

A. Sabbatical Proposal: Advancing the Environmental Humanities in the University

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B. Abstract:

The primary objective of my sabbatical will be to assess best practices in the design and implementation of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary educational programming, particularly EH programming, by academic and institutional leaders in the field. My sabbatical work will aim to achieve two goals: identify best practices, first, at integrating faculty from diverse educational units across the university into a single consciously transdisciplinary educational program and, second, for integrating graduate student EH research into university-wide EH programming. While there are already a number of different venues for the furtherance of EH research in existence, there is as yet no leader in the pedagogy of the environmental humanities. My sabbatical research will begin to place UK in that position.

C. Description of Program

1. I propose a sabbatical appointment to take place the spring term, 2024, during which I will research the pedagogy and administration of interdisciplinary Environmental Humanities (EH) programs in the university. This project fits neatly with my own work establishing an Environmental Humanities Initiative here at the University of Kentucky.

2. The primary objective of this effort will be to assess best practices in the design and implementation of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary programming, particularly EH programming, by academic and institutional leaders in the field. A particular interest in my research will be to detangle two interconnected puzzles in the development of interdisciplinary programming at the college level. First, what are the best practices integrating faculty from diverse educational units across the university into a single consciously transdisciplinary educational program? Second, what are the best practices for integrating graduate student EH research into university-wide EH programming. Given my work over the last year establishing an EH Initiative here at UK, I feel the strong need to develop support structures – both financial and academic support structures – for inter- and transdisciplinary research at the disciplinary level. Further, I believe it is essential to the development of vital EH programming at the University of Kentucky to provide competence to our graduate students in the interdisciplinary classroom. Hence, a tertiary goal of my sabbatical work will be to discover the practices that best build teaching competencies in the Environmental Humanities among their graduate students. The institutions I intend to consult, many of which I hope to visit in person, are detailed in my Benchmarks Study created for my proposal to develop and establish an Environmental Initiative at the University of Kentucky (<http://www.uky.edu/~rsand1/environmentalhumanities/>). I have established contacts at most of the benchmark schools in that list, and I hope to visit many of these schools during my sabbatical research. The following schools are especially strong in graduate EH programming: the University of California-Davis, Michigan State University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Other non-benchmark schools and institutions of significance to my research into EH programming include: the Rock Ethics Institute at Pennsylvania State University, the Arizona State University Environmental Humanities Initiative, Environmental Arts and Humanities Initiative at Oregon State, the Environmental Humanities Program based in the High Meadows Environmental Institute at Princeton, the Environmental Humanities Project at Stanford, and the Yale Environmental Humanities Initiative. Two schools have influential and well-developed undergraduate EH programs: Colby College and Whitman College. Hence these two schools will play an outsized role in my research, as the development of best practices modeling for undergraduate EH programming is an important part of my sabbatical project.

3. As noted, the work I intend to accomplish during my sabbatical will be the establishment of best practices for creating interdisciplinary EH programming at the university level. Obviously, the end result of this work will be a journal length article on this subject, which I would submit to the journal *Environmental Humanities* for publication. More importantly, though, this research will lay the foundation for an NEH Humanities Connections planning grant proposal, which I and other members of the Environmental Humanities Initiative at UK will write up upon my return. Once the planning groundwork is laid, I intend to oversee a work to acquire an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant.

4. The pedagogical research work of my sabbatical leave will provide the basis for the development of both EH graduate and undergraduate programming at the University of Kentucky. Further, the ultimate aim of this programming effort is to establish the University of Kentucky, the land grant institution of the Commonwealth, as a leader in Environmental Humanities across the state and the Appalachian region.

5. This work falls directly in line with both the Strategic Plan of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Strategic Plan for the University. Creating strong undergraduate EH programming will provide students from within the commonwealth and beyond a transformational education that enables understanding of the world and their place in it. This will be accomplished by creating new and innovative coursework from a diverse faculty from across the humanities at UK. This work has already begun, as I am currently teaching UKC 110 Introduction to the Environmental Humanities. Hence, my sabbatical work will build on this foundation and develop incentive program to support faculty and graduate students to learn and employ promising or proven inter- and transdisciplinary teaching practices. Perhaps most importantly, my sabbatical work will embed innovation and discovery into humanities research at UK. The impact of this work will be significant. Establishing a coherent set of best practices will not only further the development of Environmental Humanities research here at UK, but it will also position UK as a leader in humanities research regionally and globally. While there are already a number of significant different venues for the furtherance of EH research, there is as yet really no leader in the pedagogy of the environmental humanities. My sabbatical research will begin to place UK in that position.

D. External Funding

Currently, I do not have any established funding streams in place to finance the greatest ambitions of this proposal. Most of the proposed work can be completed virtually, which will greatly reduce costs. However, I intend to cultivate funding resources over the current academic year in preparation for my sabbatical leaving in spring 2024.

F. Curriculum Vitae