

## **Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal**

On-Site Research Project for Fall 2018

**Submitted by Kelly Peinado**

English Department

November 2017

### **Instructor's Sabbatical Leave Status:**

**Full-time hire date:** August 2000

**Previous Sabbaticals:** 0

### **Background of Sabbatical Project**

Two recent changes have especially influenced my choice of project, one made at the state and one at the local college level. First, as of January of this year, the University of California mandated a new requirement for transfer acceptance of college composition courses: it was that "at least one full-length work of significant literature will be required for college level composition courses." Before this, the majority of composition classes at Ventura College assigned only collections of essays and articles, often grouped around various themes, as the main reading assignments and basis for essay writing. From now on all instructors will additionally need to assign and develop curriculum for a full-length work of fiction or nonfiction. Every student in all 105 annual sections of 1A will read such a work, and all 25 - 30 VC instructors who regularly teach that course will be impacted.

The second event, which few outside of the English Department may be aware of, is that as of this semester, for the first time in 30 years, Ventura College no longer has a reading program. Needless to say, the need for such instruction has not ended, as the majority of our entering students historically score below college readiness on our reading assessment test. It is therefore more important than ever that our composition classes provide reading instruction and practice. Careful selection and teaching of book-length works is an important part of that effort.

### **Purpose of Sabbatical Project**

The purpose of this sabbatical project is threefold:

1. Identify and evaluate recently published book-length texts for English V01A.

2. Write an annotated bibliography for each text that makes the cut, including a summary and an analysis of the merits of its inclusion in the classroom.
3. Develop teaching guides, including lists of media resources, for a subset of these books to share with other faculty.

## **Components of Sabbatical Project**

### **1. Identify and evaluate books**

My methods will include:

- Limiting my search to books published in the last 10 years. This is because I, and most English instructors, are well aware of excellent classic literature and books that have had a decade or more to rise to acclaim. Instructors appreciate advice on more recent, less well-established selections, and I believe that students find contemporary books more relevant and engaging.
- Surveying colleagues in English and other disciplines for their recommendations
- Seeking recommendations from other educators in NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) Discussion Forums
- Researching One Book and freshman summer reading choices at colleges and public libraries across the country
- Researching freshman composition syllabi in the Cal State and U.C. campuses through the Open Syllabus Project ([opensyllabus.org](http://opensyllabus.org)).

Books will be evaluated on their likely appeal/relevance to our student body and on their potential to stimulate discussion and a variety of writing assignments. Books on a broad variety of topics and themes will be included, focusing especially on those relevant to our multicultural society in the present day. I will also favor books that are available as paperbacks to keep costs down.

### **2. Write an annotated bibliography on the recommended texts**

For books that I recommend, I will provide a book summary, a brief background on the author, and an explanation of why the book would make an outstanding 1A choice, including its potential to generate writing and research assignments. I will also order copies of each recommended book for the college library holdings.

**3. Develop teaching guides and identify multimedia resources for a short list of the best books, to be shared with other faculty.**

Developing multi-week lesson plans, including discussion questions, essay topics, and video and audio resources, is obviously time consuming for our English faculty, the great majority of whom are adjuncts, and some of whom are hired days before classes begin. Having ready-to-use curriculum, which can be modified as desired, will make it much easier for faculty to adopt new books in their classes. I will share these teaching guides on our departmental Canvas site for all to access.

**Value of Sabbatical Project to Ventura College and District**

Potentially, every student and every professor at Ventura College will benefit. That is because every student at Ventura College must take English 1A as part of their college education, and a better English 1A will produce better readers and writers who will carry those skills to other courses. Students will be better prepared to read the required texts (monographs, primary sources, etc.) in their other classes at Ventura College.

The 25 - 30 English faculty who regularly teach V01A will teach benefit from the book recommendations I produce and the teaching guides I create and share on Canvas. (Materials shared on the Canvas Commons are available to the whole VCCCD district.) The broader campus community might benefit from attending a professional development session I will offer on strategies for effectively teaching book length works in any discipline. Finally, I will share the results of my project with the One Book, One Campus committee to help in future selections—and, armed with so many ideas, I will most likely join the committee myself.

**Value of Sabbatical Project to Ventura College Students**

Great books can be life changing. When students engage with great literature, their thinking skills, world views, and confidence in reading grow tremendously and can be applied to all their studies. They will also be better prepared for the coursework they will encounter if they transfer, and will be able to apply the reading strategies they learn to any text they are assigned. I would also add that the sheer number of students who might benefit from an excellent book selection is very high; at 105 sections offered in a calendar year, multiplied by 27 students per section, that is 2,835 students. If this list is useful for five years, that comes to 14, 175 students—and I think it will be useful for longer.

### **Value of Sabbatical Project to the Instructor**

This project will be immensely valuable to me by bringing me up to date on the most relevant, engaging, and impactful literature possible to offer our students. It will enrich not only my English 1A classes, but my English 1B and literature courses. It will grant me the luxury of time to read far and wide to become a wiser and more current instructor.

Thank you to the committee for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Peinado  
Professor of English