

Proposal for ACR Curriculum Development Grant
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May 2006

1. Introduction:

- a) Goals: I plan to develop a new course, "World Literature and the Environment," this summer. The course has already received support from the Chair of Environmental Studies, Prof. Richard Reed, to count towards the minor. I shall work on the course during this summer, focusing on preparing its syllabus and determining the reading list. The texts I shall consider include works of contemporary literature from around the world and critical discussions of literature and the environment. My work, then, will involve reading, research, and discussion with colleagues here at Trinity as well as at other institutions nationally and possibly internationally. By the end of August 2006, I plan to have a proposed course syllabus and explanation ready to submit formally to our Environmental Studies Program, the minor in Comparative Literature, and to the University Curriculum Council for approval.
- b) Justification: Such a course on world literature and the environment would be a significant contribution to our minor in Environmental Studies, as there are currently only two humanities courses offered as options for the students seeking the minor (one in history titled "Seminar in United States History," and one in English titled "Seminar in American Nature Writing"). Richard Reed noted that the English class has not, to his knowledge, been taught in the recent past. Hence my course would both expand the interdisciplinary offerings of our Environmental studies program with a humanities course that directly speaks about the environment, and it will also provide a more international, indeed, global, perspective to the program (which seems so very necessary considering the fact that environmental issues know no political boundaries).

In addition, this course could also be an important contribution to the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE), of which I am a member, as all of their existing syllabi listed on their website focus exclusively on American and British Literature (see website: <http://www.asle.umn.edu/archive/syllabi/syllabi.html>). I shall submit this course on world literature and the environment to ASLE to be considered for inclusion in their syllabus archive.

Yet it is not only the curriculum in the United States that focuses almost exclusively on literature and the environment in terms of American and British texts. The new and rapidly expanding field of ecocriticism, an approach to literary studies that seeks to understand the relationship of literature and the physical environment, first developed in English departments. It still remains today primarily in the purview of American and British literature. In my own research in German literature and the environment, I find only very few colleagues in international or comparative literature working in ecocriticism. The latest publications from such founding figures in ecocriticism as Lawrence Buell call for greater attention to global perspectives and international literature even while the vast majority of scholarship resists the expansion (see his 2005 *The Future of Environmental Criticism*). Similarly, in the most recent *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* from

March 2006, Ursula Heise writes in her essay on “The changing Profession” about the great opportunities that ecocriticism provides even while noting its need to broaden its horizons and “think globally” (“The Hitchhiker’s Guide to Ecocriticism,” *PMLA* 121:2, pgs. 503-516). It is my hope that expanding the curricular options presented online by the ASLE could be at least one small step towards enriching the overall field of ecocriticism and its objects of study.

It is with this goal of a global perspective that I plan to develop this course in world literature and the environment. It shall be listed under the rubric of Comparative Literature minor (of which I am the chair here at Trinity). This course will thus supplement both the interdisciplinary minors of Environmental Studies and Comparative Literature. I currently teach the introduction to Comparative Literature course CMLT 1300 (a postcolonial perspective on literature around the world), and the full range of German language and literature courses; this proposed course, “World Literature and Environment” would be my first course directly connecting my own research on ecocriticism with my teaching.

Before I began researching ecocriticism, I was writing on literature and science (particularly early geology and the German romantics; see my curriculum vitae for list of publications). I have already taught several courses on science and literature or science and religion. The world literature and environment course would be an opportunity to combine in one interdisciplinary course my interests in world literature, science, and the environment.

- c) Match with listed Priorities: This proposal matches five of the six specifications, and, I believe, relates to the other (#2, courses in foreign countries):
- #1: It is a course in the humanities: k.) Environmental Literature;
 - #2: *** (This is not a course IN a foreign country, but it is ABOUT foreign perspectives and literature);
 - #3: It is a course that creates an interdisciplinary offering;
 - #4: It is a course that fills a demonstrable void in an existing Environmental Studies Program (see above comments);
 - #5: It is a new course that has not previously received funding (this is my first submission of a course development proposal to both the ACS and Trinity);
 - #6: I am a professor who has not previously received a grant from the CFD alliance (This is my first proposal to ACS or CFT alliance).

2. Project Description:

a) Activities:

- Primarily, I shall be seeking and reading three types of texts: 1) recent literature from around the world that speaks specifically about environmental issues, 2) texts in ecocriticism that can serve as an introduction to specific issues for the students, and hopefully some more international discussion; and 3) scientific texts (for non-scientists) helpful for understanding global environmental issues.
- I shall discuss with fellow ASLE members their courses, texts, and syllabi. I shall also try to meet with some of my colleagues in the sciences here at Trinity to gain more information about the scientific perspective on global environmental.

- b) Timetable: I plan on completing a proposed syllabus for the course by the end of this summer of 2006. This work will take six full weeks this summer; the rest of my time shall be dedicated to the research and writing of an essay on ecocriticism for publication.

I plan to submit the course in the fall to Trinity's University Curriculum Council, and to the ASLE syllabus page. I shall teach the course in the spring or fall of 2007.

- c) Budget: I am requesting a total of \$2,250 from the ACS.
- \$1750 will be a stipend for my time spent this summer.
 - \$500 will be for book expenses.

This financial support will provide me with the resources to undertake such a large summer project dedicated to the curriculum.

- d) Syllabus: This is what I shall develop; it should include literature from around the world, a text in ecocriticism, and likely a guide to international environmental issues. During my reading for the currently existing course, Introduction to Comparative Literature, I have found several novels that should be appropriate, but most of the work on finding the texts for the syllabus will be done this summer.

3. Evaluation and Dissemination:

- a) The project will be evaluated by the faculty in both interdisciplinary minors, Environmental Studies and Comparative Literature, and then submitted to the Trinity University Curriculum Council for acceptance. I will then teach the course in the spring or fall of 2007, after which the students will complete a course evaluation form. I shall also submit the syllabus to the ASLE website for possible inclusion in their archive.
- b) If approved, I would also post the syllabus on the CFD website as a possible model for other ACS courses.

4. Institutional Approval:

As chair of the minor in comparative literature, I myself approve the drafting of a proposal for a course that shall be listed as CMLT 3301. I also have sought and received approval from the chair of my department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Stephen Field, and from the chair of the minor in Environmental Studies, Richard Reed. I have forwarded the e-mail from Richard Reed to you, and have requested an email from Stephen Field. Finally, our Sponsored Research Officer, John Stillwell, has given me support and guidance on this proposal. (Please see e-mails.)

5. Disclosure Statement:

Trinity University has encouraged this proposal and has invited me to apply for any additional funds necessary to complete the project from the internal curriculum development budget. Associate Vice President Diane Smith has indicated her support for my course proposal, and noted that Trinity should be able to supplement whatever funding that I might get from the ACS, if necessary.

6. Curriculum vitae: Please see additional file.