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TLAC Conference Grant Program Application
1 November 2013

Conference: 129th Annual Modern Language Association Convention
Date: 9-12 January 2014
Location: Chicago, Illinois

Introduction

Language teaching pedagogies are constantly shifting and undergoing processes of renewal. Certainly, since I began teaching, language pedagogies have changed substantially, primarily because of the wider accessibility of computers and hand-held devices. While my language classroom remains a generally technology-free space, I would like to learn how to incorporate some aspects of technology in my language classroom in order to enhance and increase student learning. I also teach literature and culture courses, courses that generally utilize a paper textbook full of readings and information. In today's academic climate of quick access to texts, videos and music, I find myself utilizing a variety of tools to engage students in texts written years, decades or centuries ago. However, I am constantly searching for more ways to generate meaningful conversations with students so that they can synthesize the variety of information with which they are presented. Therefore, I would like to attend workshops and panels at the Modern Language Association (MLA) annual conference in January in order to improve my teaching of Spanish language, literatures and cultures.

The Modern Language Association annual conference is one of the largest gatherings of teachers and scholars in foreign languages. Although I am a frequent attendee of scholarly conferences (please see a selected list on the attached CV), the conferences I attend are discipline-specific and focus primarily on literary analyses of texts, rather than teaching. I would like to attend the MLA conference in January in order to focus on attending panels and workshops devoted to teaching modern languages, literatures and cultures.

Specifically, I plan to attend the following roundtable discussions that focus on the teaching of language, literatures and cultures:

- “Augmented Reality for Teaching and Learning in the Humanities”—Participants will be introduced to various practical ways of utilizing mobile technology in the humanities classroom. Current projects addressing language learning and literary studies will be presented.
- “Theory and Practice in International Online Classroom Collaboration: An Electronic Roundtable”—This electronic roundtable showcases international online collaboration projects. The speakers' projects come from a range of disciplines—writing, literature, and language teaching—and identify the challenges and reward of cross-cultural interaction in global classrooms.

- “Engaging Pedagogy: A Hands-On Exploration of Student-Centered Approaches to Teaching Literature”—This workshop engages participants in activities that support student-centered approaches to learning, providing a laboratory experience to explore ideas and activities before implementing them into instructional practices.

I also plan to attend the following panels:

- “Creative Thinking: Integrating the Arts into Foreign Language Teaching”
- “Setting Language Targets for Your Department”—This panel is arranged by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), an organization that our department currently looks to for assessment guidelines, and will be important as I intend to bring information back to my colleagues.
- “Raising the Bar: Academic Rigor in the Language Classroom”

Not only will the MLA conference offer a variety of panels and workshops to attend, but many book publishers will be present as well. This will give me the opportunity to preview language texts and beginning literature texts in Spanish that I can consider for my classes. I am particularly interested in previewing cultural texts and short novels in Spanish as I plan my upcoming courses SN312: Introduction to Spanish American Culture, scheduled for fall 2014, and SN429: Twentieth- and Twenty-first Century Spanish American Literature, scheduled for Winter 2015.

Interest in Teaching and Pedagogy

My interest in teaching and pedagogy extends back to the first Spanish 101 class that I taught as a graduate student. Through my travels abroad as well as discussions with colleagues, I continually develop new materials and exercises to help language, literatures and cultures come alive for my students. Additionally, I have attended the following teaching-related workshops over the years to enhance my teaching:

- “Modified Oral Proficiency Interview.” Workshop, Northern Michigan University. February 2012.
- “TPR Storytelling.” Workshop presented by Susan Gross, Northern Michigan University. April 2011.
- “ACTFL Writing Proficiency Standards.” Workshop presented by Karl Otto, Northern Michigan University. April 2010.
- “Enhancing Classroom Group Collaboration.” Teaching and Learning Advisory Council, Northern Michigan University. February 2010.
- “Implementing Group Exams.” Teaching and Learning Advisory Council, Northern Michigan University. April 2009.
- “Teaching with Writing: A Writing Pedagogy Methods Seminar.” Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing, University of Minnesota. August 2002.

In addition to attending workshops, I have also received the following grants to update and enhance courses:

- Northern Michigan University Instructional Improvement Grant (\$3000) and matching funds from a Title VI Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language (UISFL) grant (\$3000) for creating a special topics course on Argentine women writers and for enhancing current courses on Latin American literature and culture (2010).

- Northern Michigan University Wildcat Innovation Fund Grant (\$9320) to team-teach the Introduction to Gender Studies course and enhance the Gender Studies minor. Specifically, I taught a unit on gender issues in literature and culture. Co-written with Drs. Maya Sen and Ruth Watry (2009).

Sharing Information

My department is very interested in keeping apprised of developing language pedagogy (as can be seen from the list of workshops hosted by our department above). Specifically, my attendance at the panel “Setting Language Targets for Your Department” will be particularly useful since this panel is arranged by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), an organization that our department uses to set assessment and outcomes guidelines for our students. I plan to present what I learn at this panel, and others, to my colleagues at our monthly department meeting in February or March.

Funding Request and Eligibility

I am requesting \$1000 to supplement my AAUP Professional Development funds to attend the Modern Language Association conference. My primary objective is to attend workshops and panels that will help me to improve my teaching. I also plan to preview language, literature and culture texts for inclusion in my courses.

I am a full-time associate professor with continuing contract status in the Department of Modern Languages & Literatures. I teach all levels of Spanish language, literatures and cultures.

Budget

Based on already incurred expenses and searches of relevant websites, I estimate the following costs for attendance at the MLA convention in Chicago, Illinois, in January:

Conference Registration	160.00
Hotel	436.50
Airfare	360.00
Taxi	75.00
Parking at KI Sawyer	20.00
Food	128.00
Scholarly Resources Purchases (books, journals)	100.00
TOTAL	1279.50