

**Foundation to Promote Scholarship and Teaching
2009-2010 Awards
Abstracts**

Paul Bender, Assistant Professor of Writing Studies
“Environmental Rhetorics”

Course Release Fall 09

A perfect storm of institutional disciplinary/departmental realities offers an opportunity for developing courses that will align with the new general education outcomes, the President's commitment to the Clinton Global Initiative, and the Writing Studies Department's new Core Concentration.

For the past two years, I have been incorporating sustainability issues into WTNG 220: Critical Writing for the Professions courses. Students have addressed recycling, alternative energy, green building, and a number of other innovative programs on campus.

This course release will allow for the work that was begun in the 220 courses and develop a Special Topics course (to be offered spring or fall 2010): Environmental Rhetorics.

Loren Byrne, Assistant Professor of Biology
***“Effects of Urban Land Cover Management on Terrestrial
Biodiversity and Biogeochemical Cycling”***

Course Release Spring 10
Funding \$7,080

Although urbanized landscapes are expanding worldwide, urban ecology research remains in its infancy. However, ecological information about urbanized landscapes-especially lawns and gardens-is needed to guide their sustainable design and management. This project's main objective is to compare the biodiversity and ecosystem processes in experimental field plots of lawn, unmowed vegetation and wood and leaf mulch (i.e., garden land covers) that will be established at Mt. Hope Farm with funds from this grant. The research will provide opportunities for undergraduate research and also be used to inform the development of an urban ecology course and public outreach materials.

Margaret Case, Assistant Professor English
***“Star Wars and Culture Wars: The Discourse of Evolutionary
Biology in Battlestar Galactica”***

Course Release Spring 10

This research project places the 2003-2009 *Battlestar Galactica* (BSG) television series within a literary tradition that warns about the dangerous quest for knowledge and technology (e.g., *Genesis's* “tree of knowledge,” the *Prometheus* myth, the *Faustus* myth, Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, etc.). Even as it engages this literary tradition, however, BSG deconstructs the commonplace binary opposition between “technological” and “human”, by exploring the notion—common within evolutionary biology—that humans are “programmed DNA.” Thus, this popular television series redefines notions of humanity itself, and represents a significant shift in the 21st century “culture wars” between science and religion.

Jacqueline Cottle, Assistant Professor of Psychology
“Juror Comprehension of Judge’s Instructions: Poor Comprehension or Conceptualization?”

Course Release Fall 09 & Spring 10

There is currently a movement in some government agencies towards revising documents to reflect plain language, or language the average layperson might understand (HR3548; Redish, 1985; Mazur, 2000). While this movement has not yet reached the courtroom, there has been extensive research in social psychology that investigates the effects of clear language on an average juror’s comprehension of instructions in the legal arena. In this proposed line of research, the goal is to discover additional imitations of plain language within legal contexts, and to propose some potential solutions to poor juror comprehension.

Edward Delaney, Professor of Communications
“Journalism History/New Media”

Course Release Spring 10

The proposed project involves research into the history of journalism, specifically about the early days of modern newspapering and of three of its best-know practitioners: Horace Greeley, James Gordon Bennett, and Henry Jarvis Raymond. This work will be a creative nonfiction project that will seek to tell the story of the men and 1851 Vanity Fair cartoon called “Three Three Bedlams” and to relate it to the current shift happening in today’s journalism environment. This work is intended to be readable, accessible and artistic, as well as grounded in solid research.

Kelly Donnell, Assistant Professor of Education
“Research on Urban Teacher Learning: The Role of Contextual Factors Across the Professional Continuum”

Course Release Fall 09
Funding \$500

The field of urban education has recently come to understand that the “revolving door” of teachers is primarily an issue of retention, not recruitment. Teachers’ work conditions are critical factors in determining whether teachers leave the profession. This edited volume is a collection of theory, research, and policy that addresses how the context of urban schools impact teacher learning throughout teaching careers, from preparation to practice. The book both fills a critical gap in the literature and provides timely research to support the important decisions educational constituents will be making with regard to urban teacher learning across the professional continuum.

Elizabeth Duffy, Assistant Professor of Art
“Elizabeth Duffy: Upcoming Exhibition at the Chazen Gallery, Providence, RI”

Funding \$3,804

Prepare works of art for an upcoming two-person exhibition at the Chazen Gallery in Providence, Rhode Island. For the exhibition several recent drawings made from incised maps and circle reinforcements, and recent sculpture will be shown. Ten recent works on paper will be framed and materials (circle reinforcement labels) will be purchased to complete a sculpture in progress.

Gail Fenske, Professor of Architecture
“Skyscrapers”

Course Release Fall 09

A reference book designed to introduce the reader to visual collections within the Library of Congress documenting the skyscraper as a building type. It will feature a 5,000 word introductory essay (a history of the skyscraper, both thematic and chronological) along with the preparation of captions that precisely identify approximately 1,200 images from the collections of the Library of Congress. For the latter, I will be consulting originals as well as the Library’s online catalog.

Matthew Hedstrom, Assistant Professor of History
“Race and the Search for Religious Authenticity in Modern America”

Course Release Fall 09
Funding \$4,440

The book explores the crossing of racial boundaries for the purposes of religious exploration and enlightenment in the period from 1865 to 1975. Beginning immediately after the Civil War, American liberals began to turn toward the racial “other” as a source of spiritual authenticity as they found themselves increasingly alienated from sources of meaning in a rapidly modernizing society. In many ways intertwined with the phenomenon of “the cool” in popular culture—which since the 1920s, at least, has been heavily laden with racial voyeurism—cross-racial religious exploration has likewise entailed the simultaneous transgression of, and reinforcement of, racial boundaries, in this case as a formative component of liberal American religious practice.

Anthony Hollingsworth, Professor of Modern Languages
“Teaching Roman History to Greek Students in 4th Century Athens”

Funding \$1,500

Few classical scholars recognize the name Paeanius; even fewer have read his history of Rome. There is good reason for Paeanius’ obscurity. His history is simply a translation into Greek of a Latin history of Rome. Pedagogical interest, on the other hand, is great. For years Paeanius was the only textbook on Roman history written in Greek. With young adults in mind, the vocabulary and syntax are simple. I am requesting funding to digitize this Greek text (no digital version exists; the most recent publication dates to 1879) for publishing a reader, and for use in intermediate Greek courses.

Jason Jacobs, Assistant Professor of Foreign Languages
“Towards a New Political Geographics of the Chanson de Geste”

Course Release Fall 09

Old French epic poetry is generally considered to be nostalgic and backward-looking, and therefore apolitical. This project contributes to the study of the medieval epic and of vernacular political culture in the period more generally by unpacking the political content of a series of lesser-known epics. The representation of geography serves as an interpretive axis in this project: the epic’s overt spatialization of its formulaic narrative encodes a sophisticated negotiation of politics set within a broad European context.

Jeffrey Jenkins, Associate Professor of Criminal Justice
“Gender Equity in Independent Schools”

**Course Release Fall 09
or Spring 10**

This study examines gender differences in independent school students and faculty in the United States and Canada. The focus of this study is the extent to which male and female students and faculty differ in their views of independent schools in terms of characteristics of the school environment and relationships with others, such as comfort, equity, stress, and respect. Using a sample of nearly 20,000 ninth and twelfth grade students and almost 6,000 responses from faculty at 39 independent schools, this student explores trends in gender equity in the boarding school population over the last ten years.

Alejandro Leguizamo, Assistant Professor of Psychology
***“Offense, Victim, and Offender Characteristics of
Incarcerated Sex Offenders: Comparison of Three Ethnic Groups”***

Funding \$4,500

Little attention has been paid to multicultural issues/variables in the sex offender literature. While ethnic minorities are underrepresented in the literature, they are overrepresented in the criminal justice system; thus there is a pressing need to investigate how ethnic group membership is related to sex offending and potentially to different treatment needs. Hence, the project seeks to investigate ethnic differences in sex offender, their victims, and their offenses. A retrospective archival research design will be used and data will be collected regarding male offenders participating in a sex offender treatment program in prison in Massachusetts.

Marilyn Mair, Professor of Music
***“Brazilian Choro: Documenting Methodology;
Creating and Recording New Works”***

**Funding \$8,400
Course Release Fall 09**

Grant will support a return to Rio de Janeiro to complete four projects. The first is a bilingual book, “Brazilian Bandolim, A Method in the Choro Tradition,” which is being co-written with Dr. Paulo Sa, a Rio-based music professor and bandolimit. We have a contract for publication, and will be developing the text and recording examples for the illustrative CD. Second is a new CD, “Meu Bandolim,” I am recording with Brazilian musicians that focus on choro written for bandolim including 3 of my own compositions. I will continue to document the legendary Brazilian bandolimit, Joel Nascimento, through private study, film, and digital recording. And I am creating a series of multi-media works about Brazil, combining my recorded music, photography, and sonnets with live performance.

Bruce Marlowe, Professor of Education and
Rachel McCormack, Associate Professor of Education
“A Reading Intervention Model for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children”

**Course Release Fall 09
Course Release Spring 10**

The request is for continued funding of last year’s Foundation Grant. As noted in the first application, deaf and hard of hearing students typically graduate from high school reading between the 3rd and 4th grade level. This study will continue to evaluate the efficacy of an

innovative reading approach which consists of two different interventions employed in concert. The first, Visual Phonics, is a phonemic, gestural cueing system composed of hand cues that match the articulatory patterns of the mouth. The second is a bilingual method, which requires students to first voice (or mouth) English words while reading and then to provide a sentence-by-sentence American Sign Language translation. Initial data collection was completed in the fall and post-intervention data collection and analysis will begin in late spring or early summer.

Marcia Marston, Professor of Biology
“Genomic Analysis of a Mt. Hope Bay Myovirus, RIM-8”

Course Release Fall 09
Funding \$6,008

Viruses are one of the most abundant biological entities in coastal ecosystems. Little is known, however, about how these viruses evolve over time. In this study, the genome of a virus isolated from Mt. Hope Bay, S-RIM8, will be completely sequenced. After the viral genome is assembled and annotated, the gene sequences will be used to 1) analyze the role of horizontal gene transfer in the evolution of S-RIM8, 2) identify gene regions in S-RIM8 that are important in viral-host interactions, and 3) look for the evidence of evolution in other S-RIM8-like viruses isolated at different times from Mt. Hope Bay.

Murray McMillan, Assistant Professor of Art
“Berlin Video Installation and Thessaloniki Biennial”

Funding \$6,929

The Gillian Morris Gallery in Berlin has awarded Murray McMillan, and his collaborator Megan McMillan, a solo exhibition in Berlin to exhibit a new video installation artwork in October 2009. This proposal will provide travel (for one person), lodging, material equipment and shipping funding needed to make this art exhibition. Additionally, Murray and Megan McMillan have been invited to represent the US in the 2009 Thessaloniki Biennial. This proposal would fund a large photograph to be framed and shipped to Greece.

Koray Ozer, Assistant Professor of Mathematics
“Time-Discretization of Inhomogeneous and Semi-Linear Cauchy Problems”

Course Release Fall 09

The research aims to investigate and illustrate aptitude and efficiency of the Rational Inversion methods for the study of time-discretization procedures for inhomogeneous abstract Cauchy problems. A key ingredient in the study of the inhomogeneous Cauchy problem is the investigation of the regularity and growth properties of the convolution operator. Mild solutions of the inhomogeneous abstract Cauchy problem will be explored in two different settings; on the half-line \mathbb{R}^+ and on the sector Σ_θ . In order to be able to apply rational inversion methods, to approximate solutions of the inhomogeneous Cauchy problem, we shall need to investigate boundedness, uniform continuity and the analyticity of the convolution integral on these domains.

Susan Pasquarelli, Professor of Education

Funding \$3,500

“Passport to Change: What did study abroad do for me?”

A growing trend in the field of international education is the development of faculty-led short-term study abroad programs. A short term study abroad program, ranges from 2-6 weeks in length, and is designed to be both an academic program as well a “culture-based program where students face the emotional and intellectual challenge of direct, authentic cultural encounters” (Engle, 2008, 2). This short term model of study abroad offers flexibility and expands opportunities to students and faculty members who wish to study and work abroad, but do not have the resources or time to spend a semester or year abroad (Vande Berg, 2003). The RWU Center for Global and International Programs sponsors approximately 15 faculty led short-term study abroad programs. The purpose of this grant proposal is to fund a research study during the 2009 semester to investigate: *What are the effects of RWU short-term study abroad programs on participating students’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes?*

Judith Platania, Associate Professor of Psychology

Course Release Spring 10

“Understanding the Impact on Sentencing of Mitigation

Funding \$10,080

Testimony & Prosecutorial Misconduct”

During the sentencing phase of a capital trial, it is defense counsel’s responsibility to humanize their client. The goal is to have jurors see not merely a murderer, but a person in whom we see the moral weaknesses of humanity. This is done by presenting evidence of mitigation, offered as a consideration in favor of life imprisonment over death. Mitigating evidence comes in three basic categories. The first category pertains to information concerning the defendant’s background, history, and role in the predicate crime. The second category involves considerations of future dangerousness. The third category of mitigation evidence concerns the offender’s “character”. Although the U.S. Supreme Court has yet to define “character” in mitigation, it plays a crucial role in providing insight into the defendant’s essential social or “moral worth,” the cornerstone of the capital sentencing decision. My current research program investigates how death-qualified jurors consider evidence of character. For some jurors, character evidence will induce dissonance, an uncomfortable psychological state this is experienced when an individual engages in counter-attitudinal behavior (Festinger, 1957). This research will examine the motivating effects of reducing dissonance through the cross-examination of mitigation testimony and improper prosecutor argument during the sentencing phase of the defendant’s capital trial.

Sandra Schreffler, Associate Professor of Modern Language

Course Release Fall 09

Puerto Rican Heritage Spanish Speakers: Identity, Language, and Education”

This phase of the project will analyze the gathered data, carry out statistical analyses thereof, and reach conclusions regarding the underlying questions previously posed: Is there a single definition applicable to all those who wish to be considered a heritage speaker of Spanish? Are there traits common to all heritage Spanish speakers? If so, what are they? Who qualifies as a heritage speaker? Who determines the individual’s membership as such? This is a continuation of the project mentioned above. The data gathered in Puerto Rico during the

semester break (December 2008-January 2009) will be compared to data that will be gathered from Puerto Ricans in the continental US in order to ascertain the influence(s) attributable to the surrounding Anglo population.

Amiee Shelton, Assistant Professor of Communications

Course Release Fall 09

“Portrayals of Civic Duty and Impact on Meaning-Primary Source Research”

The meaning of civic duty and how people come to their understanding of it is explored in this paper. Specifically, what civic duty means in England and the United States between two separate and distinct demographic groups: those who lived during WWII and citizens between the ages of 18-25. How these attitudes and beliefs towards civic duty are cultivated is explored through a content analysis of internet and television news, interviews and a survey. This triangulated approach provides a context for why people may hold their ideas of civic duty, and will lead the formation of better messages to evoke civic duty in citizens.

Gary Shore, Associate Professor of Dance

Course Release Fall 09

“Nijinsky’s Room”

Funding \$7,500

This is a proposal for development funds to direct, choreograph, write and produce a performance and film piece loosely based on the life of Vaslav Nijinsky. The piece will combine video and live theatre. It will portray images of the years Nijinsky spent institutionalized while suffering from schizophrenia integrated with flashbacks from his career. It will be created with seven actors/dancers, a composer, a set designer and a filmmaker. The finished product will be performed at our own theatre on campus as well as other area theatres.

Jessica Skolnikoff, Associate Professor of Anthropology

Funding \$4,330

“Cross Cultural Youth & Activity”

Dr. Skolnikoff and Dr. MacPhee are in the preliminary stages of developing a qualitative investigation of the social and cultural contexts that shape youth dispositions toward physical activity. The study will employ the theories and methods of cultural anthropology to explore how children develop attitudes and habits related to exercise and other kinds of physical activity. We hypothesize that individuals develop long-term beliefs and behaviors about exercise based on their experiences as children. These experiences of participating in PE class, playing sports, taking dance classes, or simply playing with friends take place within broader socio-cultural contexts, in which a confluence of cultural values and meanings engage with social rules, norms and identities. One dimension of these socio-cultural contexts is the recent promotion of physical activity as a key public health strategy for preventing heart disease, diabetes mellitus, and obesity, but the high prevalence of a sedentary lifestyle in the US population suggests that other social and cultural factors present individuals with competing motivations. These factors may derive from cultural notions of the body, gender, work and play as well as social structures of friendship, competitive sports, and other leisure activities. Our study will be designed to incorporate both positive and negative dispositions toward a wide variety of physical activities and will be attentive to gender, ethnic and socioeconomic differences in the study sample. We hope to explore the sociocultural context beyond explicit beliefs, values and practices to

illuminate how exercise fits into the implicit assumptions, habits and expectations that contribute to the strategies early adolescents employ in everyday life.

Matthew Stein, Associate Professor of Engineering
“Telepresence for Laboratory Courses”

Funding \$500

This is a new research area for the proposer and the grant will fund modest equipment and provide release time for initial efforts to investigate a new and interesting area of telepresence. Distance education uses existing technology to effectively deliver conventional courses to remote participants by providing audio, video and real-time text interaction. But extending the paradigm to laboratory courses is problematic. Laboratory experiences are intended to be “hands on”. How can a participant be simultaneously remote and “hands on”? Others have made some attempts through “virtual instrumentation” and remote-controlled laboratory equipment. I propose developing both technology and courses structures that enables remote students to have a worthwhile and educational laboratory experience. A component of this technology will be a mobile robot controlled by the remote student providing laboratory telepresence. The mobile robot and resident laptop computer will not only allow the student to observe laboratory activity but will project the student’s presence into a group work environment. The target course will be ENGR 300L “Mechanics of Materials Lab.” In this course students subject metal samples (beams, bars, bolts, etc.) to various forms of loading, typically until breakage, while measuring resultant deformations. This proposal will show how these activities are particularly well suited for remote participation. This proposal will also describe the robotic hardware required to make this a reality and justify the requested equipment funds.

James Tackach, Professor of English
“May 1854: The Month That Broke the Union”

Course Release Fall 09

During my fall 08 sabbatical, I completed a 259-page draft of a manuscript titled *May 1854: The Month That Broke the Union*. The work examines the reactions of five antislavery/abolitionist authors/orators (Garrison, Thoreau, Stowe, Douglass, Lincoln) to the events of May 1854—the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which potentially opened the western territories to slavery, and the arrest and rendition of Anthony Burns, a fugitive slave, in Boston. I intend to try to publish my manuscript as a book and will use the fall 09 semester for this effort; the process will include marketing and revising the manuscript. Failing to secure a book publisher, I would revise sections of the text into critical articles.

Anne Tait, Assistant Professor of Art
“Imagery in Marble: Monuments from the 19th Century-Cemetery and Vermont Marble Co.”

Funding \$7,500

This support during my sabbatical year will allow me to present my findings on the monument arts of the nineteenth century and also to complete the artwork—woodblock prints—that is derived and inspired by the imagery from this research. This will be accomplished through presentations at the Association for Gravestone Studies and American Culture

Association conferences this spring as well as an exhibition in the marble valley of Vermont at the Carving Studio during their international *Sculpfest* in September which will combine my original woodcuts with images and content from my research of the marble monument trade.

David Taylor, Assistant Professor of Marine Biology Course Release Fall 09 & Spring 10
“Fate of Mercury Contaminants in Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island”

Mercury is a toxic environmental contaminant affecting human health, and exposure occurs mainly through dietary uptake of contaminated fish. This investigation will examine the mercury content of several fish species collected from Narragansett Bay, including bluefish, striped bass, black seabass, tautog, summer flounder, and winter flounder. These edible fish are of great economic importance, accounting for >80% of the total recreational fish harvest in RI waters. Despite the prominence of these fisheries, however, very little is known about their mercury concentrations, and thus, potential risk to human health. The analysis of toxicant levels in these fish will permit the development of empirically based models to predict and assess the relative risk these species pose to human consumers.

Brian Wysor, Assistant Professor of Biology Course Release Fall 09 & Spring 10
“Elucidating the Biodiversity of Panama’s Marine Flora”

Seeking two course releases to continue research on the biodiversity of Panama’s marine flora. This work builds on the results of a 2007-08 Foundation Award, and contributes to the activities of two separate National Science Foundation Grant Awards. The fall 2009 course release will facilitate the production and editing of photographic guides to the Caribbean marine flora of Panama following the completion of the Pan American Advanced Studies Institute in August 2009, while the spring 2010 course release will facilitate the elucidation of algal diversity through DNA Barcoding studies as part of the Biodiversity Surveys and Inventories project.

Li-Ling Yang, Assistant Professor of Education Course Release Fall 09 & Spring 10
“A Comparative Study of Science Education Standards Funding \$4,950
Elementary Science Curricula, and Elementary School
Teachers’ Use of Inquiry-Based Teaching
Practices in the U.S. and Taiwan”

The purpose of this research study is to compare what is considered most important in the U.S. and Taiwan regarding the depth and breadth of science concepts as reflected in their national science education standards, and to explore the connections between standards, science curriculum development, and teachers’ use of inquiry-based teaching practices. This project would have two components: 1) implementation of “Teaching as Inquiry: Fundamentals of Inquiry Workshops,” with online follow-up support for elementary teachers in the U.S. and Taiwan, and 2) research in the area of science education standards and curricular documents in these two countries.

Michael Yuan, Assistant Professor of CIS
***“Comparing Alternative Models of International
Copyright for Global Information Economy”***

Funding \$1,550

Copyright is the legal underpinning of the global information economy. The global information economy consists of multiple national information markets, national information industries, and national copyright authorities of different countries. The national copyright authorities interact with each other. There are alternative models of their interactions: they may compete to maximize self national interest; they may cooperate to maximize global welfare; the copyright authority of one nation may lead other nations in copyright policy. This study compares the operation of the global information economy and the welfare of different nations under the different models of international copyright. Because countries differ in size of markets for information products and in capability of creating information goods, they may differ in their preference for the different international copyright models. The result of study will have implication on what nation will or should pursue which model of international copyright.

Miao Zhao, Assistant Professor of Marketing
***“Influence of Brand Type and Time on the Advertising
Appeals Use in Chinese Commercials”***

Funding \$1,750

Advertising plays an important role in differentiating the various brands. This study analyzes commercials collected in the *IAI China's Advertising Works Yearbook* which represents excellence in advertisements and commercials throughout China on a yearly basis. The objective of this study is to explore this issue in greater detail by specifically examining the relationships between an advertised brand's country of origin and nature of advertising appeals. Moreover, the study will report our analysis of Chinese TV commercials for two time periods – 2002 and 2007 to determine whether Chinese commercials reflect a greater westernization over time.

Min Zhou, Assistant Professor of Foreign Language
“Anna Seghers's Encounters with China”

Funding \$5,447

As one of the most important and controversial German authors of the 20th century, Anna Seghers's life and work have been intensely discussed and re-evaluated after German unification. My project examines Seghers's accounts of her encounters with China, documented not only in her short stories and newspaper articles; but also in diary entries, notes and personal correspondences—unpublished works that are particularly valuable because of strict censorship in East Germany at the time. I will pursue the question of how these writings reveal Seghers's struggle with dogmatic cultural policy in East Germany and her negotiation between literature and politics.