

## **SABBATICAL LEAVE PROPOSAL**

**Allison Murray Pop**

**Please respond to the following questions on a separate sheet(s) of paper. The Sabbatical Leave Committee will use this document to evaluate and prioritize all proposals submitted. Please be as complete as possible, keeping in mind the criteria established for evaluation.**

1. Briefly state the purpose of your sabbatical leave.

In my first sabbatical, I researched world mythologies in six different countries with the intent of introducing a global perspective of the human storytelling experience to the students of LBCC. The experience was enormously rewarding to my students and to me, professionally and personally. I found myself reliving the academic experience every time I lectured in that class, and my students were so taken with the interactive lectures that many of them traveled and studied abroad as a result. One student was so enrapt with our discussions of Scottish folklore, that she spent a year studying in Scotland, ultimately marrying a Scot, and is now working professionally in Scotland. The best way to turn our students into global citizens is to give them a thorough introduction to other cultures, and mythology is an excellent vehicle.

I would like a year to do continued research in four specific countries: Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, and possibly Kenya (if the political climate is secure). I would also like to research local Native American stories, to fully establish the cultural reach of the mythology course. The first three countries have very specific and evolving literary and anthropological research. For example, when I was last in New Zealand, I met with the leader of the Auckland marae, (the center of Maori culture in a community), who told me that new DNA research had indicated ancestral links to Peru, rather than other islands in the South Pacific. I would also like to research African mythology to round out the regions of the world I present. 14% of LBCC's students claim African American descent and with the inclusion of representative African research, we could induce more African American students toward Literature studies. The inclusion of Native American myths and research responds to a growing student demand to clearly establish America's place in the pantheon of global myths.

While I am excited by the research I previously conducted, I feel that my handouts—given to the students in a pdf format—are less polished than I would like. Given the technology of the time, I scanned pages of readings from books I obtained abroad, and included introductory materials and study questions. By collecting the materials on pdf, I was able to give the file to my students free of charge. While some students have tablets and laptops to view the materials in class, others must print them out. Sadly, the pdf doesn't reproduce well. Ideally, I would like the majority of my class to be paper-free, and given the functions of Moodle, I believe we can accomplish this. During the year, I will organize my research and convert the gathered primary texts into an eBook that can be easily uploaded into Moodle, and then accessed by students online. By placing the documents in Moodle, students with laptops and tablets can access them in class, and

those who desire a hard copy can utilize that option, with superior print resolution. Furthermore, this approach allows the course to be more easily converted into an online course in the future.

2. Give all pertinent details of your proposed plan. This should include all activities, projects, research, itinerary, study, employment, expected outcomes, relationships with current coursework, etc. connected with your proposed leave.

While there is a good variety of more popular regional literature available stateside, certain literatures are specific to their native countries. I learned this throughout my prior sabbatical. During this sabbatical year, I plan to renew professional contacts at universities in Scotland and Australia, where I previously worked with the chief librarian at Lews Castle College, on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, and with the chair of Aboriginal Studies at the University of Wollongong, in New South Wales, Australia. I also plan to conduct library research at universities in New Zealand, and if resources and the political climate allow, in Kenya as well. If travel to that region isn't safe, I will conduct research at local universities that have African Studies programs.

While abroad, I will take better quality photos of significant sites to integrate into my lectures. The ones I have from my previous trips are sufficient, but I have a far better camera now, and with the improved resolution in our classroom media, higher quality photos impart a more vivid experience.

I also plan to review several current world mythology textbooks to determine if one might be a suitable substitute for my current classical mythology textbook, and to assess what comparisons those versions offer to the one I will build. Having done some initial research, I know there are few versions on the market, and each has its limitations; Salem Press has an *Introduction to World Mythology*, at the exorbitant price of \$175; other texts are limited to classical and European myths, but not other regions of the world; however, Oxford University Press has two texts that look promising: *Introduction to Mythology: Contemporary Approaches to Classical and World Myths*, and *The World Myth: An Anthology*. Both offer a broad variety of cultures as a "sampler platter," and may prove to be good choices. I've already ordered desk copies for review.

Once I've viewed the other offerings and gathered my own research, I will compile the material into chapters to be uploaded into our new online platform. With the introduction of Moodle to replace Ezone, instructors like myself were compelled to learn a new format for online grading. Moodle has far more capabilities than Ezone, but it is also significantly more complex, necessitating many hours of practice to attain fluency. The sabbatical is necessary to properly integrate my research into Moodle, so the materials can be released to the students on a week-by-week basis. And, based on recommendations from student evaluations, I'll add more study questions to guide the readings, and update my essay prompts.

3. Provide a timeline indicating how the activities in your plan will be completed within the time frame of the proposed leave.

My travel will take place from August 2015 through May 2016. I anticipate spending approximately ten days in each country doing active research. In between traveling, I will compile my research into chapters or units of study, and upload those into Moodle. During the fall 2015 term, I will review other mythology texts, and I will revise my study questions and essay prompts. During spring term, I will conclude my travel, and integrate that research into chapters with study questions. I will also update my Power Point presentations for my lectures.

4. Describe how the proposed leave will contribute to your professional development, including how it relates to your current assignment.

In a “Know Your Colleagues” session last semester, Jannie Mackay and Lynn Shaw spoke about the benefits of travel in their jobs as educators. They affirmed that travel makes us all better educators and better employees. I have long asserted that travel provides the best education a student or an educator can attain, and as I stated above, it makes us all better global citizens. In my student evaluations, the most frequent compliment I receive is in regards to my stories, which I use as teaching mechanisms. In my Mythology classes in particular, students frequently write: “her passion for the literature and her knowledge of the places” are strengths of the course, and they regularly tell me that I’ve inspired them to conquer their fears to travel the world. Since I worked in the Study Abroad office at CSULB for three years during grad school, I explain how I went about living and studying overseas. This information demystifies the process for them and empowers them to plan their own semesters abroad, when they transfer to a CSU or UC. And those who do are transformed, matured, sophisticated, less xenophobic, and more open to new experiences. Truly, this is the most rewarding part of my job.

Four years ago, I became Course Evaluation chair. During my first year in that position, I realized how valuable an Honors Addendum to English 33 would be. After writing it and seeing it through the approval process, I began teaching the Honors section, combined with my regular section. The caliber of students drawn to the course rose significantly, necessitating more researched lectures and presentations. I’ve taught the combined Honors sections for three years, and during that time many students have returned to tell me the level and quality of education they received at LBCC is better than many of the classes they have taken at UCs. This is a point of personal pride, and I credit my previous sabbatical for the quality of education I provide my Mythology students. If approved, this new sabbatical will provide refreshing material not only for Mythology, but also for each of my literature and composition classes.

5. Describe how the proposed leave will benefit the college and students.

This sabbatical will benefit the college and our students in numerous ways. As mentioned above, students are influenced by, not only what their instructors present, but also *how* they present it. At the conclusion of spring semester, a student gave me a thank you card that read, “You validated my passion and desire for traveling, and I am going to take what I learned in this class wherever I go! Ireland is first on my list. Thank you for inspiring me and feeding my wanderlust!” Hearing their professors speak about living,

studying, or exploring abroad breaks through their misconceptions and prejudices and, most of all, their fears of travel. And being a globally aware individual helps them make better choices as a local citizen. In my class, we discuss the importance of cacao both in *Popul Vuh* and within Mayan cosmology. This has led to a discussion of fair trade farming and practices, which encouraged them to question how they can act with their own dollars. In our discussion of Celtic folklore, I discuss the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland, which figures into the stories of Fynn McCool. This often leads to a discussion about the rising sea levels, which will cover the Causeway in ten years. It's both encouragement to see the site sooner, rather than "someday," as well as to think about how our human contribution to global warming affects far off places.

Ideally, all of our students would have the means to visit at least one foreign country, but realistically, we know that isn't possible. At best, .5% of all college and university students will study abroad. But literature and well-organized lectures can bring the world to their classrooms. And education alone is a wonderful and empowering passport.

The college will benefit from a class that regularly fills to capacity and serves to recruit more English majors who take advantage of the AA-T, which I regularly promote in my classes. But this research will not be limited to English 33. The material will also benefit my English 44/44H class, World Literature I, which uses some of the same references and primary texts.

6. List and describe the specific, tangible products you will bring to the college within 90 days after you return to your assignment.

Tangible products will include:

- I. An eBook with eight chapters, each including an introduction to the culture and the literature, selected readings, and pertinent study questions. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 are already largely complete, and only need revisions and to be adapted into the format.
  - A. Chapter 1—Shinto
  - B. Chapter 2—Mayan
  - C. Chapter 3—Chumash/Native American
  - D. Chapter 4—Celtic
  - E. Chapter 5—Gaelic
  - F. Chapter 6—Aborigine
  - G. Chapter 7—Maori
  - H. Chapter 8—Maasai/African
- II. Print-quality photos to compliment the chapters.
- III. An annotated bibliography including, but not limited to:

Blackburn, Thomas C. *December's Child: A Book of Chumash Oral Legends*. Berkeley:

U of California P. 1975. Print.

Campbell, John Gregorson. *The Gaelic Otherworld*. Edinburgh: Birlinn. 2005. Print.

- Carmichael, Alexander. *Carmina Gadelica: Hymns and Incantations*. Edinburgh: Floris. 2006. Print.
- Erdoes, Richard and Alfonso Ortiz, eds. *American Indian Myths and Legends*. New York: Pantheon. 1984. Print.
- Feldman, Susan, ed. *The Story-Telling Stone: Traditional Native American Myths and Tales*. New York: Laurel. 1965. Print.
- Haley, Brian D. and Larry R. Wilcoxon. "Anthropology and the Making of Chumash Tradition." *Current Anthropology* 38.5 (December 1997). 761-794. *Jstor*. Web. 23 October, 2014.
- Jung, C. G. and C. Kerényi. *Essays on a Science of Mythology: the Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis*. Trans R. F. C. Hull. New York: Princeton UP. 1969. Print.
- Lee, Raymond L. and Alistair B. Fraser. *The Rainbow Bridge: Rainbows in Art, Myth, and Science*. Penn State P. 2001. Web. 24 October, 2014.
- Leeming, David A. *The World of Myth, an Anthology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford UP: New York, 2014. Print.
- Leonard, Scott and Michael McClure. *Myth and Knowing: An Introduction to World Mythology*. McGraw-Hill: Boston, 2004. Print.
- Newcomb, Franc Johnson. *Navajo Folktales*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P: 1993. Print.
- Powell, Barry B. *Classical Myth*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Pearson: Boston, 2015. Print.
- Puhvel, Jaan. *Comparative Mythology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP. 1987. Print.
- Smith, Ron. *Mythologies of the World: A Guide to the Sources*. Urbana: NCTE. 1989.

Print.

Walker, James R. *Lakota Beliefs and Rituals*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P. 1991. Print.

IV. Throughout the fall 2015 semester, I will receive additional training on Moodle through IITS to obtain the necessary skills to upload and publish the eBook chapters. I have already discussed my needs with Wendi Lopez and will continue to consult with her throughout the project.

7.

Describe how you will share the outcomes of your proposed leave with other interested parties upon your return.

After submitting my report to the Sabbatical Committee and Board of Trustees, my students will be the primary beneficiaries of my research, in the eBook I will use in class. I also plan to make my research publically accessible to any colleagues who are interested, and if desired, I can present a Flex session for my department, as well as for the “Know Your Colleagues” series.

8. If applicable, please disclose any additional sources of employment earnings during the proposed leave.

I anticipate no other sources of income.

October 30, 2014

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Allison G. Murray Pop

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Date