduate students in literature history who want to think about research methods as well as the course's content. I think librarians and archivists also could learn a lot from this class, though that isn't my field.
3. {no response}
4. Students at any level; faculty in the humanities.
5. Professors, students, and librarians.
6. {no response}
7. One of the great things about this RBS course—in addition to the amazing professor and engaging content—is that it facilitated conversation among a diverse group of professionals with different areas of expertise, and this enriches everyone's learning experiences. My fellow students were a diverse mix of librarians, professors in various disciplines, archivists, special collections librarians, working at small, large, private, public universities and foundations. Everyone had something valuable to contribute to the conversation, and we all learned from one another.
8. Anyone will benefit from this course. Initially, I thought it would be more useful to scholars and professors who study/teach Wheatley. However, this was a very mixed class of special collections librarians, archivists, and professors and I think the mixture provided different perspectives.
9. Those who wish to learn more about Black eighteenth-century writers and the communities in which they lived, loved, and labored.
10. I don't work in libraries/archives, so I can't speak to the usefulness for the many archivists and librarians who participated. But from an academic perspective, I think this would be highly useful to graduate students as well as to professors looking to expand their range of skills.
11. I think instructors, researchers, and catalogers all stand to benefit!
12. {no response}
13. Anyone interested in or working with eighteenth-century African American materials.

14. I think it is wonderful that the RBS community (over the years) has brought together scholars, librarians, archivists, students, booksellers, &c. into a space where we are talking to one another in a real way. This is very important for all of us as we interact with one another in our common interest in the collection of culture in its physical artifacts.

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

1. {no response}
2. Absolutely.
3. {no response}
4. Definitely.
5. Yes.
6. Absolutely.
7. Most definitely. I know that an in-person learning experience would have been wonderful, but I never would have been able to attend due to the additional cost of travel and accommodation. I hope RBS continues to offer some online courses every summer.
8. Yes, I believe I got my money's worth. TB has a very bubbly personality which is why I took the course. Had it been anyone else, I'm not sure if I would have taken it. I knew with her teaching, it would not only be educational but entertaining and it was exactly that!
9. Yes.
10. Yes, very much so.
11. Yes.
12. {no response}
13. Yes.
14. Definitely got my institution's money's worth. The smarter I am about our collections, the better I will be able to provide access to it.

8) *How likely are you to recommend this course to others?*

1. 10
2. 9
3. 9
4. 10
5. 10
6. 10
7. 10
8. 10
9. 9
10. 10

11. 10
12. 10
13. 10
14. {no response}

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

1. {no response}
2. I loved the recorded interviews. They were super fun and informative.
3. Yes—the recorded interviews with scholars were fantastic and offered an incredible perspective on class discussions.
4. Yes.
5. Yes.
6. Yes. I especially appreciated that each of the speakers were asked the same questions. The variety of answers to the same prompts was instructive in and of itself.
7. TB created a series of short videos during which she interviewed other experts with the same set of questions, and we viewed one of these each day of the course. This was a brilliant way to incorporate “guest speakers” as it broadened our understanding of how to approach the Black archive.
8. N/A
9. As I mentioned above, the recorded interviews were very interesting, but I find it hard to watch videos longer than about ten minutes. Thus, I would like to have had more variety in the course activities. See Q5.
10. Yes.
11. Yes, the interviews with guests were very interesting!
12. {no response}
13. Yes.
14. Yes. TB had a podcast interview each day with several of her colleagues in similar scholarship as hers. It was very good to hear the diversity in their interests as well as what they share.

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

1. {no response}
2. This class was awesome. Everyone should take it.
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. Having some knowledge about Wheatley’s community is helpful, but not needed. TB does a good job of providing context.

6. {no response}
 7. This was my first RBS course. I've been eyeing the course listings for years, but always wondered, as a public services librarian for undergraduate students, if I would have the requisite expertise. If you are like me, please go ahead and apply to take a course that interests you. I learned so much, and likewise found that I had pockets of expertise that I could share, too. You won't regret it.
 8. N/A
 9. TB is a very engaging and energetic professor who creates a welcoming learning environment. Her passion for eighteenth-century Black writers is infectious. You will look at the eighteenth century with new understanding and appreciation. This course is incredibly enlightening.
 10. {no response}
 11. I would encourage anyone taking this course to be prepared to participate in small and large group discussions.
 12. {no response}
 13. No.
 14. I think TB's students at the University of Iowa should consider themselves blessed to have such a down-to-earth, inquisitive, excited, engaged instructor. As one of her students this week, I consider myself blessed.
- 10) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or haiku, what would you say?*
1. {no response}
 2. As centuries go / The eighteenth might be the best. / But also, Beechers.
 3. Incredible ... more Black RBS faculty plz!!
 4. Enjoy thinking in new ways!
 5. "There's always answers into the stuff (archives) and there have always been Black people in History." – Cassie Smith
 6. Wheatley not alone / I am not alone either / When thinking of her.
 7. Online RBS is a valuable investment in your ongoing education.
 8. N/A
 9. In a diverse community of curious learners, I gained a new understanding of and appreciation for the experience of community for eighteenth-century Black writers and their family and friends.
 10. I didn't know an online course could be so personal and meaningful—but it can, with Phillis Wheatley, Obour Tanner, TB, and the RBS!
 11. A really great course and format.
 12. A real treat!
 13. TB is a great instructor. The class was organized and consistent.
 14. I said to my boss during one of the breaks this week that I felt like I was back in college.

As a forever student of something and a person who loved school (all levels) back when I formally was one (too many years ago), it was very refreshing to be in an environment of firsthand learning again.