

Assad, Mary
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PURPOSE

Rationale

This project establishes interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration between Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Institute of Art to help improve student writing. The proposed project revises a currently offered First Seminar course for CWRU international students, themed “Graphic Memoir and the Art of Life-Writing,” by introducing visual communication workshops co-developed by the instructor and a CIA student-artist. The workshops will invite students to learn, apply, and teach fundamental visual strategies used in comics art and transfer this knowledge to academic writing. The project also draws upon collaboration with the KSL Freedman Center to support students’ learning and application of digital technologies including Comic Life and Scalar. The project encompasses two sections of First Seminar (24 students) during the Spring 2020 semester. Aside from benefitting these students, the project’s scope includes building the groundwork for accomplishing three long-term goals that extend beyond a single instructor or course, described below.

Spring 2020 Course Revision

A CIA student-artist (sophomore- or junior-level) will be selected to collaborate with the First Seminar instructor. The student-artist’s expertise in visual design, combined with the instructor’s pedagogical expertise, will be leveraged to develop workshops that teach students visual strategies, with particular emphasis on comics vocabulary and cultural conventions that shape visual communication. A familiarity with these principles, particularly when learned in an engaging and interactive environment, will improve students’ ability to understand and produce nuanced and rhetorically situated academic writing. Several workshops will focus on visual analysis of graphic memoirs, while others will invite students to apply the learned visual strategies in the creation of graphic memoirs and educational resources. In addition to co-developing whole-group workshops, the student-artist will collaborate with the seminar leader to develop small-group workshops and studio-style critiques of individual students’ work.

This curriculum promotes independent learning and knowledge transfer as students make connections between the graphic memoirs they have read and their own multimodal creations. In prior iterations of this course, students have used Comic Life software to create their memoirs. The student-artist’s expertise will support the development of classroom activities that empower students to learn and apply visual strategies through more sophisticated engagement with Comic Life features as well as pencil-and-paper methods. Students will thus become familiar with and apply digital and hand-drawn affordances for multimodal communication as they craft their own graphic memoirs and educational resources. While collaboration with the student-artist provides CWRU students with design and cultural insights, collaboration with the Freedman Center enhances students’ technical knowledge and facilitates production of deliverables in Comic Life and Scalar.

Deliverables and their Impact

The current version of this course requires that students create graphic memoirs. As in prior semesters, students’ memoirs will be displayed at the CWRU Celebration of Student Writing and Research. This Nord proposal, which provides students with concrete visual strategies, innovates this previous work not only by enriching students’ toolkit for creating their memoirs but also by incorporating student-led production of visual communication resources. The goal of these resources is for students to explain visual communication vocabulary and iconography from American culture as well as their home cultures using words and images, in order to improve their ability to understand and demonstrate effective writing. These resources will be compiled, printed at high resolution, and shared in digital form with the CWRU and CIA communities. Printed copies will be available in the CWRU Writers’ House resource library. The digital resource-set will become a living document available for classroom use and development by CWRU and CIA faculty, thus allowing for robust application, expansion, and potentially broader public access over time.

Scope

This project’s scope includes course redesign for Spring 2020 as well as three goals with long-term implications: the creation of print and digital resources for CWRU and CIA faculty to access and develop in subsequent semesters, the development of a proof-of-concept model for classroom workshops that engage students in best practices both for learning and teaching visual strategies, and the establishment of a framework for future CWRU-CIA collaborations that would not require grant funding.

STUDENT IMPACT

This project will improve CWRU student learning in three main ways: students will learn and apply key visual strategies; they will learn how to teach the strategies and related vocabulary to others; and they will learn cultural knowledge that will promote their active engagement with American academic writing as well as American popular culture. In the process, because CIA has offered the use of academic and creative spaces for CWRU students' workshops, CWRU students will gain access to new and inspirational spaces for thinking, writing, and creating. This project is innovative because it challenges students to draw upon the tools and resources of another discipline in their writing and communicative practices. It empowers them to think not just as writers, but also as artists, and to transfer that knowledge to improved academic writing. It inspires them to consider how techniques such as line-work, shading, color, and page layout create meaning for an audience, and further to identify and analyze cultural meanings conveyed through personal narrative and iconography. Ultimately, this project invites students to think about rhetorical situation and purpose from the standpoint of both a writer and an artist, so that they may continue to hone and apply these skills in future academic and workplace contexts.

PROFESSIONAL IMPACT

With the recent adoption of multimodal communication as a SAGES Student Learning Outcome, there is a heightened need to find innovative ways to empower students to think of writing as including but not limited to the written word. This project demonstrates innovation in teaching by establishing a framework for inter-institutional collaboration, particularly within University Circle. CWRU and CIA share the goal of empowering students to become independent thinkers and creators. By inviting a CIA student to co-develop activities for the writing classroom, this project helps redefine the boundaries of what counts as "writing" and contributes to a growing pedagogical conversation surrounding multimodal communication and its place in the university writing classroom. As evidenced by panel topics and publications in composition studies conferences and journals, today's students must acquire skills and tools for effective communication across modes, contexts, audiences, and cultures. To become adept, flexible, and creative communicators, students must learn to write and create beyond the five-paragraph essay. This project therefore supports innovative teaching and research in composition studies by bringing together a writing instructor and an art-expert to support students' writing skills. By establishing and evaluating a model of collaboration, this project will spark conversations with CIA stakeholders regarding future CWRU-CIA collaborations that draw upon the resources and meet the needs of both institutions.

METRICS AND DATA COLLECTION

The project's success will be measured through pre- and post-testing as well as surveys. Pre- and post-testing will directly measure CWRU students' learning. Before the first workshop, students will be asked to write a short essay that describes and analyzes a selected excerpt from a graphic memoir. Students will be given the same task with a new excerpt at the end of the semester. Responses will be compared to identify the extent to which visual communication vocabulary has been learned and applied in students' writing. Anonymous surveys will gather data on students' self-perceived learning as well as their overall thoughts and reactions to the workshops. Finally, an anonymous survey will be distributed to CWRU writing faculty to evaluate the pedagogical value of the student-created resources, gauge faculty interest in implementing similar workshops, and invite suggestions for future multimodal communication tasks and resources.

UCITE FUNDS

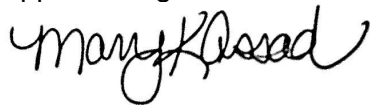
While resources such as Scott McCloud's publications are helpful for students, the expertise of the student-artist is essential for developing interactive workshops that offer students a dynamic and interdisciplinary learning experience. Thus, funding is needed to fairly compensate the CIA student for his/her time and expertise. Inviting a CIA student rather than a faculty member allows the funding requirement to be reasonable while also fostering peer-to-peer dialogue alongside cross-cultural communication. Funding of art supplies provides engaging resources for workshops. Remaining supplies will be stored at the CWRU Writer's House. Students will be asked to identify which supplies were most meaningful; those materials will be added to the course supply list for students to individually purchase in future semesters. Funding for food will support a friendly and comfortable environment for students and also help remove some of the anxiety that often accompanies the writing process. Funding for printing allows the project's deliverables to be shared with wider audiences at the Celebration of Student Writing and Research and as a permanent part of the resource library at the CWRU Writers' House.

BUDGET

Expenses		
Compensation for CIA student		\$1,600.00
Art supplies (pencils, pastels, sketchbooks, and other items recommended by student-artist)		\$500.00
Printing of student-created memoirs and resources		\$600.00
Food and refreshments for select workshops (3 workshops with combined class sections @100.00/workshop)		\$300.00
Total expenses funded by award		\$3,000.00
Cost Sharing		
Honorarium for guest speaker on iconography across cultures	Course Incidental Funds	\$100.00
Reference copies of McCloud's <i>Understanding Comics</i> (2 copies @20.00 each)	Course Incidental Funds	\$40.00
Reference copies of McCloud's <i>Making Comics</i> (2 copies @18.00 each)	Course Incidental Funds	\$36.00
Printing of posters for university-wide presentation (2 posters @37.00 each)	Course Incidental Funds	\$74.00
Registration and travel to Composition Studies conference	Departmental Research Fund	\$750.00
Total cost sharing		\$1,000
Total project cost		\$4,000.00

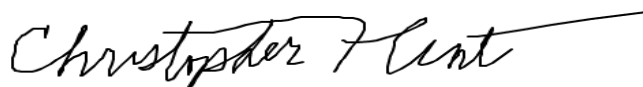
Applicant Name: Mary Assad

Applicant Signature:



English Department Chair Name: Christopher Flint

English Department Chair Signature:



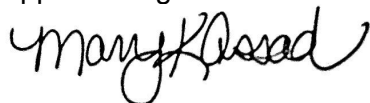
NOTE: This budget was also reviewed by the Director of SAGES, Peter Whiting, since the SAGES program provides and approves funding for First Seminar courses and instructors.

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Applicant Name: Mary Assad

Applicant Signature:



Director of SAGES Name: Peter Whiting

Director of SAGES Signature:





9 December 2019

I am writing in support of Mary Assad's application for a Nord Grant to fund a project that promotes interdisciplinary and institutional collaboration between Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Institute of Art. The project is aimed at designing a course entitled "Think Like an Artist: Engaging CWRU Students in Multimodal Communication." It includes the development of novel teaching methods, technological innovations to assist student learning, and the revision of an existing course. All of these are suggested as critical elements of a viable Nord Grant proposal.

I have reviewed Mary's proposal and budget, and can confirm that the projected timeline (Spring 2020) and the \$4,0000 budget, which designates expenditures that will draw on Mary's FSCC class funds and her research and advising fund, is reasonable (as long as the Director of SAGES, Peter Whiting, also approves, since the financial support for SAGES Lecturers is overseen by that program). Because the SAGES Lectures are contracted by the Dean at the recommendation of the Chair of the Department of English but funded entirely by SAGES, the Department of English has no designated resources to provide for this initiative.

Mary is not only one of our best SAGES Lecturers, she has also participated energetically in English Department curricular and scholarly activities. Her admirable work on foundational teaching makes her a prime candidate to bring a fresh pedagogical and technological perspective on cross-disciplinary studies. I am confident, given her teaching record, that her efforts will deepen student learning, promote trans-disciplinary collaboration, create student learning opportunities beyond the classroom environment, and unite CWRU faculty and students in using a specific issue related to teaching and learning to promote the advancement of visual, verbal and digital learning.

Mary's lively collegial interaction, her thorough and engaging presentations in a variety of pedagogical and scholarly settings, and her respectful encouragement of other viewpoints makes her an ideal participant in interdisciplinary initiatives such as the one proposed here. She is the sort of colleague whose own pedagogical acumen makes one's own thinking that much more refined—not only because of the intelligence of her contributions but also because of the insights she consistently brings to the table. I strongly recommend that this application be given very high consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher Flint". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Christopher Flint
Professor and Chair of English

Mary K. Assad

Department of English, Case Western Reserve University
11112 Bellflower Rd., Cleveland, OH 44106

mka23@case.edu

EDUCATION

Ph.D., English (Concentration in Writing History and Theory), Case Western Reserve University (2014)

M.A., English, Case Western Reserve University (2009)

B.A., History (*Summa cum laude*), Baldwin-Wallace College (2006)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Lecturer in English as a Second Language, English Department (2016-present)

Courses taught:

First Seminar. Seminar-based writing-intensive course for ESL students. Course themes include Graphic Memoir, Defining Communities, International Students' Wellness, Health & Narrative.

University Seminar. Second-level writing-intensive seminar focusing on the analysis of memoirs and the rhetorical functions of personal narrative in public discourse.

Academic English. Course for ESL students focusing on reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

Academic Writing Studio. Course for ESL students centered on building academic writing skills to bridge the transition from first-year to upper-level writing courses.

Lecturer, English Department (2014-2016)

Teaching Assistant, English Department (2007-2014)

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE AND SERVICE

Co-founder, Open Book Project, English Department (2019-present)

Faculty Advisor, Polyglot Club (2018-present)

Academic Advisor, English Department (2014-present)

Senior Capstone Advisor, English Department (2017-2018)

Mentor, Provost Scholars Program (2016-2018)

RECENT PRESENTATIONS

"Using Comic Books to Visualize the Invisible in the Writing Classroom." *College English Association Conference*. New Orleans, Louisiana. 2019.

"Multimodal Composition." SAGES Pedagogy Seminar Series. CWRU. 2019.

"The Pedagogical Value of Comic Books." SAGES Pedagogy Seminar Series. CWRU. 2018.

PUBLICATIONS IN COMPOSITION STUDIES

"A Wellness-Centered Approach to First-Year Composition: Curriculum Design and Course Management Strategies for Promoting Students' Rhetorical Knowledge and Personal Self-Awareness." Best of Session selection for the 2018 CEA Conference Proceedings. *The CEA Critic*. 80.1 (March 2019): 11-16.

"How a Comic Book Assignment Can Help Students Learn the Value of Research Evidence." *The CEA Forum*. (Summer/Fall 2017).

"Illness Narratives in the Writing Classroom: Creating a Compassionate Space for Rhetorical and Literary Analysis." Best of Session selection for the 2016 CEA Conference Proceedings. *The CEA Critic*. 78.3 (November 2016): 281-286.

AWARDS

Richard A. Bloom, M.D. Award for Distinguished Teaching in the SAGES Program (2018)

Graduate Dean's Instructional Excellence Award (2012)

Appendix

Additional letters of support are included from the individuals listed below.

1. Peter Whiting, Director of SAGES
2. Gusztav Demeter, Coordinator of ESL Writing
3. Sarah Minor, Chair of the Liberal Arts Department at the Cleveland Institute of Art
4. Jennifer Green, Team Leader at the Freedman Center for Digital Scholarship

Peter Whiting
Director of SAGES

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<http://www.cwru.edu/sages>

December 8, 2019

To whom it may concern,

I urge funding for Mary Assad's Nord Grant proposal.

Mary Assad has developed a rich approach to building skills and community in her SAGES seminars with her use of graphic memoirs. Just last Friday her students presented at the Celebration of Student Writing in association with Intersection and I was struck by the student presenters' poise and excitement as they showed me their graphic memoirs. Inspection of these graphic memoirs showed these were well-conceived, reflecting deep thinking about the rhetorical moves they were each making.

Mary Assad's plan to further refine her approach and to facilitate others' creation of such graphical memoirs is both clever and likely to be productive. The creation of this pedagogical tool will provide an important resource for use in other seminars. The tool is timely as SAGES seeks to broaden students' abilities across a range of multimodal communication.

I hope the committee will support this important project.

Regards,



Peter Whiting

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Case Western Reserve University

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www.case.edu/artsci/engl/

December 9, 2019

Matthew Garrett
Director, University Center for Innovation in Teaching and Education
Case Western Reserve University
Allen Memorial Medical Library Building, Room 101
11000 Euclid Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44106

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to support Dr. Mary Assad's application for the Nord Grant. I have known Dr. Assad for more than five years, and I have worked with her closely both as a colleague and as the Coordinator of ESL Writing. I have reviewed her grant proposal and I wholeheartedly support it for the reasons I will outline below.

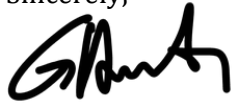
First of all, the project would be very valuable not only to multilingual students enrolled in Dr. Assad's First Seminar sections next semester, but also to the ESL Writing program as a whole. Dr. Assad was the first to initiate the comic book project in her First Seminars, which allowed students to not only be creative but also to express one of the main objectives of the SAGES First Seminar courses, persuasive writing based on critical thinking, in a multimodal way. By asking students to present at the Celebration of Student Writing and Research event, Dr. Assad also provided students the opportunity to engage with a real audience, which enhanced student motivation and improved student learning. Soon, the assignment was also used by other instructors in the ESL Writing Program. In the Fall 2019 semester, all the SAGES First Seminars for non-native speakers of English used this assignment, which demonstrates the fact that Dr. Assad's curriculum development initiatives have an impact on student learning beyond her own sections. The present project would take course design in a new and exciting direction, including collaborations with the Cleveland Institute of Art and the KSL Freedman Center. If successful, these collaborations could then be extended to sections of the course taught by other instructors in the ESL Writing Program. Finally, the resources and deliverables created through the project would be available for students and ESL instructors for future use.

Moreover, even though Dr. Assad is a lecturer, her long-term commitment to teaching multilingual students in the SAGES ESL Writing Program has been proven by her history in the program, her dedication to curriculum development, and continuous professional development. Dr. Assad has

been teaching in the SAGES Program for the past 6 years, with 5 of those teaching First Seminars to multilingual students. During this period, Dr. Assad has constantly revised her courses and since this past summer she has been working with me to design a new course for multilingual students that would be offered starting the Spring 2021 semester. She has been consistently nominated for the SAGES Excellence in Writing Instruction Award and in 2018 she won the program's most prestigious award, the Richard A. Bloom, M.D. Award for Distinguished Teaching in the SAGES Program. Her excellence in teaching has also been demonstrated by the numerous awards that her students have won at the Celebration of Student Writing and Research over the years. This clearly shows that Dr. Assad has a long-time commitment to the program and Case Western Reserve University in general. Even if Dr. Assad were to leave CWRU, her contributions to the curriculum (including those provided by this grant) would benefit students for years to come.

In conclusion, I'm happy to support Dr. Mary Assad's application. Besides the benefits to her own students, I believe the project would open opportunities for the entire ESL Writing Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Demeter', with a stylized, cursive script.

Gusztav Demeter, PhD
Coordinator of ESL Writing
Department of English
Case Western Reserve University



Cleveland Institute of Art

Dear Nord Grant Reviewers,

I write on behalf of CIA's Liberal Arts Department with support for Professor Mary Assad's proposal to develop an inter-institutional collaboration between CIA and CWRU as part of a revision to the CWRU first year seminar course for international students entitled "Graphic Memoir and Art of Life-Writing. We believe this proposal represents an opportunity to lay the groundwork for many future collaborations.

I admire the ways Assad's proposal draws upon existing resources at both CIA and CWRU to support the development of multimodal composition and communication strategies among students at both institutions. I am also impressed by the careful planning, teaching experience, and innovative pedagogy that informs this proposed collaboration. This is evidenced, as Assad explains, by the ways "this project helps redefine the boundaries of what counts as 'writing' and contributes to a growing pedagogical conversation surrounding multimodal communication and its place in the university writing classroom." As chair of an interdisciplinary department, I also notice the ways this project will successfully support the writing strategies of second language learners, and will also model the types of collaborative experiences students will engage in at work through any number of career paths after they graduate.

The individual CIA student artist or designer who will partner with Assad's CWRU course will benefit from the chance to engage both with an international student body, and with the culture and resources of a neighboring institution. The learning benefits for the CWRU students are also clearly defined, and we believe these students would enjoy having the chance to work with an artist to learn and apply communication methods they may not encounter in other coursework. As part of this collaboration, Assad will be welcome to reserve and utilize spaces on CIA's campus to allow CWRU students the chance to explore new artistic and academic spaces during some of their workshops.

Additionally, we at CIA hope the collaboration will pave the way for future mutually beneficial, outcome-based projects between the two neighboring institutions. This year CIA hosted Thi Bui, author of *The Best We Could Do*, as part of our summer reading program. We expect that in the academic year 20-21, Assad's cross disciplinary project will be further supported by opportunities for students to engage with CIA's next visiting writer, who we expect will also be an author/illustrator working in the graphic novel or graphic memoir genre. Further, this project lays groundwork for future collaborations in which a senior CIA student may wish to partner with a CWRU writing or literature class as part of the development of his or her BFA project. In recent years, several CIA students in our Biomedical Art department have collaborated with CWRU biology professors for their BFA work, and these collaborations have proven meaningful for both parties involved. We believe there is room for extending such work outside of the sciences as more CIA students realize the opportunities that exist for productive collaboration with departments at CWRU.

It is our belief that Assad's proposal to 1. Draw upon shared resources, 2. Combine pedagogical and visual expertise at two institutions, 3. Engage in careful data collection to assess the project, and 4. Demonstrate its results through print materials that can be read and shared by both university members and the public, make this project ideal for Nord funding.

Sincerely,

Sarah Minor
Chair, Liberal Arts Department, Assistant Professor, Creative Writing



KELVIN SMITH LIBRARY

CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY

Kelvin Smith Library

Case Western Reserve University
10900 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44106-7151

Phone (216) 368-2992
Fax (216) 368-6950
<http://library.case.edu>

December 9, 2019

To whom it may concern:

This letter acknowledges the Freedman Center's support of Mary Assad's Nord Grant proposal. Her proposed project envisions and makes possible a valuable inter-institutional collaboration between Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Institute of Art that would also include close collaboration with the KSL Freedman Center for Digital Scholarship. Specifically, the Freedman Center is prepared to support technological aspects of Mary's project, including the development of students' graphic memoirs in Comic Life and visual communication resources in Scalar. Freedman Center staff will work with Mary to develop workshops that support students' learning and application of technological affordances. Students will also use the Freedman Center computers and space to develop their projects under the guidance of staff as well as independently.

We believe that this project will support student learning on the topic of visual communication, while also encouraging students to meaningfully engage with the digital resources available on our campus. By gaining familiarity with the resources at the Freedman Center, students will grow more comfortable and confident in their ability to use technology to compose multimodal projects, conduct research, solve problems, and pursue independent learning.

Sincerely,

Jen Green, Team Leader
Freedman Center for Digital Scholarship