

Peter Crane and Roger Gaskell  
I-50: Six Hundred Years of Botanical Illustration  
17–21 July, Upperville, Virginia

### **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. Yes, useful—including encouragement to skim and read widely in areas of interest. Some readings were rather dense and I know I will get more out of them by revisiting them after this experience.
2. Yes, helpful.
3. Yes. I have a solid background working with early printed books in both professional and scholarly capacities, but I am not as familiar with the processes involved in image production, especially post-seventeenth century or so. I found the required readings quite helpful in providing the basics of the technology involved. The Blunt/Stearn text is a wonderful resource for the evolution of the illustrations themselves, and I am glad to now have it in my personal library.
4. For I-50, all of the readings were relevant, interesting, and very specific to the subject. I would recommend watching, before beginning the reading list, the BBC documentary (available via YouTube and other streaming services) "Botany: A Blooming History" or another similar video if you are not familiar with botany as a science. This will help with general overview and terms as you begin the texts. The Blunt book is the most important pre-read for the course, but not an easy journey. Understanding print processes is very important, however RG does an excellent job of explaining during the course as well.
5. I had a work change right beforehand, so I was only able to skim the readings. I did enjoy the art of botanical illustration and look forward to digging into more of the provided bibliography after.
6. Yes, I thought the book suggestions were great. It was nice that some were available online, but I agree that the print copies were better quality and easier to use. I like that there were additional but not required suggestions for reading beyond the core list.
7. The extensive bibliography that PC and RG assembled provided students, with a variety of interests, ample ways into the course material. While the primary text (*The Art of Botanical Illustration*) could be dry and outdated in its worldview, the wealth of secondary resources helped each of us select an appropriate contextual anchor for the in-depth learning we did in the class itself.
8. {no response}
9. I would appreciate a selection of articles over books, as that would be more manageable

in terms of preparation. I felt lucky I was already familiar with many of the readings as it was, since I would not have had time to get on top of all of them otherwise.

10. {no response}
11. Useful.
12. Yes, as a general introduction.

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 workbook was indispensable! I appreciated having space to take notes on the books we viewed, and brief definitions, &c. were very helpful to have on hand.
2. Workbook was informative during class and I will definitely continue to refer to it.
3. I will certainly be using the course materials for future reference.
4. Workbook was thorough and excellent. I would only recommend adding more blank pages, or printing one-sided for those of us who prefer taking notes by hand. The workbook is a great place to keep this all together parallel to the lectures. Having space for notes on the list of books viewed was very helpful.
5. Great resources. I almost wish we had the list beforehand so I could compare it to my library's holdings ahead of time rather than after. A little more detail would be great, or even sharing slides.
6. I think the course workbook is laid out well and I will definitely refer to it in the future. Especially the bibliography section.
7. The workbook helped me keep track of the truly dizzying amount of work that we did in the course. The bibliography will be particularly useful to me as a librarian advising students and faculty on research in plant humanities.
8. {no response}
9. The workbook is \*stunning.\* I so appreciate the bibliographic information for every book on view; and having the hyperlinks in the digital copy of the workbook is a huge bonus. The bibliography is something I will mine for a long time, and RG's notes on printmaking techniques—even to someone who feels comfortable with the various processes—are superb reference material both for his insights, as well as for thinking about how to teach the differences between media.
10. {no response}
11. Please distribute printed schedules: at OGSF, the Wi-Fi didn't always work well, and having to pull up the schedule on a phone was time-consuming. In terms of materials distributed by the instructors, yes, it is very valuable and will be helpful with teaching and research. I think even more materials would have been welcome: perhaps a daily packet where we could write notes? (One could do this in the packet provided, but something with room left for note-taking in a more intentional way would be welcome.)

12. The course workbook was very helpful. I greatly appreciated having the short lists of the objects we viewed in the various sessions. The consolidated bibliography will be hugely helpful to me in my work going forward. Several colleagues in my department have already reviewed the coursebook and it will remain in active use on our shared shelves.

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. Yes, too many to name here! It was wonderful to get a sense of fellow students' projects and interests. All sessions by PC were fascinating and my only regret about those is that they were too brief. Hands-on time in the library was a gift and the setting for the course was completely inspiring. I am walking away looking not just at botanical treatises and florilegia, but at the whole world of environmental humanities with renewed appreciation.
2. I appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the OSGF collection, learn more about printing techniques, and the lectures on botanical science. Yes, I have many, many new project plans (and not enough time).
3. I am working on a book proposal that would involve botanical illustrations and this course allowed me to solidify some ideas that were a bit nebulous. I now have a better sense of how I want to treat and discuss botanical illustrations in my project.
4. Overall, "intriguing" is a great way to describe this course. For anyone interested in book illustration, print processes, and scientific illustration this course is a deep dive into all of these areas with a clear focus on one subject—plants and botany. This area is not well covered in art history or the history of science, despite the close kinship to medical history, and learning about botanical books will fill in knowledge gaps most did not know existed. I am definitely looking at the world through a different lens after learning about and seeing the objects viewed. The foliage and environments depicted in all art objects has a new richness that has sparked a deeper level of curiosity that will stay with me indefinitely. After a week at Oak Spring, a new or renewed interest and appreciation for planned gardens is assured.
5. I appreciated being able to see some of the hallmark pieces of botanical illustration and seeing the scholarly conversation between them; how one book built upon another. I almost wish we had a diagram linking books together ... maybe a personal project for myself down the road.
6. The focus on coloring of illustrations was most relevant to my research. I'm glad that RG dedicated a section of the course to hand coloring and had examples for us to see in the library. I am hoping to expand some projects I've been working on related to the production of botanical illustrations in books. This course was incredibly inspiring in that regard.
7. I came away with a more overarching understanding of the history of botanical

illustration and particularly its entanglement with imperialism and slavery. PC's overview of the history of botanical science was particularly valuable to me as someone better versed in the humanities. I wish we'd had more time to explore the science in more detail!

8. {no response}
9. It is perhaps trite to say, but the people were the most stimulating part of the course. Getting a glimpse into the depth of knowledge of not only PC and RG, but also of all the other participants, has prompted me to think about this material in ways I could not have imagined without the lectures, discussions, and observations from the course. In particular, I am eager to think more about the history of the science of botany and how to connect with botanists in order to take a more interdisciplinary approach to my evolving research.
10. {no response}
11. I particularly appreciated the inclusion of Japanese works and welcomed discussion of global exchange of plants and prints. I will incorporate this into my fall courses, and it has given me new ideas for my own research as well.
12. I appreciated the holistic approach to the objects with discussion of the artists, printers, entrepreneurs, publishers, patrons, &c. I am grateful for the insights and great potential for new research on the role of women scientists and artists. The presentation and drawing session with Alice Tangerini was fabulous—it was a wonderful learning opportunity and added a unique contemporary dimension to the program.

*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, 100%. I only wish we had had an extra day.
2. Yes, I learned what I hoped to and the instructors were truly experts in their field.
3. Absolutely.
4. I learned significantly more than expected. The balance of learning print processes, book history, and botany as a science was expected, but the richness of the material was a happy surprise. If any time or new experiences should be added, I hope it would be more downtime to enjoy the gardens and other spaces at Oak Spring or more active activities like the drawing exercise.
5. Yes.
6. Yes! I came into the class with a fairly good understanding of various printmaking processes and how they developed over time, but I still learned so much. There are many different angles one can take when approaching this subject and this class gave a great overview of the various threads related illustrated botanical books.
7. The course is heavily weighted toward early print history (incunabula to chromolithography), which was great for me as a person who studies the nineteenth century, but students interested in the twentieth century might be disappointed.

8. {no response}
9. Yes, and then some.
10. {no response}
11. Yes, and yes.
12. Yes. I had a very specific goal of gaining a broad overview of the history of botanical illustration in order to help me better understand an aspect of a collection I work with at my institution. The course provided me with the quick deep dive I have been looking for.

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

1. Personal research and continued institutional connections.
2. I hope to be able to implement exhibition projects that include more rare books. I plan to publish scholarship that makes use of ideas and objects I encountered during the course.
3. I will be incorporating them in my future research and teaching.
4. I am sure this knowledge will help with collection development and curation of rare art books, as well as prints and other media.
5. Collections, exhibits.
6. It makes me want to turn my History Master's thesis into an article or book. I did a lot of research about a book series that utilized a lot of the methods of printmaking and book production that we covered in this course. I think I have an even richer understanding from RG and PC sharing their expertise on the subject.
7. The skills I learned here will enable me to read botanical texts more carefully and purposefully. I feel like I actually know what I'm looking for now!
8. {no response}
9. I plan to use these skills as I hone my dissertation topic and methodology.
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. I look forward to embarking on selected reading and research in order to develop an exhibition proposal for a show drawing on my institution's collection of botanical illustration.

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

1. Applicable to a very wide audience, from artists and art historians to scholars, plant scientists, librarians, and avid gardeners with an appreciation for history.
2. Anyone with an interest in plants and their history.
3. {no response}
4. Art librarians, artists interested in floral design, history of science scholars, and all those interested in garden design.

5. CBHL librarians!
6. We had a lot of librarians and curators in our class. I think educators would get a lot out of this, especially history professors.
7. Anyone studying botanical art or the history of botany would benefit from this class, obviously. Less obviously, this class offers a fabulous introduction to the history of printed illustration, and its narrow focus helps students trace that history more readily across the centuries.
8. {no response}
9. The range of professions and disciplines from which the students for our course came was, for me, one of the most exciting aspects. RBS did an amazing job forming a cohort, and I think it showed how widely beneficial this course has the potential to be. (i.e. I don't have a specific answer!)
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. Artists with an interest in botany/horticulture/illustration; students/curators/researchers interested in researching the role of women in this field.

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

1. Alice Tangerini's session was delightful.
2. That books and bookselling were central to the pursuit of botany during my periods of interest (early modern and early nineteenth century).
3. This is likely going to depend on each participant's background and expectations. For me, as someone well-acquainted with much of the text that tends to accompany botanical illustrations, and with certain "usual suspects" that pop up in all manner of herbals, seeing the different depictions of them, and the different techniques used to produce them, was fascinating. Just a few highlights include: certain whimsical and dramatic Audubon prints with which I was unfamiliar; an amusing description of Durian; seeing a Fuchs herbal that was colored in; advertisements for toiletries; learning of the connections between lithography and the Archaeopteryx fossil discovered at Solnhofen quarry; seeing first-hand in illustrations the effects of Linnaeus' system of classification, and so on.
4. Overall, how important the books examined are to the history of book illustration, art and design, and the relationship of botany with medical science. Also, many of the books viewed are in my own collection and I never understood how they fit in with the collection as a whole, and how the history of print process can be told through them.
5. For me, understanding the difference in printing processes was really important and helpful. It is very complicated and I still struggle at times, but I have a better understanding now.
6. I think this course is incredibly unique because of how immersive it is. Being able to

stay on site at Oak Spring is really such a treat. It allows you to focus on the course, but also experience the rejuvenating gardens and countryside. The Oak Spring Library is incredible and unlike any other book space that I've been in.

7. Putting together the history of botanical science with the developing syntax of botanical illustration was just so fundamental—it doesn't feel like it should have been an "aha!" moment, but it really was that fabulous kind of "aha!" moment that just resonates across disparate pockets of knowledge to unite them in a single clear understanding.
8. {no response}
9. There was something quite special about studying all these botanical illustrations while moving in and out of such a beautiful, and also changing, garden-scape. The in situ aspect of this course goes beyond the richness of the library's collection (which would be enough on its own), and I think that's something that could be drawn out even more. For example, in addition to the drawing lesson on the first afternoon, it might be nice to offer an optional second drawing session (wouldn't need to have an instructor) one night. Participants could be invited to pick something from the Rokeby garden during their tour (under the head gardener's guidance), and then could draw it later in the evening, once back on the other side of the estate. Or a plein air, pre-dinner session with clipboards and stools in the flower garden.
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. {no response}

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

1. I would appreciate having a printed copy of the RBS *Student's Vade Mecum* on hand, or at least a printed schedule of course sessions and times as part of the workbook.
2. More lectures on the science of botany, and tie the science more directly to the books to be viewed. Connect the dots for students — "this new concept in botanical science had the following impact on botanical illustration."
3. My only suggestion would be to perhaps include a video demonstrating chromolithography, as I still found it a complicated process. For my own work, being able to identify it is not particularly important, but I imagine for other participants who work in libraries and museums, this might be helpful.
4. More time between activities and slightly longer breaks. I would have liked even 15 minutes longer for breaks and lunch to allow for enjoying the gardens and space to process the material—even if it meant having a slightly longer day. For Friday, more time to visit the gallery.
5. Maybe plan for a half day free time in the library towards the end, or more than 30 minutes to one hour... maybe we could suggest a topic or specific items we are personally interested in and Tony Willis, Head Librarian, could pull two to three items

for each person to make it really customized. Slightly later shuttle time, possibly?

6. I wish there was a little more time for visiting the library on our own. There was only one opportunity for this on Friday afternoon, but it was a very short window (about 30 minutes) right before we left which made it very rushed. We looked at a lot of books in this course which was fabulous, but couldn't spend a lot of time with an individual book, so it would be great if there was an opportunity to view them again on our own or in a smaller group. I also think we should have a printed schedule since we were changing locations many times throughout the day. It was hard to refer to the online schedule.
7. This is a really short course, which is great in many ways, but I wonder if having the students arrive in Charlottesville the Sunday before, and then shuttle them as a group to Upperville on Monday, would free up time on the site itself? Having a brief orientation or introductory lecture might make the week feel less condensed.
8. {no response}
9. I would have loved a bit more lecture/discussion with PC. For example, it would be great to have him "respond" to a few objects at the end of each day, or else to offer more of the scientist's point-of-view with regard to why these illustrations across time are interesting (or, perhaps, not so interesting!).
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. I would have liked to receive the *Student's Vade Mecum* a week or two before the course. It would have been helpful to get a printout of the schedule in advance or offered at the course.

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

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

1. Yes, see above. Meals with staff and fellows and visits to the conservation farm were a lovely bonus.
2. Yes, the experience with Alice Tangerini was not only enjoyable but helped me appreciate the art and science of botanical illustration.
3. Yes. Alice Tangerini, the artist who gave us a demonstration of her technique, was lovely, and I found seeing and putting into practice her process very useful for thinking about the many and circuitous routes from living plant to specimen to sketches to drafts to engravings and etchings, and so on. There is so much information gained, lost, translated, and interpreted at every step, and I really appreciated Alice Tangerini's insights thereof. I also particularly enjoyed her anecdotes about working with botanists to ensure not only accuracy but that the desired information about the plant is being conveyed in the final image.
4. Relevant guest speakers could enhance the experience, but in person is preferred as opposed to video or virtual.
5. I loved the women in books conversation at the end.
6. Yes, we had a drawing workshop with Alice Tangerini that was illuminating. I really enjoyed hearing about Alice Tangerini's career and the session helped with understanding the practical aspects of botanical illustration.
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. Yes, Alice Tangerini was brilliant.
10. {no response}
11. The botanical illustrator was a very engaging speaker, and I'm very glad I had the chance to meet her. That said, the drawing exercise itself was less than inspiring: tracing a photograph is something I could have done on my own with no instruction.
12. Yes. The guest speaker and the related drawing exercise was a phenomenal addition to the program. Would highly recommend having Alice Tangerini return every year.

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

1. Bring bug spray and a floppy hat!
2. Read as much as you can before the course begins.
3. {no response}
4. A deep dive into the reading made the class a very rich experience.
5. The last day was the most impactful for me and felt very rushed. I actually wish that was spread out a little more, and some of the herbals were condensed.

6. This is such a special course! I've taken a few other similar classes, but they do not compare because of how immersive an experience this is. I had an absolutely fantastic time. Potential students should know that the days end up being quite long since we end up having all our meals together. I enjoyed this aspect of it, but I know that might be a lot for some people since there isn't much down time.
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. Take this course!
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. Do not hesitate to apply—it was the most wonderful experience. In addition to the focused teaching and access to an extraordinary collection of books and art, the setting is glorious and the accommodations and food are fabulous. Be prepared for patchy cell phone reception and slow or no Wi-Fi. I loved being almost entirely disconnected, but know it's not for everyone.

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

1. A green thought in a green shade.
2. RBS courses are an ideal way for emerging students and seasoned professionals with interests in book history to develop their skill sets.
3. {no response}
4. I am not sure this is possible. I will be thinking about this experience—the material, the place, the gardens—for a long time. It is an experience that changes how one sees the world around them.
5. Fabulous! I wish I could attend again!
6. Rejuvenating! This class has been so inspiring to me and I can't wait to see how it shapes my research and career moving forward.
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. Beautiful beyond words (as is appropriate for a course on illustration).
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. My idea of heaven on earth; micro-grad school on a 4-star farm hotel.