

Tara Bynum
H-180v: Six Degrees of Phillis Wheatley
9–13 June, 2025, Online

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. I wish we had one required pre-course reading. I knew so little about Phillis Wheatley that it would have been helpful, but maybe everyone else knew more.
2. {no response}
3. The recommended readings were extensive but incredible!
4. {no response}
5. N/A
6. I did not have any pre-course readings but I'm always happy to have some if they are available.
7. It was great to have the pre-course readings as background resources
8. N/A
9. The pre-course readings were helpful.
10. {no response}
11. The suggested reading list seems quite useful, though I signed up relatively close to the start date, so it's a little hard to say (as in, I probably would have gotten a lot from reading or refreshing on more of this).
12. Yes, the materials were useful.
13. Yes!
14. There were only “suggested” readings, and a fairly long list, so it might have been helpful to have a few of them highlighted. I perused a number of them, but not all. I didn't feel like this was any disadvantage going into the course, though!

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. Very useful!
2. I will be thinking about and using this content well after this course.
3. The teaching materials were available in real time, and it greatly influenced how we interacted with the class in the best way.
4. {no response}
5. The materials we worked with in class were great, and I can absolutely see teaching with them in the future.
6. These teaching materials were super helpful to building the story behind the activities and to make Phillis and her community more real. They also helped to provide me with a great activity in the future for my undergraduates with the “See, Think, Wonder” of it all.
7. All the content was intriguing and stimulated questions and thoughts.

8. All the content was useful and appropriate.
9. The use of archival materials led to an amazing class experience.
10. {no response}
11. The content was so useful! I could easily see incorporating it into future courses, and if not, I'm confident it will inspire/influence other choices for materials that I bring into my classes.
12. Yes, the materials were useful.
13. The teaching materials were incredibly useful and I will continue to use them (and go in search of my own like them) for a long time to come.
14. {no response}

3) *Which aspects of the course were most intriguing and relevant for you as an individual? Did you walk away with any new insights, ideas, or project plans?*

1. {no response}
2. I walked away feeling energized and excited about my professional work and personal scholarship. The conversations were informative and insightful in an area I was lacking context for.
3. {no response}
4. The expanded view of Phillis Wheatley's life, and all of her associates, and the circles they all traveled in...it was so much new information for me, and I love that.
5. I really loved our conversations about archives—what constitutes one, where and how do they emerge, what kinds of affective and social relationships structure them—and learning about new sources for helping to reconstruct (at a distance) the social networks of eighteenth-century. Black communities.
6. I definitely walked away with the “See, Think, Wonder” activities, which I will be happily using in my own classroom.
7. I especially like the conversations we had after reviewing materials and being able to make associations and connections about them.
8. As someone who doesn't work on the eighteenth century, I felt that the most relevant takeaways were primarily methodological in nature. I have so many questions and ideas about how to translate the approaches we took in this class to other contexts that I'm studying.
9. Seeing and discussing the archival materials and what we might learn about Phillis and her community through the materials of others.
10. {no response}
11. Yes! I walk away with new ideas for archives I want to explore, hopes to work with students to change or broaden the kinds of stories they may have about what an archive is, and to bring in new primary materials when teaching Wheatley.
12. TB fulfilled the role of an exceptional teacher by inspiring the class and enabling the students to engage in meaningful dialogue.
13. Our conversations were the most intriguing to me, and I have a lot of new insights and plans for how I will teach my early American literature classes and incorporate primary sources in new and exciting ways for those students.
14. For me, the biggest immediate takeaways are methodological ones. The experience this week has been transformative, in terms of how I think about how to read and

think about materials related to my own research projects. So many thoughts about communities, friendships, and other networks embedded in documents and materials—three-dimensionality and time traveling!

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, I learned so much about spending time with objects instead of quickly trying to read them.
2. Yes! TB was so great, and I would take oodles more courses with her.
3. {no response}
4. I learned what I hoped to learn and more. TB was fantastic!
5. Yes, TB was excellent!
6. Yes, absolutely! I think this course was so great at helping me better understand how to build connections with Wheatley and also how to get students thinking about her as a person rather than just a lady from the 1700s.
7. This course helped me see the vast and vital importance of community and relationships.
8. The instructor helped me learn more than I expected I would.
9. Yes.
10. {no response}
11. Yes! TB really helped establish a sense of the relationships around Wheatley and how/why we can care about these figures as complex people, while also grappling with all that we don't know.
12. I learned more than I expected to.
13. I learned what I hoped to learn and more in large part due to TB's leadership.
14. Yes. In fact, I learned more than I'd hoped for, and this week has reinvigorated me as I return to one of my own research projects this summer.

5) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*

1. {no response}
2. To enhance my teaching and to think differently about my personal scholarship on grief and loss.
3. I'll be using some of the techniques from this course to refine my experiences in teaching with primary sources.
4. In collecting for the library, and in future library exhibitions.
5. They'll inform both my research and teaching.
6. I intend to spend more time focusing on how to build out Phillis Wheatley as a person and not just a static author.

7. The course pedagogy—using “See, Think, Wonder” with primary documents—will help me craft similar experiences with communities I’d like to invite to our special collections and library
8. The skills and knowledge I acquired during the course will benefit both my research and my teaching. Not only has the course helped me to think about the ways I can approach archival materials, but it has also taught me about activities in the “See, Think, Wonder” model, which I plan to use to get my students to appreciate questions in this vein.
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. My university has acquired some local archival materials in the several years since I’ve been here, and this course is absolutely giving me motivation to go delve in and ask questions about them.
12. Yes, to work on my project for America250.
13. I plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired here in my teaching immediately and also in my research and my own time spent using libraries, archives, and digital resources.
14. The modeled skills and methods of reading archival materials are ones I will employ in my own research. And I’m definitely bringing “See, Think, Wonder” to my own classrooms in the fall!

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

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. Graduate students, library workers, and professors.
4. {no response}
5. I think educators (particularly college-level, but potentially high school as well), librarians, archivists, and collections specialists are particularly well suited for this course.
6. I think really anyone who holds Wheatley materials in their archives or anyone who is actually interested in Wheatley as a person. Also, anyone interested in the African diaspora would benefit from this course.
7. Librarians, archivists, and teachers (high school through university).
8. I think the course is broadly relevant to anyone working with archival materials, even if they aren't specializing in the eighteenth century or are an Americanist. As someone who studies the United States during a later period, I learned a lot of historically specific content that I didn't know before, but I also benefited so much from the course's disposition with respect to the archive.
9. College students, librarians, archivists, researchers, and writers.
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. All students can learn.
13. Librarians, archivists, literary teachers, and anyone with an interest in Wheatley, Black literature generally, or who is learning to read primary sources in new ways.

14. Anyone interested in the eighteenth century, archival/historical documents, Black history, literary history, and communities. This includes literature scholars, historians, archivists, librarians, and more!

7) *If applicable, what were the most original, powerful, or otherwise noteworthy educational moments in the course? Were there any “aha!” moments you'd like to share?*

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. I think finding out how connected Phillis was to a community and also how much time she spent in Newport was interesting to me. Viewing Phillis Wheatley as a young woman was also incredibly interesting rather than just thinking of her work as static text.
7. Everyday contained an “aha!” moment!
8. I especially appreciated moments where TB helped us to consider implied presences of Black life from archival details: if a ledger itemizing the cost of a pig roast mentions the names of nine people, who else was in attendance to eat the pig?
9. Beginning the course with a discussion of Phillis’ letter to her friend and ending the course focusing on her friend, with Phillis as a distant figure.
10. {no response}
11. It was such a pleasure to see how rich the conversations were that we could have from the “See, Think, Wonder” prompt; it absolutely encouraged me (as other folks also said in our final discussion) to trust students to engage with materials in this way in the classroom.
12. Too many to name: the class, and the instructor.
13. TB: ““If I build this world [that I'm researching] out, what is it that I find?””
14. “See, Think, Wonder”. Imagining the past in three-dimensionality. Checking my own expectations and assumptions when I approach a historical document. Trying to imagine a historical figure not just as their most famous accomplishment (Wheatley as author of poems) but as a full human.

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

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. This class was excellent for me, so I have no notes!
7. It was great!
8. No.

9. N/A
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. Longer.
13. No.
14. My only wish, which is close to impossible in an online class, is to enable somehow the informal conversations that happen outside the classroom during an in-person class. I would have loved to get to know my classmates more!

9) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? How likely are you to recommend this course to others? On a 1-10 scale, 1 would indicate that you disagree that you got your money's worth, 5 would indicate a neutral response, and 10 would indicate that you agree that you got your money's worth.*

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

10) *If your course made any (virtual) field trips outside of the classroom or had guest speakers, do you feel that they enhanced the course experience?*

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. N/A
6. {no response}
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. Yes.
10. {no response}
11. N/A

12. Sure, it could be useful.
13. I did appreciate the interviews we were able to watch with “guest speakers” but I got the most out of our time discussing and interpreting artifacts together or listening to TB’s lectures.
14. {no response}

11) *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. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. I think come into this course knowing a little bit about Phillis Wheatley, but not too much, so you can truly get the best experience of piecing together the puzzles we solve in the class.
7. This is a wonderful way to explore an important century in the formation of U.S. culture—would definitely recommend!
8. You should take it. :)
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. I’m so glad I took it! It was so energizing to see the rich set of questions that the texts we studied raised for TB and also for participants—including discussing these texts with folks in fields and professions other than my own.
12. Please take it.
13. Take it!
14. {no response}

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

1. {no response}
2. A delight!
3. {no response}
4. This is only my second course, but it has been the best experience both times. The instructors have been top-notch, the material provided and the knowledge I’ve gained have been extremely helpful in my career.
5. {no response}
6. As Tina Turner would say, “Simply the best!”.
7. RBS is a wonderful camp for nerds—I love it!
8. Approach world building / by taking into account / all three dimensions.
9. I’ve had an amazing experience taking RBS classes and meeting people with similar interests from all over the world.

10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. TB is an exceptional professor. She is warm-hearted and generous in her willingness to share her extensive knowledge.
13. This course helped me learn how to research differently so the Black eighteenth century (and beyond) was more legible to me, more dimensional, and more dynamic.
14. A pig doesn't just feed nine people.