

ACS Mellon Foundation Faculty Renewal Grants Final Report

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Institution: Centenary College of Louisiana, Shreveport, Louisiana

Project Name: Developing an Experiential, Multidisciplinary Course: The Chinese American Experience

Specific Timetable for Grant Supported Activities:

January 2009 – April 2009: Research and selection of materials for course; contact with various organizations and speakers.

June 2009 – July 2009: Research, travel, and selection of appropriate sites within USA.

August 2009: Written 2010 May Module proposal, including creation of syllabi and travel itinerary, submitted to Provost's Office, Centenary Plan Committee, and Course Review & Petitions Committee.

September 2009: Expected approval notification from College regarding proposed May Module course.

Spring 2010: Anticipated meetings of on-campus course.

May 2010: Anticipated experiential portion of trip/course.

Amount Awarded: \$6,555.00

Centenary College of Louisiana's May Module experience is "an essential component of the Centenary Experience that gives students a brief and yet in-depth exposure on topics not typically experienced in a normal semester class." As a complement (every other year sequencing) to a previously offered travel to China module (2008; offered 2009), we requested funds for the development of a May Module course investigating the Chinese American experience. The goals of this proposal were (1) to develop an experiential learning 2010 May Module for introduction to the Chinese American experience; (2) to increase the opportunities on the Centenary College of Louisiana campus for students to interact and study a different culture, specifically China/Chinese; (3) to provide the facilitators the necessary resources and contact opportunities to plan, develop, and facilitate this course offering.

Our first goal, "to develop an experiential learning 2010 May Module for introduction to the Chinese American experience," was met. Our course, *The Chinese American Experience: San Francisco and New York City Chinatowns*, is developed and ready for initial implementation. In addition to being experiential, this course is multidisciplinary (both facilitators have terminal degrees in education with Prickett's in

English Education—focus on American Lit—and Webber’s with a cognate in history—focus on U.S. History). We believe that our course, *The Chinese American Experience: San Francisco and New York City Chinatowns*, is a robust introductory course to a subculture within the U.S. which leverages both the literature and history of the Chinese American culture as a preparatory component to complement the interaction with members of the community during the travel course, itself.

This proposed course, as developed, has also met all necessary approvals for implementation. Per funding committee request, we sought and were awarded module course approval by the appropriate Course Review and Petitions committee and, subsequently, college faculty in the spring of 2009 prior to grant supported travel. After having completed all development of the course, our course was submitted for the additional merit of “intercultural credit” in August, for which The Centenary Plan committee recommended and full faculty awarded said credit this Monday, September 28, 2009. Our next step is student registration, which begins in October 2009.

We also sought to, “increase the opportunities on the Centenary College of Louisiana campus for students to interact and study a different culture, specifically China/Chinese.” Because of this newly developed course, students now have the option of studying Chinese American culture during the Spring 2010 May Module program, an offering that we believe to be the first of its kind in our school’s history. Beginning next week, the course will be “advertised” on campus through facilitator postings and personally “introduced” to students during Centenary College’s annual Module Fair. We also hope that this course may act as an impetus to encourage students to seek additional study of, and in, China; for example, we also offer travel modules to China in alternate years and are hoping to have Centenary students participate in the additional study abroad opportunities recently pursued in China by and through ACS.

Importantly, our “scouting trips” to San Francisco and New York City during the 2009 summer months did provide us as the facilitators with the necessary resources and contact opportunities to plan, develop, and facilitate a quality course offering focusing on the Chinese American culture. One of the key results of this travel was the logistical information of travelling within and around the two cities, as well as the subsequent sequencing and re-sequencing of events and places as the experiential portion of the course was being planned. Websites, phone conversations, and still pictures are no substitutes for on-the-ground experience of seeing and interacting with the logistics of travel. For example, despite an excellent website (a valuable resource), we discovered that the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) in New York City is a relatively new (in its current location), small (physical space) museum. What we might have planned as a half-day exploration visit based on its website we now realize is more realistically an hour-and-a-half visit if personally guided by a staff member.

Using MOCA, again, as an example, we do believe that MOCA is an invaluable physical place to visit; however, its greater value may be the way it bookends our course: both as the place from which we discovered our course text (which will be read prior to student travel) and as a summary of places already visited and information already

learned upon student arrival in New York City. This is because, while examining MOCA's bookshelves and talking with staff, we discovered Peter Kwong and Dušanka Mišćević's Chinese America: The Untold Story of America's Oldest Newest Community (2005), which we are now using as our primary textbook. Helen Zia calls this text "A veritable 'People's History of Chinese Americans.'" We certainly hope it inspires the same level of critical thinking for our students that Howard Zinn's work does in a college U.S. History course. In addition, though physically small, the layout of the museum provides a visual capstone of the Chinese American experience, walking visitors through migration and settlement patterns that will mimic the sequence of travel our students will take from the west coast to the east coast.

Therefore, our own brief immersion in these communities assisted us in the careful selection and sequencing of components (readings, viewings, discussions, visits, and other events) we will require of students prior to—and during—the travel course in order to meet an overarching intercultural program goal: that of experiencing their own culture in the context of the Chinese American sub-culture (instead of seeing their own culture as central to all reality). Working from Dr. Milton Bennett's model (*The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* – 1986, 1993), every effort will be made to provide students with the resources and opportunities to move from ethnocentric modes of denial, defense, and/or minimization to ethnorelative stages of acceptance, adaptation, and/or integration.

Per our initial proposal: "The success of this project will be evaluated through multiple avenues. First of all, as this proposal is for the development of a new course, the success of the students will be evaluated through a variety of assessment tools, including but not limited to, journals, research presentation, interviews, and a final reflective paper. Secondly, the course will be evaluated through anonymous student evaluations administered by the Provost's office. Finally, the intercultural nature of the course will be evaluated by Centenary College's Faculty Centenary Plan Committee and the Office of Intercultural Engagement through the administration of a student survey." Each of these evaluations and assessments, due to this project being the creation of a new course, will not be able to be administered until May 2010 (during and after the course is taught). Post-course evaluations, described above, will be available to the ACS Mellon Faculty Renewal Initiative. Please note, however, that the course, as planned, already has been evaluated/assessed by two Centenary committees (the Course Review and Petitions Committee and the Centenary Plan Committee) and the faculty at large. All three bodies have recommended and awarded our proposed program (a) course permission, (b) module status, and (c) the intercultural credit.

If we were to change anything about the development of the course and our scouting ventures, we believe it would be the following. We were working within two budgets: both that of the grant and our own personal ones for food and other miscellaneous expenses that occur when you travel and visit large cities. Because of this, we planned very tight trips. In retrospect, we would have lengthened our visit to both cities by a few days to spend additional time in the suburbs of both cities where new "Chinatowns" have and are emerging (an important component of our study is the

emphasis that the stereotyped Chinatowns are, in reality, dynamic communities whose role in Chinese American culture has shifted within the last several decades). Note: We decided to include Shreveport as our on-campus layover to talk with regional Chinese Americans between San Francisco and New York during our May Module. For this reason, we did not pursue a visit to Houston, TX as we had projected as a possibility within our grant proposal. It might also have been of value to have taken a student with us on each scouting venture to get student feedback as we planned and reflected on further development of the course proposal for August submission to The Centenary Plan committee for intercultural credit.

Though Centenary College does not have a formal department nor designated faculty for Asian and/or Chinese studies, several faculty members are interested in components of Chinese culture within their areas of expertise and are advocates for increasing opportunities for our students to experience and/or study Asian cultures, themselves. Therefore, we are among several who believe that our efforts to develop a module such as this may provide impetus from our student body for additional program development around Asian studies. In addition, we hope that this course can act as a model for other faculty interested in developing quality intercultural May Modules that support and expand our current module offerings. Developing, planning, preparing, and implementing such an experiential, travel course is viewed as a daunting task by some faculty. We believe through the publicity of receiving this grant, coupled with the faculty approval of the designed course and informal conversations with various faculty members from around campus, that more faculty may be encouraged to pursue and develop courses such as this.

Furthermore, Centenary College's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) focuses on a collective program with three components: careers, culture, and community. The culture component calls for an increase in the quality and diversity of student opportunities for intercultural study. Therefore, first and foremost, the development of this course positively supports our institution's current QEP. Additional hoped for impacts include, but are not limited to, an increase in interest on the part of students (grassroots approach) for Chinese related study opportunities and increased presence of Centenary students in student conferences such as ACS's Chinese Studies Conference.

As referenced prior in this report, no students were involved with the planning, scouting, and/or developing of the course. However, student involvement begins next week at our annual Module Fair, during which we will begin discussing the course with potential students. Once students are registered for the course (October and November 2009) and begin their study, we believe that the impact can be important in assisting students in developing both a knowledge of the Chinese American experience and a healthy intercultural sensitivity.

Our plans for dissemination still include circulation through the Chinese Studies Faculty Conference members and/or posting of final course syllabi on the ACS China Studies' Courses webpage (distributed at point of uploading course's Blackboard for registered students). Students participating in the course will be encouraged to

participate in student-led research that could be presented at the ongoing Student Research Conference on Chinese Studies. In addition, the faculty members still plan on seeking publication (such as, but not limited to, journals such as *The Journal of Multiculturalism in Education*) and presentation venues relating to the creation and implementation of the proposed May Module course. We are currently in the process of exploring our particular study of the implementation process for purposes of publication (again, with interest in the program as an avenue for realizing and/or assessing Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity). Finally, a photo essay of multiple images from Chinatowns was planned for this fall 2009. However, because the library's exhibit calendar was already booked for months in advance at time of grant award, we were unable to fulfill this proposed recognition of funding.

The following outlines the "next steps" in the evolution of *The Chinese American Experience: San Francisco and New York City Chinatowns* course. Beginning Sunday, October 4th, we will start advertising the course through a flyer-ad campaign all around campus. On Tuesday, October 6th, Centenary College's Office of Intercultural Engagement will hold the 2010 May Module Fair on campus. This event brings together all of the approved May Module courses and allows students to receive information about the Module options, to speak directly to the faculty teaching the various courses, and to begin the registration process. The deadline for registration is January 26th, 2010. Registered participants will meet as a class with their facilitators approximately once a month during the spring semester (February, March, and April) in preparation for the travel portion of the course. During these classes, readings and viewings will occur and/or be assigned, as well as discussions setting up the experiential travel piece. The course itself is scheduled from May 20th – June 2nd. As previously referenced, the course will then be evaluated post-implementation by its participants and The Centenary Plan Committee.

Please find included in this final report the financial statement of the project. Please also note that by purchasing our flights through discount sites and attending museums on free days, as possible, we were able to complete our project for less than anticipated. In addition, we had the good fortune of fuel costs dropping from time of proposal to purchase of airfare and other transportation expenditures. These factors all contributed to our ability to now return unused funds to the ACS Mellon Foundation Faculty Renewal Grants account c/o Marcia White, with hope that it will further enable other faculty proposals to be supported in the upcoming cycle. This return check is now being processed.

Summary for inclusion on the ACS Faculty Renewal website:

**Developing an Experiential, Multidisciplinary Course:
*The Chinese American Experience***

Centenary College of Louisiana's May Module experience is "an essential component of the Centenary Experience that gives students a brief and yet in-depth exposure on topics not typically experienced in a normal semester class." In addition, module courses which also satisfy intercultural objectives are an integral part of the college's Quality Enhancement Plan which focuses on experiential learning offerings supported by co-curricular offices such as our Office of Intercultural Engagement. Therefore, as a complement to an already developed and implemented China module, funds were requested and received to support the origination and development of a May Module course investigating the Chinese American experience (to be offered in alternating years with the already developed and facilitated China module). Now developed, the course has received all committee and faculty approvals at Centenary for initial implementation during May of 2010.

The specific goals of this proposal for funding support were to (1) develop an experiential learning 2010 May Module for introduction to the Chinese American experience; (2) to increase the opportunities on the Centenary College of Louisiana campus for students to interact and study a different culture, specifically China/Chinese; (3) to provide the facilitators the necessary resources and contact opportunities to plan, develop, and facilitate this course offering. Activities for the development of the course, *The Chinese American Experience: San Francisco and New York City Chinatowns* included making initial contact and consultations with Chinese American scholars, citizens, groups, and organizations in both San Francisco and New York City; the review and selection of suitable media (such as *Chinese America: The Untold Story of America's Oldest New Community* by Peter Kwong & Dušanka Mišćević; and *Becoming American: The Chinese Experience* – PBS documentary series); and a scouting visit for site selection in both San Francisco and New York City (including within the renowned Chinatowns of the city proper and the newer/emerging Chinatowns of the nearby suburbs).

Our own brief immersion in these communities as part of the development process assisted us in the careful selection and sequencing of components (readings, viewings, discussions, visits, and other events) we will require of students prior to—and during—the travel course in order to meet an overarching intercultural program goal: that of experiencing their own culture in the context of the Chinese American sub-culture (instead of seeing their own culture as central to all reality). Working from Dr. Milton Bennett's model (The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity – 1986, 1993), every effort will be made to provide students with the resources and opportunities to move from ethnocentric modes of denial, defense, and/or minimization to ethnorelative stages of acceptance, adaptation, and/or integration.

We believe that our now developed course, *The Chinese American Experience: San Francisco and New York City Chinatowns*, is a robust introductory course to a subculture within the U.S. We look forward to the implementation phase of the course pilot and the continuation of this study through focused faculty and student research and publishing opportunities. These opportunities will be more fully realized after the first complete programming cycle of the course (plan, develop, facilitate/implement, and evaluate).