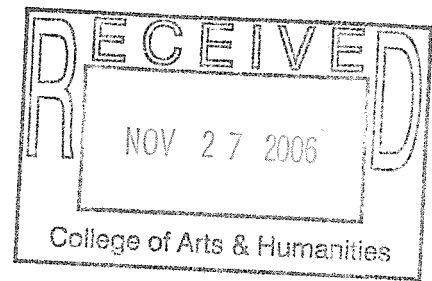


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IPESL Grant Application
(Initiative to Promote Excellence in Student Learning)
Minnesota State University, Mankato
PROPOSAL COVER PAGE



Title of Project: Leaving the Lights On: Participatory Learning and Art History

Name: Alisa Eimen

Are you full-time faculty in 2006-2007?
(fixed-term faculty are not eligible to apply) Yes No

Do you plan to return to MSU in 2007-2008? Yes No

e-mail: alisa.eimen@mnsu.edu

Campus Address: 136 Nelson Hall

Campus Phone: 389-2886

College: Arts and Humanities

Department: Art

Spring Semester Schedule:

List times when available to participate in Learning Communities and workshops.


Mondays: _____

Tuesdays: noon - 5pm

Wednesdays: 11 - 4

Thursdays: noon - 5

Fridays: _____



Signature of Applicant

 11/29/06

Signature of Department Chair/Director/Supervisor

Jane F. Earley (sac)

Signature of College Dean/Vice President

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Proposal Details

1. Project title

Leaving the Lights On: Participatory Learning and Art History

2. Purpose

Although digital images have displaced the long-standing convention of dual-slide projection in most art history courses, the discipline's pedagogy has changed little in the past several decades. Typically the lights dim and the lecturer begins with nominal regard for the variety of learners and interest levels in the room. Rather than teaching to the few who respond to the format, I seek through this project to engage all students without relinquishing rigor. By varying resources and projects, pace and instructional media, I intend to explore and develop new teaching methodologies that focus on participatory learning.

Knowledge building is a dynamic process as research continues to show. From educational assessments to research in brain sciences, it has been made clear that learning occurs through active engagement and networks of thought. This project, designed in conjunction with a course I will be teaching spring 2007, aims to develop a series of in-class assignments and activities that emphasizes critical thinking. In each case, the focus of the assignment will be to aid discipline-specific student learning by encouraging critical thinking, which I consider to be an ability to assess and examine information in relative and analytical terms. Through ongoing assessment I will be able to refine these assignments and teaching methods, which will be easily transferable to my other courses. In particular, I will implement these strategies in the annual foundational art history survey, a required course for every student in the art department. (241)

3. Project description:

In order to move away from the textbook/lecture model, this project aims to develop and utilize a variety of new instructional materials to enhance participatory learning through increased peer interaction. Throughout spring term, this implementation will be paired with ongoing assessments of the materials in order to determine both usefulness and necessary refinements.

The instructional materials will focus on developing critical reading, thinking, and writing skills, emphasizing interaction among students. To this end, I will develop a course reader that builds on the textbook by amplifying important themes, methodologies of study, and current scholarly debates. In conjunction, I will design a series of small-group activities and assignments to support each reading, ranging from discussion to research to analysis of related arts production, such as film and literature. These activities will be designed to engage students in active research, interpretation, and analysis of the positions about which we read. In other words, in addition to learning canonical information I will expect students to interrogate the material, distinguishing between fact and interpretation, recognizing analysis from perspective, and developing their own analytical responses to this material based on relational, interdisciplinary studies.

To meet this goal, formal writing assignments will focus on a series of issue-based papers that stem from our in-class work. Incorporating peer and instructor review throughout the term, these assignments are a direct component of building skills in critical thinking. Sustained exercises that allow students to assess, analyze, and revise their ideas are central to their development as critical thinkers. (249)

4. Project assessment:

Assessments will be based on two kinds of information: anonymous evaluations and student work. With regard to evaluations, the course will be designed as a series of units, each with its own goals, activities, and assignments. As I develop each unit, I also will draft an evaluation rubric. At the end of each unit, students will respond by circling applicable outcomes enabling their anonymous response. These will significantly supplement end-of-semester evaluations, providing much more material for sustained analysis. In addition, I will conduct periodic in-class assessments, enabling me to adjust the course to student learning during the semester. These include brief in-class responses to questions I pose, including one-minute summaries, spontaneous position papers, and directed paraphrasing—techniques to gauge student interest and learning. Finally, the series of writing assignments will enable me to assess their improvements in critical thinking and writing throughout the duration of the term. (146)

5. Dissemination:

The results of this project will be disseminated locally and nationally. As a member of the MSU Medievalist association, I will organize a spring colloquium that addresses creative pedagogies to move all manner of historians beyond the textbook/lecture model. Using this as a springboard, I will organize a roundtable session at my annual professional meeting in order to bring together art historians with similar pedagogical concerns. While there is currently debate about diversifying the standard art history survey course, there is little discussion of an extensive restructuring of instructional materials, which I suggest is vital to increasing the discipline's viability. (100)

6. Relation to department/university goals:

This project contributes significantly to department/university goals of improving student learning and institutional teaching. In addition to honing critical thinking skills through writing, careful reading, and discussion, this project fosters the development of art-historical pedagogy, implementing new interdisciplinary teaching methods that advance traditional ones, shifting the disciplinary model. (49)