

Title of Grant: American Transcendentalism Project

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Abstract:

This grant funded my participation in a week-long summer seminar sponsored by the Community College Humanities Association called “Concord, Massachusetts: Transcendentalism and Social Action in the 19th Century.” This seminar enabled me to develop a comprehensive multi-media unit on American Transcendentalism for ENG 241 as part of Black Board modules for use in face-to-face, internet, and learning community sections of the course. This unit will address literary, cultural, and historical issues and will provide a valuable resource for faculty who teach ENG 241 as well as for faculty involved in any learning community in which this area of American literature is a component. In addition, once I have developed and shared this unit with ENG and other faculty, I will lead workshops to help faculty teaching ENG 241 and 242 to develop similar multi-media modules as part of a larger project to develop units for American literature courses. I will then share this process for developing comprehensive multi-media units with faculty in other disciplines. As program head for English from 2005-2007, I established two subcommittees for Eng 241 and 242 to develop materials for a variety of units within each course to be shared with other English faculty. Because my area of literary expertise is American Transcendentalism, I volunteered to develop that unit. This week-long seminar will provided me with the opportunity and the materials to fully develop this unit and to incorporate multi-media resources that will be made available to me through this seminar. These resources include audio, visual, and internet resources. In addition, because I will be working with other community college faculty, I will have the opportunity to develop materials through collaboration. Once I have developed my unit on American Transcendentalism, I will lead workshops for other English faculty who are working on similar units for ENG 241 and 242. Finally, I will assist other disciplines to set up similar working groups to develop units for their courses. My major research questions include: 1) How do I develop a unit on American Transcendentalism for online sections of courses in ENG, HUM, and HIS that takes advantage of the online format? 2) What can I learn about the process of developing this unit that might be of use to other VCCS faculty?

Actual Outcomes:

The first stages of this project have been completed. The seminar was enormously successful and I collected materials and took numerous photographs to develop a new interactive, multi-media unit on American Transcendentalism for ENG 241. I secured photographic rights from the Concord museum and

the "Hawthorne in Salem" website to use other materials. I have also worked with Terri Whitney who developed the "Hawthorne in Salem" website, which is a product of North Shore Community College outside Boston. I visited numerous sites important to the American Transcendentalists and worked with scholars on my own research and the development of a final project for the seminar -- "American Transcendentalism in Concord: A Photographic Essay." Once completed in the fall of 2008, it will be added to the American Transcendentalism Web site maintained through VCU and will form the basis for a module on American Transcendentalism to be used in conjunction with ENG 241. In addition, I am working with another VCCS English faculty member to develop a special topics course on American Transcendentalism at two VCCS colleges simultaneously and to develop a web course on American Transcendentalism.

Other Colleges:

Three other faculty members from VCCS institutions also attended this seminar.

Discussion and Critique:

This research project worked exactly as planned. I did the required reading and participated in the NEH seminar, at the end of which I presented an outline for my photographic essay and eventual web module. I was able to network with other community college faculty and several of us have decided to take this project one step further develop an American Transcendentalism web course. I am grateful to the VCCS for this grant opportunity because as a result of this grant I was able to focus my research even before I began my reading in preparation for the seminar. Because I already had a project established as a result of the VCCS grant proposal, I was able to use my time effectively, taking photographs, networking with colleagues and scholars, and connecting with members of research and scholarly sites. As a result, this has been one of the most professionally rewarding grants I have ever undertaken.

Evaluation:

Based on the collaboration I have already engaged in with other faculty, both in the VCCS, as well as in other states, I believe this project will be enormously successful. I plan to present on this project at the college's upcoming Professional Development Day after which I will be evaluated. And I expect future evaluation from English faculty at JSRCC and from my own students. I will be teaching ENG 241 in both face-to-face and online formats in the Spring 2009 and expect feedback at that time.

Dissemination:

I have already begun to collaborate with faculty from other community colleges. Once the web module is complete later this semester, I expect to work with the English faculty at my JSRCC as we develop units for ENG 241 and 242. In the future, I hope to work with other faculty, within in English as well as in other disciplines, to help them develop similar course units, especially useful in online and learning community sections of courses. I expect my project to be developed in time to offer a session at JSRCC on Professional Development Day in November 2008 in which I will make a presentation targeted at other disciplines.