University Teaching Development Grant
Example Abstracts

Kara Poe Alexander, Assistant Professor of English

I have applied and been accepted to participate in the 2012 Summer Seminar at Michigan State. This Seminar focuses on contemporary movements in composition pedagogy and will explore ideas, theories, and practices of teaching writing. The Seminar will include formal presentations by six top teacher-scholars in the field and workshop sessions over these presentations. The program is highly interactive with multiple occasions to develop and apply the skills and knowledge I gain through these presentations and workshops to my own teaching. This opportunity would allow me to basically take a mini-seminar from several renowned teachers/scholars in my field, and the other participants are also scholars and teachers in the field, so I would get several ideas for texts, assignments, and exercises.

I have attached a flyer with more information regarding the Summer Seminar. Additional information is available online at the website listed above.

Dave Bridge, Assistant Professor of Political Science

A colleague and I have modified an existing computer game, Diplomacy, to model the International Relations concept of offensive realism. My colleague, Simon Radford, is a graduate student at the University of Southern California and writing his dissertation on international relations. My specialty lies in American politics, but I have a secondary research agenda on Teaching and Learning. He is helping maintain the theoretical part of the simulation while I am guiding the pedagogical aspects. I have received permission from two Baylor Political Science professors to allow me to run the simulation in their courses. Both will take place the week of October 3-7 in PSC 4385 (Diplomacy in Theory and Practice) and PSC 3315 (Fundamentals of International Politics). [...]

The goal is to have Simon lead the first part of the week, in which we detail offensive realism as an academic theory. He would lay out the theory, citing examples along the way. Both of us, then, would explain the rules of Diplomacy (a semi-complex game). One of the main benefits of the game is that most of the gameplay takes place online, thereby allowing for a deliberative game without using up too much classtime. Simon and I feel, however, that the first moves should be made during class, where students can have technical and theoretical questions answered immediately. After they get a sense for the game, they can continue to play it online in the following week(s).
My teaching effectiveness would be enhanced by watching an expert in international relations lecture on the theoretical dimension of the lesson plan. The real purchase comes in the fact that that expert is lecturing on offensive realism with the Diplomacy simulation in mind. While I do consider myself well-versed in the Teaching and Learning literature, I am only a novice at international relations theory. Were Simon to come to Baylor, I could observe him in the classroom, and record the best way to teach the theoretical dimension. Afterwards, I could use his lecture notes and Powerpoint slides to lead the same lectures on my own. Put simply, his presence would allow me to learn the 1-2 lectures needed before we launch into the simulation. I could then use them in future classes I teach, on my own, at Baylor.

Finally, I plan on taking direct measures of whether or not the students found the simulation to be useful. Instead of assuming that the game worked and added to the class, I will administer an anonymous survey to the students. The survey will be similar to Baylor teaching evaluations. In one part, students will be asked to quantitatively judge the simulation (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). Questions will include:

- The simulation enhanced my learning of offensive realism.
- The simulation was a good break from traditional lecture and discussion.
- The simulation helped me prepare for class assignments.
- I recommend using the simulation in the future.
- Overall, the simulation was useful.

In addition, the survey will include a free-response section, where students can write their specific thoughts on the simulation. Questions will include:

- What did you like about this simulation?
- What did you not like about this simulation?
- Would you suggest any changes to the design or operation of the simulation?

In sum, Simon and I are looking for direct measures that our experiment actually made a difference in the minds of the students.

Anne-Marie Schultz, Associate Professor, Philosophy; Director, Baylor Interdisciplinary Core

I am applying for this grant to attend a nine-hour workshop on The Bhagavad Gita given by renowned Hindu scholar, Dr. Edwin Bryant. Dr. Bryant is a Professor at Rutgers University. He has written six scholarly books and countless articles on the thought of the Indian Sub-Continent. His extensive vita is available on his webpage (http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~edbryant/about.html). Dr. Edwin Bryant will be visiting the B.K.S. Iyengar Yoga Center in Dallas, Texas. He will give a set of lectures on The Bhagavad Gita titled, “Exploring The Bhagavad Gita.” The workshop will begin Friday evening, September 7 and will conclude Sunday afternoon September 9. I plan to attend the entire workshop. The information I learn in this workshop will directly enhance my ability to teach The Bhagavad Gita in BIC 4389: Yoga Practice and Philosophy in Contemporary American Culture.