

Documentary on the Life of Joan of Arc: DVD in French for use in French Classes

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1. Background: Rationale for Overall Project

I propose to make a 50-minute documentary in French on the life of Joan of Arc.

It is easy to find wonderful materials for French classes dealing with current events such as French songs, films, and news clips. It is not so easy to find ways to introduce the rich and complex history of the Middle Ages to our students. Every French department includes courses that trace French civilization from its medieval roots and seek to make the history of that period come alive for the students. One of the most exciting historical figures from that period is Joan of Arc--Jeanne d'Arc. Her short and eventful life captures the imagination of our students who are about the age she was when she emerged on the stage of French history. Almost without exception, our students have heard about Jeanne, but few know much about her beyond the fact that she heard voices and was burned at the stake.

The story of Jeanne serves as a focal point for an array of historical subjects as varied as the development of France as a nation, the evolution of the French monarchy, the legal system in the Middle Ages, the role of the church, the relationship of France and England, and the Hundred Years' War. Beyond that the legend of Joan of Arc points to the discussion of more modern themes such as nationalism, patriotism, individualism, feminism, and the use and exploitation of political icons. Her life's story is also a wonderful way to include exciting content in a course where students are working on improving their French language skills.

Many films have been devoted to her life, but most are in English and most take liberties with historical accuracy.

2. Description: Part of the Project to be Done under ACS Funding

My goal is to make a 50-minute DVD of the life of Jeanne. In addition I will make an audio CD of the speech given in honor of Jeanne at the 575th anniversary of her liberation of Orléans. The project will also include course materials and study questions on a web site.

In the spring of 2004 I went on a pilgrimage in the footsteps of Joan of Arc. Every place I went I spent considerable time and effort recording video for use in my Joan of Arc class. I want to put the best scenes together in an accurate depiction of her life for classroom use. The DVD will show her birthplace in Domrémy (the house where she was born still stands), the church where she was baptized, the crypt in Vaucouleurs where she prayed for months, the "Porte de France," views of Chinon, Sully-sur-Loire, Orléans, numerous battle sites, Reims, Saint Denis, and of course Rouen and the sites where she was tried and burned. I will include footage of historical documents (e.g. the letter she dictated to the Regent of England), illuminated manuscripts that illustrate her life, artists' renditions of her at various events, with music and voice overs to aid student comprehension of the material. Still photography introduced with the Ken Burns' effect will also be used.

One of the most visually exciting moments of my pilgrimage was the two-hour “Sound and Light Show” in Orléans on May 7. Every year since 1429 (with a short hiatus during the French Revolution) the city has celebrated Jeanne’s role in the liberation of Orléans from the English. Other scenes I have captured on film are: commemorative masses, parades, political ceremonies, the Mayor of Orléans and his speech, and footage of the young woman who was selected to reenact the role of Joan of Arc in Orléans this year.

Therefore, the ground work has already been done, and, though the actual videotaping was a lot of work, it is nothing like the task ahead that involves the editing process and the making of a final 50-minute DVD. It is for this editing process that I seek ACS funding. I also need to collect some more video footage and still photos. I hope to achieve that through friends in France, but another trip to a few sites maybe necessary to round out the project. I would especially like to get videotape of the commemorative celebration of Jeanne’s role in the coronation (le sacre) of Charles VII in Reims in July 2005.

My course on Joan of Arc is designed primarily for freshmen who have had 2 to 3 years of high school French. The French will be simple. The voiceovers will also be written out as subtitles in French. I will include sayings of Jeanne recorded at her trial that relate to various events in her life and original music composed by a friend of mine.

3. Timeline: Deliverables/Milestones for ACS Funded Part of Project

Fall 2004: I am constantly thinking of ways to present the material, but have little time for actual editing while teaching a full load. However, I am showing portions of my video to my two sections of “Joan of Arc” and getting feedback from my students.

Winter 2005: I am not teaching during our short winter term and will work on organizing the material into a story board and selecting the teaching materials to accompany the project.

Spring 2005: I hope to arrange my schedule to have one full day per week free of classes for editing in the HPCC (High Performance Computer Center) at Centre. I have edited video and burned DVD’s before and find long segments of uninterrupted editing time are far more productive than a few hours here and there. I also hope to design the web site for ancillary teaching materials during this time.

Summer 2005: Finish the editing process. Possible videotaping trip to France in July. Burn DVD’s and have finished product in hand by the middle of August.

4. Technology: Technical Requirements for the Project

I own video recording equipment and a 500GB storage device for gigabyte-hungry video projects. The HPCC at Centre has the editing software and DVD Pro for editing and burning the DVD’s. Web hosting of study materials will be on Centre’s server.

5. Other Support: Institutional and/or Outside Support for Project

Centre College helped pay for my videotaping trip last spring. In addition, Keeta Martin, the Coordinator of Instructional Technology, will serve as technical advisor.

6. Learning Outcomes: How the Project Will Enhance Teaching/Learning

The DVD documentary will give students an accessible introduction to the life of Joan of Arc based on actual sites where she lived, walked, prayed, fought, and died. Included with the DVD will be an audio CD of the Mayor's speech during the "fêtes johanniques" in Orléans, teaching materials, and study questions.

7. Curriculum: How the Project Will Be Integrated Into the Curriculum

The finished DVD will be shown to my French classes on Joan of Arc (FRE 260). There is also a segment on Jeanne in our second-year course FRE210 where the DVD could be used. In addition, the Mayor's speech will be used as a pronunciation and elocution exercise. I recorded his speech in Orléans, and subsequently was able to get the exact wording of his speech via email from his office. He has graciously agreed to let me use his speech in French classes. The French maintain that the most beautiful French is spoken in the Loire valley, and the Mayor's speech is a magnificent model of eloquence worthy of emulation. These video and audio materials can be used in any second or third-year College-level French class.

8. Assessment: How the Project Will be Evaluated

I am currently receiving positive feedback from my classes on some of the video footage. This is encouraging. Once a preliminary DVD is done, I will ask Dr. Ellen Campbell, professor emerita at Marymount College, who still teaches a course on Joan of Arc every year, to critique it and make suggestions. I will also send a copy of a preliminary DVD to Marie-Véronique Clin, author of several books on Jeanne. She is the curator of the Joan of Arc archives in Orléans and director of the Joan of Arc Museum there and was of invaluable assistance to me in the video taping process. I will ask her to give me suggestions. I will incorporate them in the finished version of the DVD. Naturally, my classes will give me formal feedback on evaluation questions and informal reactions as well.

9. Dissemination: How the Project Will Be Shared with ACS Colleagues

The finished DVD and the audio CD will be sent to each French Department in ACS schools. Supplementary materials will be made accessible on a web page hosted by the Centre College server.