

Peter Toth
H-195: Transmission of the Bible from the Beginnings to 1500
29 June–4 July, 2025, Oxford, UK

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. Not really. We never referred to them in class.
2. The readings were very helpful for setting the context.
3. Yes, the pre-course reading was a useful introduction to what we learned in class.
4. Yes! I completed the optional readings, and I found that they set me up well for the week.
5. Very.
6. Yes, they were helpful in orienting me and giving background, and were also not too time-consuming, which I appreciated.
7. Yes! PT curated an extremely helpful list to prepare for the course.
8. Yes, they were an excellent introduction to the history of the Bible to the fifteenth century.
9. Not useful. Good thing I did not purchase them—we never referenced them.
10. 0082 It was a good amount. Not unreasonable/unmanageable and put in good stead to begin the course.
11. Yes. It was a great way to get ready for the course.
12. I would love to have an additional brief history of the Bible (small, short preliminary text). I loved the de Hamel book and the Brown book, but they were quite large in terms of size (coffee table style books). I did appreciate that PT linked free version online, but being a book lover, I bought them, and I refer back to them after the course again and again to remind myself of what I have learned.

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 helpful keepsake of our major learnings. Will be good reminders of our coursework.
2. The content was thorough and well-organized.
3. Yes, the materials have all been so helpful. I will certainly be saving them to refer to in the future.
4. The course book was indeed useful, but for my money the most important takeaways were the daily printouts of the volumes that the instructor pulled from the Bodleian's holdings.
5. Yes.
6. The coursebook was an excellent resource, and the lists of manuscripts were very much appreciated. In a future iteration, these two categories might be combined into one book, but that works best for a second-time teaching.

7. Yes, definitely! I will certainly be referring back to the bibliography of materials that we got to handle.
8. The content was very appropriate as a visual expression or context for the daily lectures.
9. Very interesting course. I appreciated the syllabus. The lists of rare books we saw was useful. {private response}
10. It might have been more useful to have shelf mark lists for seminars included in overall course book. Lots of separate sheets can get a bit confusing!
11. I thought the course workbook was helpful and easy to follow. The content was appropriate and useful. It will continue to be useful for the rare book work that I do.
12. So helpful. The workbook was informative and the slides were great—so helpful to see information on screen to familiarize myself with/these new-to-me names and dates. I will revisit these materials again and again. And thank you for giving out a list of titles and shelf marks of the books we saw.

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. Handling of the actual bibles and other materials. Show-and-tell was the highlight of the course.
2. The course was extremely informative and quite fun—being able to learn in a hands-on way with the treasures of the Bodleian, guided by experts, was an incredible experience. As an independent scholar working on Italian Giant Bibles, I appreciated the grounding PT gave us. I am leaving with exciting new insights into the creation and distribution of Bibles which I am eager to apply to my work.
3. Everything presented was truly fascinating! I learned so much about the history of this work we know as the Bible, the many twists and turns it's taken over centuries. I will use what I learned in the class to explore biblical materials in Coptic, Syrian, Ethiopian in our special collections which I haven't seen before. I will also likely present on this material within our library at some point. I've come away with such a strong enthusiasm for this subject area, I want to continue reading and learning.
4. Prior to the course, I had a good big-picture understanding of the topic, and thanks to my doctoral training I had past acquaintance with three of the central ancient languages on display in the materials (Hebrew, Greek, and Latin). At that overarching level, the course thickened my understanding of key periods, particularly by allowing me to have immediate sensory experiences of materials that I have been reading about in some cases for more than two decades. The course also improved my understanding of certain stages of the Bible's transmission (e.g., why Paris Bibles flourished and took the form they did), challenged my mental pictures of others (Wycliffite Bibles), and gave me entirely new information on traditions that I've tended to skip over in larger histories of the Bible in the past (the Syriac tradition). The course has also reinforced a lesson that I've been learning in other contexts about my need to make a serious scholarly

study of the history of Judaism (in other words that I need to read the *multi-volume* versions). In short, the course was EXCELLENT.

5. {no response}
6. The *longue durée* of Biblical history was incredibly helpful, as was the ability to identify content in various Bibles regardless of language. I am so much more confident in my ability to handle future encounters with Biblical manuscripts of all kinds!
7. I loved the early papyrus and the non-Latin scripts. They are beautiful to look at, and it has inspired me to look into learning Biblical Greek!
8. The actual tactile use of the books themselves. Yes, it was clearly a jumping off point for continual study of the history of the early Bible.
9. I enjoyed learning about the canonization of the New Testament. It was fascinating to know the timeline of the Bible's evolution.
10. The visit to the Art, Archaeology, and Ancient World Library papyrus collection was a highlight, and particularly relevant to my world. But being able to visit Merton was a treat.
11. When we got to examine a selection of manuscripts of what we learned that day. I want to use what I learned to teach the students at the college I work at.
12. I loved the overview. I liked the info on timelines and key figures. I loved the information on parataxis, languages, regions, developments, and seminal texts. Basically, I liked everything.

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, and much more. PT was an outstanding instructor. This course exceeded my expectations.
2. Absolutely.
3. Yes, and more! PT has been a phenomenal instructor. I cannot praise him enough! He has been so generous with his expertise and time. His own delight in this material is infectious.
4. Absolutely. Already by the end of the second day, I was remarking to friends that the course had exceeded my expectations both in terms of its historical content and its material exemplars of each of the course's historical-cum-geographical lessons. This course is truly representative of the implicit argument of all of RBS's courses: that you can't understand the history unless you are working directly with material artifacts. Obviously, the artifacts were especially impressive in this case because of the host institution.
5. Yes.
6. Yes, absolutely, and more! PT and the guest instructors were all wonderful.
7. Yes, and yes!
8. Beyond exception, yes. PT's knowledge went well beyond what the basic requirements of the course were. This was as fine a teaching experience as I have had.
9. Yes.

10. Yes!
11. Yes, he did. I learned more than I had hoped for.
12. Yes.

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

1. In my own study of the Bible and ancient world.
2. I will continue my independent research and collaborative projects with my colleague and, hopefully, turn these ventures into a Ph.D. within the next few years.
3. As above, I will be exploring related material in our special collections and likely presenting on some of this within the library. I'm also keen to continue expanding my knowledge through further RBS courses.
4. I will immediately *translate* course content into multiple courses that I teach on the ancient world. I also see applications in future scholarly pursuits. In an ideal world, I would return to the Bodleian in a few years to revisit some of the materials that we reviewed.
5. Yes.
6. These new skills will benefit my dissertation research, future teaching, and any future book-related career I may have!
7. The manuscripts have inspired me to jump back into my calligraphy practice.
8. Continue to understand how the printed book defined interpretations of the Bible and the search for the in-text.
9. I would be interested in working with Medieval Manuscripts in my job and feel equipped to do so after this course.
10. The knowledge I have gained has given me a much stranger understanding of how different copies of the Bible from across time and geography relate to each other
11. To teach college students and the community.
12. I will incorporate this new knowledge into my own research and teaching.

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

1. Faculty members at any stage of their careers.
2. Art historians, curators, instructors.
3. Anyone with interest in the subject!
4. All the usual RBS suspects. But it also occurred to me this week that scholars in religious studies (which as far as I can tell is not a field from which RBS normally draws) would likely benefit tremendously from this experience. I plan to advertise the course to friends and colleagues in that world.
5. The curious.

6. Anyone who might encounter manuscript versions of the Bible, or who is interested in the history of Biblical transmission.
7. Anyone involved in the book world.
8. Anyone with a basic Christian education and an interest in the interpretation of the Bible and how it came to be developed
9. Someone who really loves rare books and special collections. Someone who is getting a degree on this topic.
10. Someone studying Biblical texts from this period.
11. Academic librarians who work with rare books and archivists.
12. Scholars of history, religion, book history, culture/arts. Of course, rare book cataloguers and librarians could use this course.

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. The document show-and-tells and tours of the Oxford libraries. The stuff we could only get by coming to Oxford.
2. Every day PT provided us with the opportunities to interact with the Bibles he had spent the morning educating us about. It made the experience exponentially richer and was such a pleasure.
3. The mechanics, misadventures, and possibilities of Biblical translation stand out! As well as learning about pre-Reformation vernacular translations. Much of this was new to me. Being able to see such so many treasures in the flesh felt the privilege of a lifetime.
4. How could I possibly pick? Verily, verily, I say unto you: The course consisted of one aha moment after another. I feel quite confident that my classmates would say the same thing.
5. {no response}
6. The ability of identify the introductory materials of the medieval Bibles that are so visually familiar to me. Life-changing!
7. Learning about how there are many myths surrounding the Bible that were a result of Protestant propaganda.
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. Seeing some of the treasures of the Bodleian's collection up close!
11. The most powerful educational moment is how the Bible was an important book during that time and how it's teachings and influence spread in different parts of the world.
12. {no response}

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

1. Class schedule kept bouncing around. Come up with a schedule and stick to it.
2. Only if it could be longer!
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. N/A. Even when we ran late, it was so, so worth it, and I wouldn't give up any of the content for the world.
7. More tours of other libraries and perhaps more handouts with visual components.
8. None that I can think of.
9. I wish we had more down time in the day. This course was not accessible for people like me with disabilities/chronic health issues.
10. More tours?
11. No.
12. {no response}

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. 10
6. 10
7. 10
8. 10. Absolutely! Yes, I would strongly recommend this course to others. This is a 10!
9. 7. My institution paid. I would not spend my own \$ on this.
10. 10
11. 10
12. 10. Loved every day.

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. Absolutely. The old library and Merton library tours were highlights.
2. Yes, absolutely.
3. Absolutely! I loved the addition of our guest lecturers and field trips.
4. Yes! I had not anticipated that we would entertain so many area experts (or get to visit the Oxyrhynchus Papyri lab), so this was a pleasant and very welcome

surprise. It is also a reflection of the course subject: no one knows everything about the transmission of the Bible. It takes an academical village.

5. {no response}
6. Yes—we made multiple field trips and had numerous guest speakers, and each one was a revelation.
7. Absolutely! The trip to the papyri library was great! Also, all of the guest speakers were fantastic.
8. Each of the three field trips greatly enhanced the course.
9. The guest lectures with expertise on the topic enhanced my learning. End of day field trips were exhausting.
10. Yes! PT was fantastic but it was amazing to also hear from experts in other fields—so much expertise!
11. Yes.
12. Yes. PT brought in guest experts to show us the texts. I didn't do the tours, &c. because I live/study in Oxford, but if I did, I probably would have loved it.

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

1. {no response}
2. Not to be missed! It was informative, fascinating, and so much fun. PT is a wonderful teacher, and the materials were breathtaking to behold.
3. Take it! You won't regret it.
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. Do it!
7. Make sure to bring a large enough notebook to take lots and lots of notes. So many good things to record.
8. {no response}
9. I would not recommend RBS to someone considering a library or religious studies (in this case) education. Only someone who is deep into the work and already passionate.
10. No.
11. Take a course that will be useful for you in the future.
12. {no response}

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

1. Oxford is the place to study the Bible and PT is the ideal instructor!
2. More, please!
3. Outstanding, an unforgettable experience!

4. Blessed are the students of H-195, for they will be shown marvels.
5. {no response}
6. Glorious, inspiring. A perfect week.
7. Lovely!
8. Exceptional in every way!
9. Learned a lot. Grateful for the experience. Clarified this is not the career for me.
10. RBS at the Bodleian is a match made in library/book history heaven. I hope for many more years to come!
11. It's worth it!
12. This is one of the best courses RBS has offered. It was an incredible overview of the material by the most learned experts.