

MAR 14 2007

2006-2007 Curriculum Development Grant Application

Name Chuck Springwood Year of tenure-track appointment 1996

Type of Grant Sought:
 Individual


Group – please list additional member(s)

Course(s): Arth 270 – Cultural Truths and Ethical Universals

Please complete the following checklist by placing a check mark against each item to ensure that your application is complete. Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant without further consideration.

- 1. Narrative (Not to exceed 3 pages, single space, Times Roman 12 point)
- 2. CD Budget Page
- 3. CD Grant Supervisor's Form

If your proposal is funded, would you be willing for the Mellon Center to use it as an exemplary submission in the online *Handbook*? Yes No

Signature  Date 13 March 2007

Curriculum Development Grant Budget

1. Estimated expenses (make sure to include a description of each of the expenses in the 2-3 page narrative). If you are requesting books or videos, please provide titles and approximate costs.

Item	Amount
<u>Morality and Cultural Differences</u>	<u>27.50</u>
<u>Interpretation, Relativism, ...</u>	<u>10.00</u>
<u>Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk</u>	<u>40.00</u>
<u>The Limits of Multiculturalism</u>	<u>25.00</u>
<u>Fieldwork in Familiar Places</u>	<u>25.00</u>
<u>Moral Relativism: A Reader</u>	<u>57.00</u>
<u>Others listed in appendix</u>	<u> </u>
Total	<u>\$ 250.50</u>

2. Stipend requested (see above text for specific requirements):

Name	Amount
<u>G. Springwood</u>	<u>\$ 1,749.50</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Total	<u> </u>

3. Total amount requested: \$2000.00

“Cultural Truths and Ethical Universals” A Curriculum Development Grant Proposal

Summary

Based on our assessment of the IWU anthropology curriculum, my disciplinary colleague and department chair, Rebecca Gearhart, and I agree that our program currently lacks a mid-level offering focused on the cross-cultural analysis of values. As such, I will be offering such a course for the first time in the spring semester of 2008, Anth 270 [Cultural Truths and Ethical Universals]. In the fall of 2007, I will be submitting a proposal seeking Analysis of Values (AV) general education credit for this new course. It is our ultimate intention to seek a permanent course number (rather than a special topics rubric) after it is taught once. We are confident that this course may help us to, in part, address some of the campus-wide concerns about enhancing engagement with writing, reading, and critical thinking during the middle portion of the curriculum.

Anticipated catalogue description: Anth 270: Cultural Truths & Ethical Universals

Using case studies from cultures around the globe, students are introduced to the concept of "cultural relativism" and the debates surrounding this argument. Cultural relativism will be compared to other traditions of relativist thought as well as to opposing anthropological approaches, such as the search for cross-cultural universals. Topics will include female "circumcision," the incest taboo, and the death penalty. Ideal for second year students

Course Content

In the first part of the course, students will be introduced to some early 1920s and 1930s anthropological writings in order to understand the emergence of cultural relativism as a commonly cited disciplinary doctrine, or a commitment to the notion that all cultural practices and values are equally valid and must be understood in their unique social contexts. Champions of this approach included Franz Boas and Margaret Mead. Students will also consider other versions of cultural relativism, including the notion that cultural differences are primary and that culture – more than all else – determines the shape of human existence. This contrasts with another trend within anthropology, a search for common universals that underlie cross-cultural variation and unite the human species, an approach advocated by Clyde Kluckhohn.

The second part of the course centers on a number of ethnographic case studies that highlight the ethical and cultural conundrums of both “distant” and not so distant value systems, including vastly different ways of defining incest; polygamy; female genital “modification;” Inuit infanticide; Makah whale hunting; Wari cannibalism; Ilongot “headhunting;” Japanese “co-sleeping;” and dog and horse-meat consumption in Asia and the United States. Students will begin to formulate interpretations of and ethical positions regarding these diverse, often challenging positions. Students will be expected to gain broad knowledge of several theoretical and philosophical arguments about cultural, ethical, and moral relativism, human rights, indigenous tradition, as well as debates about the existence of normative and universal values, in order to be able to critically apply those ideas in analyzing actual cultural practices from across the globe.

The final portion of the course requires students to begin to integrate a maturing command of philosophical ideas and positions with their own analyses of idiomatic practices

and controversies. In other words, they will be working to refine their ability to argue a point of view with respect to the rightness or wrongness of human action and belief, both within their own society and with more far flung areas of the globe. My general pedagogical interest is in fostering students' engagement with argumentation and critical thinking by asking them to analyze positions staked out in various texts.

Finally, through participation in these philosophical debates and analyses of particular cultural practices, students will – ideally – develop a much clearer understanding of anthropology's hallmark concept, *culture*. The use of this term has grown increasingly common, in both popular, political, and scholarly parlance, and students often lack a refined appreciation for how social scientists apply this idea. For example, students will need to develop an answer to the question of whether or not Nazi atrocities and the Holocaust were "caused" by German "culture." In order to engage such a question, students must rigorously attend to the complex boundaries that circumscribe the possible range of meanings of this increasingly ubiquitous idea.

Assignments

It is this aspect of the course that is currently the most underdeveloped and, thus, will demand the majority of my efforts during the summer and autumn. For now, I anticipate the development of a series of short to medium length writing assignments requiring students to clearly articulate a position on any number of cross-cultural controversies, such a female genital "modification," for example. While developing a position and a supporting argument will of course be paramount, for this class, I think it is also essential that students think and write in the context of self-exploration. Since the course content, in terms of readings and films, will serve to continually introduce students to the experiences and subjectivities of cultural others, the course is poised to become a collaborative space where students contemplate their own worlds in relation to others' worlds.

In order for this sort of classroom experience to emerge, then, I will need to foster student participation, via small group discussion, debate, conversation with guest speakers, and directed problem solving exercises. For this latter example, what I envision more specifically, is a series of group exercises in which students attempt to "solve" a cultural dilemma, or develop a culturally-sensitive intervention for a problem I pose to them. To offer a specific example, a group of four students assumes the role of a cultural resource intervention team hired to mediate tensions between federal and international representatives of the Whaling Commission and Makah Nation members wishing to hunt a whale on the northwest Pacific coast, as their tribal tradition demands. The job of the student group would be to design a framework for effective mutual dialogue between these opposing camps and, possibly, identify a cultural and ethical solution.

In a variety of ways, this class may seem very much like a Gateway course. In many ways, indeed it is, but in other ways it is different. I will be attempting to foreground the writing experience for students in this course, but in a way that likely falls below the threshold of writing instruction typical of a Gateway and perhaps even below that of a writing intensive course. The content and goals of the class are embedded deeply within the disciplinary idioms and tensions of anthropology. It will allow us to make more explicit, within the framework of our modest IWU curriculum, the anthropological stake in ethical examinations of belief and value systems.

How the Grant Will Assist in the Development of the Course

My ability to teach this course well will turn on my preparation over the next six to seven months. At present, I lack a refined knowledge of formal philosophical approaches to normative values and moral, logical reasoning. This will be particularly important in developing the Analysis of Values framework of the course. In addition, I will need to retrace the origins and history of the concept of cultural relativism, beginning with monographs in the late 19th century and the writing of Franz Boas in the early 20th century, in order to refresh my memory. Finally, I plan to spend a great deal of time conceptualizing writing assignments and class projects that *work*, in terms especially of advancing students' writing and argumentation skills in the context of a critical cross-cultural examination of value systems and belief. As such, this grant will allow me to purchase a number of canonical texts for study as well as afford me the luxury of time for reflection and course planning.

Appendix

Materials to purchase for my personal use in developing course lectures and discussions:

Cook, John. (2006). Morality and Cultural Differences. Oxford. [\$27.50]

Krausz, Michael and Richard Shusterman. (1999). Interpretation, Relativism, and the Metaphysics of Culture: Themes in the Philosophy of Joseph Margolis. Humanity Books. [\$10.00]

Mamdani, Mahmood. (2000). Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk: Comparative Essays on the Politics of Rights and Culture. Palgrave. [\$40.00]

Michaelsen, Scott. (1999). The Limits of Multiculturalism: Interrogating the Origins of American Anthropology. U. Minnesota Press. [\$25.00]

Moody-Adams, Michele. (1997). Fieldwork in Familiar Places: Morality, Culture, and Philosophy. Harvard University Press. [\$25.00]

Moser, Paul K. and Thomas Carson. (2001). Moral Relativism: A Reader. Oxford. [\$57.00]

Norris, Christopher. (1997). Against Relativism. Oxford. [33.00]

Rosaldo, Renato. (1993). Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis. Beacon. [\$20.00]

Sullivan, Robert. (2002). A Whale Hunt: How a Native-American Village Did What No One Thought It Could. Scribner. [\$13.00]