

Submit a PDF copy of this completed Project Description Template to ucite@case.edu. The information in your project description should address the requested points, clarify your intentions, and concisely convey your goals.

The review committee will read applications as anonymous submissions. Please do not put your name anywhere in the text of your project description. You may include other details, such as your department and course titles.

Project Title: The Breath of All That Lives: Medieval Jewish Art

I. Project Nature & Goals

Address the following questions as you describe the nature and goals of your project

How will your project produce better teaching and deeper student learning? What scholarship about teaching and learning does your project engage with? What service learning opportunities may be possible through your project? How might your project align with the THINK BIG strategic plan or departmental goals?

I am applying for the Nord Grant in order to allow four world-class specialists in Jewish visual culture to take active part in my new global medieval seminar, “The Breath of All That Lives: Medieval Jewish Art.” This course is a new enterprise, formulated when the closure of the Cleveland Museum of Art necessitated a cancellation of another global medieval seminar I was planning to co-teach with the museum’s Korean art curator. The course, however, has long been in the making, and I am thrilled to finally introduce it to students. It will, without a shadow of a doubt, be the only course of its kind taught in the United States.

This seminar will explore late medieval Jewish art: a woefully and unjustly understudied topic. The first part of the course will focus on broad historical and historiographic issues in Jewish visual culture; topics will include, *inter alia*, issues of word and image, problematics of representation, the iconoclastic argument, and anti-Jewish polemic. In the second part of the seminar we will look at the great variety of later medieval Hebrew books: illuminated Bibles, commentaries, theological treatises, liturgical books, scientific works, etc. Finally, we will conclude by focusing on one type of liturgical book, the Haggadah, and explore its many manifestations in both Sephardic and Ashkenazi contexts. By way of a coda, we will look at late medieval Yiddish books. This is a very challenging class, in which students will be expected to read both primary and secondary sources in order to familiarize themselves with the complex and fraught landscape of studies in medieval Jewish art and their relevance for modern-day debates.

Such a course, however, cannot be taught without the involvement of several guest speakers—leading authorities on medieval Jewish art—whose lectures I plan to record and use in all the future iterations of the course. In this way, students years down the road would have access to the expertise of these extraordinary scholars. Mark Epstein (Vassar College) has been writing about medieval Jewish art for decades; he is one of the

founders of the field, and he would speak in September, introducing students to the highly charged stakes of studying visual Jewish culture. Adam Cohen (University of Toronto) and Julie Harris (Spertus College) are specialists in illuminated manuscripts: Cohen has published on Haggadot and Harris on Bibles. They would speak in October. Finally, Diane Wolfthal (Rice University) is probably the only person in north America who specializes in Yiddish books; she would speak in early November. There is no doubt that such course project will produce *better, more effective, and more profound teaching outcomes* if enriched by the participation of these scholars, whose lectures on the history of medieval books will also directly impact and strengthen *learning outcomes*, currently centered on the ability of students to learn about, understand, research, and interpret illuminated Jewish manuscripts from the Middle Ages. I am quite well read in the field, but medieval Jewish art is the purview of just a handful of specialists, who all expressed interest and enthusiasm in participating, remotely, in this course. Ordinarily, their involvement would have been an expensive enterprise, but given that this is a *remote/hybrid course*, they can Zoom in for their lectures and ensuing discussions, and we can limit their compensation to honoraria. I plan to open up these particular sessions to the interested colleagues and students across the department, the college, and, if allowed, the university. While the course will have no direct *service-learning* component in the traditional sense of the phrase, it will have an experiential element specifically tied to the guest lectures: students will be required to consult true facsimiles of the manuscripts (already made available to them at the Cleveland Museum of Art archives) directly related to the topics of guest lectures.

One of our *departmental goals* is to introduce the global study of the arts to the students. To that end, I launched a series of courses on Global Middle Ages in 2017; this interdisciplinary course would be the jewel of the series. The seminar also aligns with three pathways of the *THINK BIG strategic plan*: it is deeply interdisciplinary (Pathway 1)—really, a default for my field of medieval studies—with its focus on art, literature, theology, and history; it strives to make a social impact (Pathway 3) by exploring and foregrounding the rich culture of a historically marginalized group; and it encourages dialogue and debate (Pathway 4) by foregrounding the diversity of thought and the embrace of different cultures.

II. Professional Impact

What is the relationship between your project and your teaching and/or research responsibilities at CWRU? Will your project have short-term or long-term impact on teaching and learning? How do you plan to maximize the number of students that may benefit from involvement in this project?

This course project stands at the crux of my *teaching and research responsibilities*. A specialist in medieval art—and the first medievalist hired by the department—I have worked tirelessly to formulate and offer new courses and enrich our students' academic and professional development by bringing key experts in medieval art to campus. The success of this enterprise is evidenced by the fact that a good half of our graduate program now consists of students who come here specifically to study medieval art. Courses such as this one *draw students to*

apply to our program, growing the department, its reputation within and outside the university, and its collaboration with the museum. I will also open the course to student auditors, invite students from different departments to attend the Zoom talks by guest lecturers, and, as I mentioned, record the lectures for future use, thereby *maximizing the pedagogical benefit* to as many students as possible. Interaction with experts will inform every aspect of this class, from discussions to presentations to object studies to papers.

The project's *impact on learning*—both short-term and long-term—will be profound. Not only will it introduce students to a completely new, understudied subject, it will also (if I do this right!) spark their interest in the topic and help grow this extremely important area of my discipline. But perhaps most importantly, courses like this, which focus on the arts of the diaspora, make students grow intellectually and ethically. Global courses make global citizens.

III. Evidence of Project Goals & Student Learning

What evidence will you seek to collect and analyze to determine how well or to what extent project goals were achieved? How will you measure evidence of student learning and/or teacher change?

As with any graduate class, *learning outcomes* will be collected, analyzed, and measured in several ways. I will primarily measure the impact of guest lectures on student learning with three assignments that will demonstrate how closely students listened to the experts, how well they understood their lectures, and how carefully they followed up on research leads offered by the four scholars.

Active object study and response papers: After each guest lecture, students will spend several hours studying relevant facsimiles of the extraordinary manuscripts purchased for just this purpose by the Ingalls Library at the CMA. I have ascertained that these individual appointments are allowable and feasible even under the circumstances, and have arranged for such visits. *Students will be asked to write short response papers guided by several questions relevant to the material they glean from guest lectures and the manuscripts themselves.*

Presentation: The final presentation will take place during the last week of class. Its aim is to allow students to test their research paper ideas in a forum of their peers and to seek feedback. *Students will engage with one or more of the topics discussed during guest lectures—controversies about representation, iconoclasm, interactions between written and spoken word and image, intercultural connections, patronage, and reception—in order to demonstrate the way that the information shared with them by the experts enriched their research.* In the course of the presentation, they will discuss their topics, postulate their theses, and present their evidence, all the while using visual material to support their arguments. The presentation will conclude with a brief Q&A period designed to help students improve their final paper; their audience will troubleshoot the presentation. Grading criteria will include the clarity and coherence of the presentation, clear articulation of ideas, ability to argue

one's point persuasively, ability to answer questions, and ability to ask thoughtful questions.

Research paper: The research paper will be 15-20 pages in length and will serve as the culmination of the semester's work. Students are asked to think about what they have found most provocative or worth knowing more about in the course topics, and formulate this into a problem that they will address in their writing. *Once again, they will inquire into broad historical / historiographic issues in Jewish art as articulated by the four speakers, and demonstrate their ability to offer their own take on these issues. Paper topics will focus on illuminated Hebrew and Yiddish books—that is, the kinds of objects explored in depth by the guest lecturers.* Students' own creative and critical thinking is here imperative. They will need to ask a question that they set out to answer rather than merely give a factual summary of information; they will have to take a position that they defend with a series of arguments rather than merely give an uncritical account of what they've seen and read; they will need pose a thesis, which they justify with evidence, rather than merely state unsupported personal beliefs.

In other words, these assignments will directly integrate the content provided by the guest speakers, whose lectures will offer students pathways for their own research projects.

IVa. Budget Narrative & Timeline

How will Nord Grant funds be used to support the project – for materials/equipment, for student stipends, or for something else? What support, if any, will the project receive from other sources, including on-campus (e.g. department funds) or beyond-campus (e.g. discipline-specific awards) funds? What is the proposed timeline for the project? Is this a new project or is the work already underway?

The Nord Grant funds *will support four guest speakers*—world-class specialists—who would offer (and record) lectures in their immediate areas of expertise, take questions from students, and help guide their research projects. Under the normal circumstances, their fees would be much steeper and we would need to factor in travel and lodging expenses; as it is, they are able to deliver lectures via Zoom. In other words, this already groundbreaking course will take an innovative approach to what would have been an on-the-ground seminar, turning the disadvantages posed by the pandemic (travel restrictions, in-person lectures) to the direct advantages from which our current and future students can benefit.

There is *no support* available for this project from any other sources.

The course planning is underway; it will be offered in the fall of 2020, and guest speakers would participate in our seminars in September (Epstein), October (Harris and Cohen), and November (Wolfthal). I have spoken to all four to ascertain their participation. In my discipline, the honoraria run the gamut between \$800 and \$1500, with recorded lectures tending to land on the higher end of the financial spectrum. I am asking for \$1000 for each speaker.

IVb. Budget Details

| Expenses <i>(round to the nearest dollar amount).</i> | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Prof. Julie Harris (honorarium) | \$ 1000 |
| Prof. Mark Epstein (honorarium) | \$ 1000 |
| Prof. Diane Wolfthal (honorarium) | \$1000 |
| Prof. Adam Cohen (honorarium) | \$1000 |
| | |
| Total Nord Grant Expenses | \$ 4000 |
| Cost Sharing | |
| Item and description 1 | \$ (amount) |
| Item and description 2 | \$ (amount) |
| Etc. | |
| Total Cost Sharing | \$ (total amount) |
| | |
| TOTAL PROJECT COST | \$ 4000 |