

Sabbatical Leave Proposal

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Proposal Date: November 2015
Proposed Leave Timeline: Academic Year 2016-2017
Previous Sabbaticals: Zero
Seniority of Service: August 2010
Planned Continued Service: Retirement 2040

Overview of Sabbatical Project:

I am proposing a year-long sabbatical to:

1. Research and execute at least one excursion to a pilgrimage site. Options include the burial site of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain; the burial site of the Sufi mystic Rumi in Konya, Turkey; the Shinto-Buddhist complex in Kumano Kodo, Japan; the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, Mexico; the Inca archeological site Machu Picchu, Peru.
2. Identify primary sources and create unique secondary source texts and media, such as first person video, and experiential exercises to communicate the human experience of pilgrimage as a historical construct in world history.

Background:

Students enrolled in the history program at Moorpark College are expected through one of the department's Program Learning Outcomes "to be able to analyze how historical events, issues and human activity over time have shaped our world today." 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.¹ 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.

Students enrolled in history courses are often interested in religion either as believers in a faith, or as atheists bewildered by the power of belief. As a historian, it is challenging to communicate to students through texts the power of experience as a basis of knowledge. Teaching through

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pilgrimage>; alternatively, it is also defined as the course of life on earth.

experiential learning in history courses is one way in which historians are increasingly seeking to make history come alive. Professor Anthony Barbieri-Low at the University of California, Santa Barbara, experimented with exercises such as digging a canal to store water at Campus Point, and oracle bone divination in his world history course during Summer Session B 2015. Students remarked that the course “was the most memorable class of their entire time here at UCSB, and nothing like any history class they had ever taken.”²

Discussions with faculty teaching world history at Moorpark College, such as professor Patty Colman, have resulted in an interest in developing a module of curriculum with pilgrimage as theme applicable to major and minor world cultures throughout history. The materials and pedagogy developed with the theme of pilgrimage in mind will benefit faculty and students in addition to traditional resources by highlighting not only the religious components of the act, but the political and cultural components as well.³

Proposal:

Since researching and developing experiential learning materials is labor intensive I propose over the course of one academic year the following activities:

1. 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. Select texts appropriate for use in the classroom.
 - a. Timeline: Eight Weeks
2. Investigate methodologies for teaching through experiential learning exercises by identifying history faculty at regional universities and community colleges that engage in experiential learning exercises such as professors Barbieri-Low at UCSB and Stephen Morillo at Wabash College.
 - a. Timeline: Four Weeks
3. Select and execute a pilgrimage to one or more of the sites identified in the list above. Record in a journal the political, economic, and social experience as a pilgrim in the 21st century. Record images and video of the journey.
 - a. Timeline: Twelve Weeks
4. Develop materials – text, photographic, and video – of the pilgrimage for use in the course. Develop lesson plans for various experiential learning exercises in history classes including the theme of pilgrimage. Prepare a presentation and workshop on teaching through experiences for history faculty. Twelve Weeks

Dissemination and Implementation:

I plan to use the materials produced in my teaching of World History and History of Latin America courses. I also plan to make them available to my colleagues in the history department who teach World History and Western Civilization at Moorpark College, as well as with faculty

² <http://www.history.ucsb.edu/news/2015/10/ancient-chinese-historian-anthony-barbieri-low-experiments-with-innovative-teaching-techniques-during-summer-session-b>

³ The very political nature of pilgrimages is highlighted by the recent attempt by the bishops of Uruguay to encourage the country’s Catholics to travel to the city of Florida to venerate “Our Lady of the 33” referencing the thirty-three Uruguayans who led the movement for independence in 1825 CE.

at regional institutions. These materials and pedagogy will be the focus of flex week presentations for Fall 2017. As a member of the World History Association, I will present my research at the 26th Annual Conference in 2017.

Benefit to Faculty Member:

This sabbatical leave will enable 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:

World History and Western Civilization courses serve approximately 1050 students per semester. The concept of analyzing human activity and how students today can relate to the people of the past is challenging. Students benefit deeply by learning through experience. Two key concepts I introduce in my world history courses are hierarchy and the power of literacy. In week six I give a brief lecture on literacy as a defining difference between elites and commoners. I break the class into small groups and have them analyze using of Ban Zhao's *Lessons for Women* to highlight the difference between elite and common perspectives. I choose one person from each group to be the note-taker for the group and call them to the front, away from the groups. I inform them that we are role-playing and that I am their leader and that they are acting as scribes in my employ. I tell them they are to record the groups thoughts on what was important in the document. They should not coach the group one way or another. They are simply my humble bureaucrats. But since they are the scribes, and therefore literate elites, when they come to the front to present the groups' findings, they should answer "History is the best model of right relationships between men and women." This should not be the group answer but the elite answer since they want to appease me as the class leader and not their fellow classmates modeling the dynamic of hierarchical cultures. In each of the past three semesters students, upon reflecting on the course over the semester have remarked that they enjoyed that class immensely because they experienced what it might have been like to be an elite with power, or a powerless commoner. Developing classroom experiences such as these is labor intensive and time consuming. Certainly students can and do read about the power of literacy and the powerlessness of the common person, but it is these kinds of exercises that bring history to life for students.

Benefit to College and District:

Moorpark College and the Ventura County Community College District will benefit 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 would also be shared through Moorpark College's Multicultural Day celebration every April. Classes exposing students to experiential learning of the past, particularly that of pilgrimages, will 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 will further the mission of the College and District to develop their Skills in critical thinking, writing, reading, speaking, and listening.

Feasibility of Implementation:

I will present the outcomes of my sabbatical leave to my colleagues in the history department and the college community at large during Flex Week 2017. I will be available to coach and guide historians and other instructors throughout the semester and the years to come. The full-time history faculty has been supportive and encouraging of my pursuit of more meaningful classroom experiences. They share in my enthusiasm for continuous innovation in teaching. While lectures do communicate content effectively, exercises emphasizing experience provide students the opportunity to become aware of the diversity of the human experience.

No additional funding is required.