

April 29, 2016

To: LARC Program Committee

From: Prof. Ann M. Nicgorski, Department of Art History

Re: LARC Curricular Innovation Application (Inquiry-Based Module)

With this memo, I am applying for a LARC Curricular Innovation Grant to support the development of an Inquiry-Based Module in my Fall 2016 College Colloquium. I am introducing a new colloquium topic this fall entitled "Portraits and Portrait Stories," and the preliminary description is as follows:

Today's obsessions with selfies and individual representations in the visual arts and media is but the latest manifestation of the historical genre of portraiture, a distinct phenomenon in art that is especially sensitive to changes in the perceived nature of the individual in society. But what exactly is a portrait? And why are such images so gripping and, at times, unsettling? What is the nature and source of their particular power? This colloquium will address these questions through the study of concepts of representation in the visual arts, theories of portraiture through the ages, and a broad range of images from various periods and places, including paintings, sculptures, prints, cartoons, postage stamps, coins, medals, documents, photographs, and films. We will also read and discuss a number of portrait stories and novels, such as Nikolai Gogol's "The Portrait" (1835), Edgar Allen Poe's "The Oval Portrait" (1842), and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). These stories explore the subjectivities of sitter, artist, and viewer in relation to portraits that are shaped by special interests, power relations, gender, and class. Stories such as these also reveal the ways in which portraits can problematize the very act of seeing as well as the way subjectivity is constructed in the field of vision.

In conjunction with this topic, I am planning to develop a group research project in which each of the students will be assigned a monumental or publicly exhibited portrait statue or painting of a famous individual in Oregon's history to investigate. About half of the assigned portraits will be right here in Salem, including portraits of governors in the State Capitol Building, such as Henk Pander's portrait of Tom McCall (1982), or the two monumental bronze statues on the Capitol grounds of Jason Lee and John McLoughlin (1953), replicas of the statues that represent Oregon in the National Statuary Hall Collection in the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. The other half of the assigned portraits will be in Portland, and a fieldtrip will be arranged (in conjunction with the Department of Art History's fall field trip, which will take place on a Saturday in September) for the class to go see them in person. These will include works like Alice Cooper's monumental bronze statue of Sacagawea in Washington Park (1905) or Rip Caswell's bronze bust of James DePreist (2003) on view in the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall. In selecting the portraits for this project, I will be seeking to represent diverse individuals and moments in time, as well as different kinds of portraits, which will raise a variety of interesting historical, hermeneutic, and ethical issues for students to explore in a series of carefully scaffolded research and writing assignments, informed by their classroom study of relevant concepts of representation and theories of portraiture as well as audience reception. The project will culminate with an online guide, designed, written, and illustrated by the students, which will provide information about the sitters, the artists (many of whom will be well-known Oregon artists, such as Henk Pander and Rip Caswell, whose papers reside in the Pacific Northwest Artists Archive in the Hatfield Library), the process of commissioning and producing the portrait, the portrait itself perhaps in relation to other portraits of the same individual or other portraits by the same artist, the public reception of the portrait, and any subsequent controversies related to the portrait.

My learning goals for this project include:

- 1) introducing students to basic research tools and resources available in the Hatfield Library as well as some more specialized research tools and resources available on campus (such as the Pacific Northwest Artists Archive and the Hallie Ford Museum of Art), elsewhere in Salem (such as the Willamette Heritage Center, the State Archives and Library, and the Salem Public Library), as well as Portland (such as the Portland Art Museum, and the Oregon Historical Society);
- 2) teaching students about how to organize and scaffold a research project, and the importance of starting early and planning for sufficient time to overcome unforeseen obstacles and successfully complete the project by the specified deadline;
- 3) teaching students about the important differences between finding tools, reference works, primary sources, and peer-reviewed secondary sources;
- 4) teaching students to provide appropriate historical context and relevant theory to a specific case study;
- 5) teaching students to develop a disciplined and scholarly approach to sensitive and controversial issues;
- 6) teaching students the specifics of Chicago-Style citation;
- 7) engaging students in collaborative, project-based, experiential and place-based learning.

I will develop an assessment form for students to complete at the end of the project in relation to these specific learning goals. I will also design a pre-/post- assessment exercise that I can apply to a sample of the students' early work as well as a comparable sample of the student's later work for this project and in relation to these specific learning goals.

The work plan for developing this group research project is as follows:

June 2016	Developing a list of significant, diverse, and accessible portraits for students to choose from.
July 2016	Developing scaffolded assignments, and coordinated instruction sessions for library resources, archive, museum, etc. Designing assessment instruments.
August 2016	Finalizing the syllabus and scheduling instruction sessions and field trips for the whole group to see, photograph, and discuss all of the portraits.
Aug. – Nov.	Implementation of the project in my College Colloquium class.
November	Completion of the project and the on-line guide.
December	Final report submitted.

**Budget (total \$2,500):**

\$2,000 stipend (\$500 in July; \$500 in August; \$1000 in December).

\$500 to buy students lunch on the Saturday field trip to Portland; any admission fees related to this field trip (e.g., Portland Art Museum; Oregon Historical Society); with the remainder as a contribution to the cost of the big bus, which will be largely paid for by the Department of Art History.

Thanks for your consideration of my proposal!