

Final Sabbatical Report for Professor Hugo P. Hernández
Coursework Development and Student Enhancement Project – Spring 2017
History Department – Moorpark College
Submitted February 2018

This report summarizes the sabbatical project I conducted during the spring semester 2017. I sincerely thank the Board of Trustees of the Ventura County Community College District for approving my sabbatical. Without the time and support of the District, and especially my colleagues at Moorpark College, this endeavor to gain experiential knowledge of the subject of pilgrimage and to offer unique experiences to students in a variety of history courses would not have occurred. The student experience of history at Moorpark College has been greatly enhanced in terms of opportunities for experience, and in a greater engagement in addressing issues of student equity.

Background:

Students enrolled in the history program at Moorpark College are expected “to be able to analyze how historical events, issues and human activity over time have shaped our world today.”¹ This Program Learning Outcome is linked to Moorpark College’s Institutional Learning Outcome of Awareness: “students will be aware of the diversity of human experience, the role of the natural environment, and the relationship between the two.” One major theme of the human experience throughout history that can be developed for students whether they are enrolled in a class on Western Civilization, World History, or the History of Latin America, among others, is the act of pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is defined as a journey to a shrine or sacred place.² While pilgrimages may generally have a religious connotation and value to the individual, they are products of history. Pilgrim roads have had political, economic, and cultural significance which has changed over time. As sites of significance have been established, people from disparate parts of the globe created physical and human networks to participate in a community of believers through the act of pilgrimage. Control over the sites themselves have established and reinforced structures of hierarchy to guard and maintain the integrity of the site as a fount of sacred power for believers. Culturally the act of taking time out of one’s life to pursue a spiritual journey has been understood as a humbling of the individual to the will of their god or gods, and/or religious leaders.

Purpose of Sabbatical Project

The purpose of my sabbatical project was to:

1. Research the historical importance of pilgrimage to individual identity, religious and identify and review literature on the pilgrimages from a variety of world cultures including the Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist religious traditions with an eye to descriptions of the experience of pilgrimage such as the networks of roads and cities individuals traveled through, and the various hierarchies that controlled holy sites.

¹ http://www.moorparkcollege.edu/sites/default/files/files/apply-and-enroll/catalog/mc_17-18_catalog.pdf, pg. 196.

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pilgrimage>; alternatively, it is also defined as the course of life on earth.

2. Execute the 500-mile pilgrimage to the burial site of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, by one of the three traditionally recognized modes of transportation, on foot.
3. Develop lesson plans for various experiential learning exercises to communicate and embody a variety of human experience, including on the theme of pilgrimage, in a history class.

Completed Components of the Sabbatical Project

- Research and identify literature from a variety of world cultures including the Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist religious traditions.

During my sabbatical I identified a number of readily accessible primary sources on the experience of pilgrimage, both fiction and non-fiction. The Fordham website Internet History Sourcebook Project on Travelers' Accounts is an excellent source of pilgrims' narratives across time and world regions.³ Primary sources of the Christian world included Neider Altaich's *The Great German Pilgrimage*, Ralph Glaber's *On the First Millenium*, and Pope Urban II's *Call to Crusade*.⁴ For the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, the *Codex Calixtinus* is one of the first documents to act as a guide to pilgrims.⁵ Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is a good work of fiction regarding the medieval pilgrimage to Canterbury England. An edited collection of sources by Brett Edward Whalen *Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages* presents Christian, Jewish, and Islamic sources on the act of pilgrimage to 1500 C.E. Primary sources of Buddhist pilgrimage in Japan's Shikoku province include works from the 17th to the 20th century by Takamure Itsue, Shinnen, and Nakatsuka Mohei. An excellent resource on the various religious traditions is the Internet Sacred Texts Archive.⁶ Excerpts of these works are being incorporated into my courses on world history.

- Execute the 500-mile pilgrimage to the burial site of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, by one of the three traditionally recognized modes of transportation, on foot

The execution of the five hundred mile long pilgrimage route from Roncesvalles, Spain to Santiago de Compostela, Spain was one of the primary objectives of the sabbatical. The pilgrimage is organized and certified by the Archdiocese of Santiago de Compostela. The Church recognizes pilgrims who make the journey by foot, on horseback, or by bicycle. Pilgrims carry passports which are stamped as the person travels across his or her route. In the medieval period, the most common route was the Camino Frances, or the French Way, as most European pilgrims travelled from beyond the Pyrenees Mountains. Today there are over a dozen routes throughout Spain as making the trek has become more popular.

I chose the Camino Frances due to its being particularly historical and well established. Walking the 500 miles was a humbling experience for a variety of reasons. First, I had initially planned to do the pilgrimage according to the thirty-three stages – thirty-three days – outlined in John

³ <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/IHSP-travelers.html>

⁴ <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/sbook1old.html>

⁵ <https://sites.google.com/site/caminodesantiagoproject/>

⁶ <http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>

Brierley's *A Pilgrims Guide to the Camino de Santiago*. Walking and hiking an average of fifteen miles per day is approximately seven to eight hours of movement a day. This amount of walking is quite manageable with appropriate practice and training. I spent many weekends of the fall semester hiking in the hills and valleys of Ventura County. Walking for hours on end is a tasking process as my mind began to wonder, ponder, and challenge my resolve to complete the journey. I was physically and mentally prepared to succeed on the *camino* on my own.

The second humbling experience was the inclusion of my family in the pilgrimage experience. Since the travel would take me away from home for over a month, my family came with me. The addition of my family – my wife and 18-month-old son – on this journey made the pilgrimage a more authentic experience than I anticipated. As we prepared as a family, we all prepared for the pilgrimage walking hours a day around our city of Camarillo incorporating meals and naps into our routine so as to acclimate ourselves to the rhythms of the *camino*. When we began the actual pilgrimage in Spain, the experience of always being on the move, leaving and arriving in unfamiliar hostels, pensions, and hotels was challenging for our son. Because everything was so new to him, he wanted to explore the sites, take in the sounds, and just be in the place we were at our first stops. After a few days, we as a family realized that just because one or two of us could put the miles in and complete the journey, it didn't make sense to do so to the detriment of a member of our group, our family. What had started out as a thirty-three day pilgrimage hiking through and across Northern Spain would turn into longer, more expensive, more intuitive experience. Our days of eight-hour walks turned into four-hour ones with more time spent in local, non-destination towns and villages. One hamlet we stayed in only had a population of ten and that was of the family that ran a restaurant and small hostel that most people passed through.⁷ On this more deliberate pace, we were forced to reevaluate the meaning and purpose of our pilgrimage. We adjusted our schedule to fifty days to accommodate this new reality.

The third experience of enlightenment on the pilgrimage was illness. While we had prepared physically and mentally for the pilgrimage, we had not considered getting sick. My wife and son came down with a severe cold just one week into our excursion. We stopped in the city of Leon, and hunkered down in an *albergue*, or hostel, as I cared for my wife and son. Thankfully my son physically recovered quickly, but my wife's ailments lasted for a week, forcing us to reevaluate yet again how we would make the pilgrimage and a major component of my sabbatical project work. We adjusted our travel plans and schedule, and continued the journey.

Doing the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela exposed me to the experiences of hundreds of thousands fellow human beings who travel across the world to accomplish some goal or objective they set out for themselves. I reimagined pilgrimage as not only a spiritual journey to a religiously relevant place, but as an experience defined by the individual. Immigrants to the United States, Jimi Hendrix fans making their way to the Hendrix Museum in Seattle, Washington, or London,

⁷ The hamlet is called Morgade was quaint with a family farm alongside the hostel. The family was bewildered and impressed that we brought an 18 month old on camino, as it is uncommon to see children hiking along. Since we were staying there the night, the restaurant opened for dinner to the people staying, serving the same typical Spanish food that they prepared for lunch at dinner. Since our son was still recovering from his illness he only wanted to eat pasta. The family indulged us and made him a plate of pasta and homemade pasta sauce that they also served to their children. One grandmother spoke to us, asking about our son's age and noting that her granddaughter was just a few months older than he. The grandmother mused that one day our son would make the pilgrimage and that they would meet again and fall in love.

England, children going to the towns where their parents or grandparents were born, students in an eighteen-week history course are all making some kind of journey across time and space to encounter and experience some truth. Along the way we all face obstacles planned for or not. The experience of the *camino* has made me a more engaged and compassionate instructor, more highly attuned to the issues of equity as I guide students – individually and as a cohort – through my courses, and through the community college experience.

- Develop lesson plans for various experiential learning exercises to communicate and embody a variety of human experience, including on the theme of pilgrimage, in a history class.

As part of my sabbatical I focused on developing lesson plans explicitly designed to elicit experiential responses to a variety of human experiences. The following is a list of such experiential learning exercises that I've developed and am in the process of using in the classroom.

1. Who's Got the Power – Bands, Tribes, Chiefdoms, and States
2. The Problem of Illiteracy – Power of the Written Word
3. Cross-cultural Communication – (Mis)Understanding People
4. Nomad – Sedentary Interactions – Opportunities and Costs of Production
5. Hierarchies and Elite-Building – Projections of Power
6. Great People v. Great Historical Forces
7. Imagination – The Power of Persuasion
8. Material Worlds – Difference between Agrarian and Industrial Societies
9. Status of Faith – How Hierarchy Influences Belief
10. Blood and Identity – “Scientific” Marginalization
11. World Travelers and Wise Practitioners – Pilgrims and Merchants

Benefit to Faculty Member

This sabbatical enabled me to deepen my knowledge of world cultures, especially regarding the political, economic, and social aspects pilgrimages, the ways in which pilgrimages create communities across time and space, and to develop meaningful experiential learning opportunities for students.

Benefit to Students

Students can and do read about the past through history textbooks and primary sources. Moorpark College students in my history courses are placed into situations to empathize with people in the period under study through the participation in experiential learning exercises. Students report that really like the activities. One student, reflecting on an exercise in authoritarian power, stated that “groups centralized their power by discriminating against other groups and then gaining following to also discriminate against ‘lesser’ people.” The exercise elicited empathy for marginalized groups and encouraged them to think about how this fictional exercise might actually be happening presently around them.

Benefit to College and District

Moorpark College and the Ventura County Community College District benefits from instructors whose ability to offer students unique experiences in the study of history

differentiate Moorpark College from other community college and university campuses. The experience of pilgrimage – the expected and unexpected through Moorpark College’s Multicultural Day celebration. Classes exposing students to experiential learning of the past fulfill the campus goals of providing students exposure to the values of diversity locally, nationally, and internationally. Students through their classroom discussions, attempting to solve problems faced by their ancestors further the mission of the College and District to develop their skills in critical thinking, writing, reading, speaking, and listening.

Thank you again for this opportunity to improve my teaching abilities and enrich the lives of our students.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hugo P. Hernández". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'H' and 'H'.

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“The mere imparting of information is not education.” - Carter G. Woodson