

Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal

John Guelcher

Department English

Ventura College

October 31, 2022

Instructor's Sabbatical Leave Status

Full Time Hire Date: August 2012

Previous Sabbaticals: 0

Statement of Purpose

This sabbatical leave application is for Fall. I propose to use this time to complete two Creative Writing courses from UCLA Extension (Novel 4 [Writing X 411.4] and Dialogue and Characterization [WRITING X 462.1]). These courses follow three sections of Novel that I have already completed (Novel 1-3). The goal of this sabbatical is two-fold. First it will advance my knowledge in the discipline of Creative Writing so I can contribute to the design and teaching of our Credit Certificate in Creative Writing that will be online Fall, 2024. My studies will lend themselves most specifically to: Introduction to Creative Writing (ENGL V10), Intermediate Creative Writing I and II (ENGL V11A and V11B), Introduction to Fiction (ENGL V16), and Introduction to Creative Nonfiction (ENGL V14). These courses are regularly our most popular and they are central to the certificate, yet we currently only have two full time instructors professionally qualified to teach them.

Secondly it will allow me to complete my manuscript of a novel length work of fiction, which has been a life-long goal of mine.

As with most of the subjects within the Humanities, English is adjusting to meet the needs of our students. Gone are the days when we can count on students enrolling in our classes only because they see an inherent value in writing well to succeed academically and to be more professional later in life. In the past century, that has been enough, but our relevance is no longer a given for all of our students. Creative Writing is one of the avenues that the

contemporary student has gravitated towards in our discipline. Offering more sections of our already popular class is a step toward meeting our students where they are so we can take them where they want to go.

Furthermore, curricula are stronger when varied opinions and viewpoints help form them. By having one more informed full time faculty member working with our current full time Creative Writing faculty, we have the potential of reaching more students from differing backgrounds than we currently do.

Personally, this sabbatical is necessary for me for my own development. I have already paid for three UCLA Extension writing courses and I will pay for these two myself out of pocket. The reason is that for as early as I could remember, I've wanted to write a novel length work of fiction. For a variety of reasons too long and boring to state here, I've not accomplished that feat. I have finally gotten some wind in my sails and I see the possibility of achieving that goal within my grasp. This sabbatical will push me over the finish line.

Finally, I have taught English at the college level for seventeen years, ten here at VC. Most likely, I have about seventeen more to go before I retire. I love my job here at VC more than I can say. I realize how lucky I am to work here. But since the end of Covid, I have sensed the fire burning inside smoldering a bit. I believe this time off to help me remember what it is I love English for, will help me. Also, by modeling the life of the writer for my students more convincingly, will allow me to be a more effective teacher. Quite frankly, without having a book length manuscript in my back pocket, even if it isn't published, makes me feel a bit like a fraud if I am to teach students Creative Writing.

Sabbatical Project Components

Professional development: I will pursue coursework through UCLA Extension in their Creative Writing Certificate program. These two ten week courses will be worth 3 credits each. Those coupled with three courses I have already taken will put me 2 courses away from completing their Creative Writing Certificate. More importantly, the content of the courses will provide me with material I can use when I return to VC and teach the Creative Writing classes. Currently we have two Creative Writing instructors. One has a specialty in Poetry and the other Creative Non-Fiction. I will be able to contribute expertise

in Creative Fiction, which could better round out the curriculum for our students.

Novel 4 (WRITING X 411.4) and Dialogue and Characterization (WRITING X 462.1) will take place in back to back 10 week sessions starting in August.

Release from my day to day duties on the VC campus will also allow me to regularly compose my fiction without peripheral distraction, which has been inhibiting in the past. This singular focus is also essential to keep the momentum up with my writing. Quite frankly, I can see myself finishes my manuscript without the sabbatical, but it will take at least one to one and a half more years. If I am awarded this sabbatical, this time will be cut in half.

Value of the Sabbatical Project:

To Ventura College and the Community

My research will allow us to offer a more robust selection of classes for our Credit Certificate in Creative Writing, thus welcoming more students into the fold. By teaching more students the value and beauty of self-expression through creative writing, we will help our students become better critical thinkers, which is a boon to all of our courses in all of our disciplines.

To the Instructor

The accomplishment of this life-long dream of mine will set the table for me to continue expressing myself creatively. This is an element that has been missing from my life that I think is pretty important. The time off will also help me to bounce back from a slight funk I have found myself in as I approach the midpoint of my career.

To the Student

The benefit to our students is substantial. Not only will the varied courses mentioned above be offered more widely to them, my students in my other English courses, the bread and butter courses, ENGL V01A, B, and C will reap the benefits. A renewed and reinvigorated John Guelcher will have a

positive effect on the enthusiasm that I bring to the classroom, which has a direct impact on the effectiveness of my curriculum.

To the District

The district will benefit greatly by having a robust Credit Certificate in Creative Writing. VC will be leading the way in the district in this regard.