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University Center for Innovation in Teaching and Education
Allen Memorial Library Building

Application for a Nord Grant

Dear UCITE:

I write to apply for a Nord Grant to pay for assistance in selecting materials for a new course on U.S. History for international students. I have designed this course in the context of a discussion of the courses offered by the Department of History; the course has been approved by the department and is scheduled to be offered in Fall, 2014; we anticipate that this new course will be offered regularly in the future.

The international students who have become prominent among CWRU undergraduates usually come here knowing little of the U.S., of its peoples, economy, politics, or government. I know from experience that international students very often find it challenging to read English-language material that presupposes familiarity with the history of the U.S. -- with the origins of its diverse population, with its economic institutions and practices, with its politics and government. Just as U.S. students benefit from introductory courses on the history and development of nations where they go as international students, international students who come to CWRU would benefit from an introduction to U.S. history tailored to their needs and concerns. Some U.S. students may well find it very stimulating to join a class consisting largely of international students who are studying the U.S.

Because there is no available textbook or reader for a U.S. history course for international students, I am building this course from scratch. Course materials must be carefully selected and evaluated for readability and comprehensibility, and for their ability to evoke student response. I have selected many readings and other materials for the course. But the course would benefit from more work in identifying and evaluating materials, including

- Readings – classic texts, personal documents, short stories, government websites
- Maps – historic, analytical, current
- Data sets, charts and graphs
- Video and film clips and other visual materials

My plan is to ask students to write thoughtful responses to readings and other assigned materials each week, as well as to write three short essays, also based on the assigned materials, and to for me and a closely supervised teaching assistant to provide quick and detailed feedback on the quality of the students' writing, the accuracy of their comprehension, and the thoughtfulness of their comments. For this plan to work well, each reading, map, or other item must relate to other assigned items in ways that international students can comprehend with reasonable effort. Some topics will be selected for their relevance to this student population (What history knowledge is



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required for the U.S. citizenship exam – why this information? How do Americans debate this selection of knowledge? What history explains the U.S. approach to the licensing of professionals and the accreditation of schools and hospitals? How have Americans come to define the regions of the U.S. in particular ways – and is there any serious current basis to regional stereotypes? How have American notions of race and ethnicity changed over the past fifty years?). Other topics will be designed to take advantage of the students' knowledge of their home nations and regions (What do maps reveal about the growth of the U.S. and its relations with other nations? How do U.S. trends compare with those of other nations in population, economic growth, and political participation?) There are many, many possible materials for the consideration of such topics: to be successful, the course will need to select very carefully.

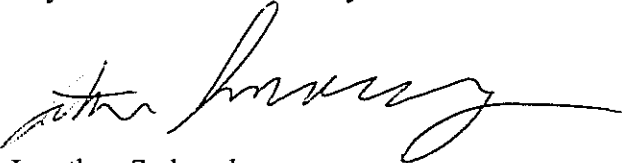
I have a good deal of experience teaching U.S. history to international students at CWRU. My international graduate students in History have gone on to permanent jobs at Oberlin College and the Educational Testing Service and elsewhere; my international students in the Masters of Nonprofit Organizations degree program offered by the former Mandel Center have played leading roles in that field in Japan, Korea, Brazil, China, Taiwan, Ghana, and South Africa. In recent years a quarter of the undergraduates in my U.S. history courses have come from overseas. I also have many years of experience in selecting readings that are both challenging and effective. My experience began many years ago with work on nationally-funded high school history courses; it has continued with the editing of the widely-used work *Making the Nonprofit Sector in the United States: A Reader*, and with other current work on materials for the study of nonprofit history and law. I tried out several of my ideas for the new course in a Sage University Seminar this spring, with a group that included several international students (learning, among other things, that students were reluctant to watch a video assigned as homework if it was more than 10 minutes long).

A current CWRU Ph.D. student who grew up and completed her M.A. in China and who has become one of our most promising graduate students in U.S. history – and who has worked effectively with many international students as a T.A. – is available to help. So this is a propitious time for this project.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,


David C. Hammack
Haydn Professor of History


Jonathan Sadowsky
Chair, Department of History