Mellon-Evidenced-Based Teaching Initiatives Grant Application
Submitted by Venita Datta (French) and Paul Fisher (American Studies)
Project title: "Experiential Learning onsite in Paris and Portfolio Presentations"

Course Description: French/American Studies 231 (taught in English): Americans in Paris: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the City of Light

We taught French/American Studies 231 for the first time in spring 2017. Below please find a description of the course:

For more than two hundred years, the experiences of Americans in Paris have exerted an outsized influence on American, French, and global culture. These transnational encounters have included writers and artists as well as diplomats, students, filmmakers, jazz musicians, bohemians and tourists. Drawing on a variety of historical and literary documents, among them novels and essays, along with films and music, we will trace the history of American encounters with Paris from the late eighteenth century to the present day. Through our study, Paris emerges as a long-running site of complex cultural encounters, a creative and dynamic metropolis with special significance to many different groups, among them, African Americans, women, and queer people, who have made this city a hotbed of intellectual innovation and social change.

1. Pedagogical Goals: Our goals are four-fold. 1. To familiarize students with the varied and rich experiences of a wide variety of Americans in Paris, covering not only those of such well-known writers and artists as Gertrude Stein and Ernest Hemingway, but also focusing on the experiences of African-Americans, queer writers, and ordinary Americans like the soldiers who went to fight on the beaches of Normandy during World War II. The Normandy site visit is a vital ingredient in a course that will dynamically treat a variety of American experiences. In other words, we do not want to teach "your grandmother's course" on privileged white expatriatism but rather to expose students to the multiplicity of the encounters of Americans with Paris and Parisians as well as the different myths of the city they either debunked or confirmed. 2. To cover a substantial historical period, beginning with the late eighteenth century up to the present. 3. To expose students to methodologies from history, literature and art history in order to teach them how to navigate these different disciplines. 4. To engage students in multicultural and transnational study.

2. Teaching Innovation: The course will take place over a thirteen-week semester in spring 2019. Our anticipated enrollment is 14 students and our major innovation is to take a college-funded trip to Paris over a six-day period during spring break in March 2019. We will take the students on guided tours of various sites and museums in Paris as well as a visit to the D Day beaches in Normandy. We also plan on at least two lectures on various aspects of the city (for example, African-American Paris), by well-known specialists.

Although the course was very successful in 2017, we were a bit disappointed in the first assignment we gave students in which they had to discuss a potential visit to Paris. We asked them to write a short essay about their personal interest in Paris, asking them to explore one area of the city, a historical figure, or an interest they had, such as food, fashion, black history, or women's history. We provided them with online Google maps and other online tools so that they

could navigate the city and describe in detail specific sites they would visit. The results were very uneven. Students did not always make use of these tools to write their essays and their comments were rather vague. It was clear to us that many, who had never visited Paris, had no concrete understanding of the geography of the city, nor of its various urban spaces. This lack of understanding often compromised their understanding of historical social geographies and held back their scholarly efforts.

Our pedagogical experience was that, for students who had never visited Paris (about half of our group in 2017), nothing could quite match an onsite visit to familiarize them with the spaces and geography of the city. We have proposed including a Paris site visit to this version our course in order to allow students to experience the city firsthand, so that they better understand not only the spaces of Paris but also its importance for the generations of Americans who have traveled there. Furthermore, we as teachers will have better succeeded in our four major goals in teaching the course once students themselves have experienced the city as "Americans" in Paris."

The specific piece of this history that we want to teach through a Mellon grant is the experiences of ordinary American soldiers in France during World War II. We propose a visit to the Normandy D Day beaches. This visit, which will encompass the enormity of what happened on this site, will also allow students on their return to Paris to see the city and its historical experiences differently and with more depth.

3. Studies on Experiential Learning and Portfolios:

Eportfolio Research and Examples:

Given the importance of reflection and meaning-making in experiential learning, the curation of student ePortfolios is a natural way to both support and assess student learning within this course. Select relevant research that connects to the proposed course is highlighted below.

I.   Heinrich, B., & Rivera, J. (2017). A method for assessing experiential learning for ePortfolios. *International Journal on Innovations in Online Education*, *1*(1).
- "Learning through reflection in the context of ePortfolios creates space for learners to assemble and build on previous experiences, potentially deepening each subsequent reflective artifact. Instructors can take advantage of such opportunity by encouraging learners to review previous reflections prior to recording new reflective statements."
- "…when program leaders provided guidance through prompts or assignment objectives, learners better documented learning outcomes as compared to documenting with no parameters."

II.   Eynon, B., Gambino, L. M., & Török, J. (2014). What Difference Can ePortfolio Make? A Field Report from the Connect to Learning Project. *International Journal of ePortfolio*, *4*(1), 95-114.
- "What does it mean to make learning visible? Most obviously, ePortfolios can make the learning process more visible to students themselves. Curating a body of their own learning artifacts, collected over time and in different settings, provides students with

opportunities to examine and reflect on their learning." (Eynon, Gambino, & Torok, 2014, p. 98)

- "…the integrative ePortfolio experience helped students build a more holistic self-portrait, a way of understanding themselves as learners." (Eynon, Gambino, & Torok, 2014, p. 100)
- "ePortfolio can facilitate collaboration and exchange, learning-centered connection with faculty, students, and other viewers outside the campus" (Eynon, Gambino, & Torok, 2014, p. 101)

III.   Blackburn, J. L., & Hakel, M. D. (2006). Enhancing self-regulation and goal orientation with ePortfolios. *Handbook of research on eportfolios*, 83-89.
Abstract: This chapter reviews the self-regulatory learning and goal orientation literatures. Findings from these literatures are used to make specific recommendations for the effective design and use of electronic portfolios in order to increase academic learning. Specifically, the authors recommend that electronic portfolios provide the means for students to set learning goals, monitor and regulate their progress toward these goals, as well as develop their self-assessment skills. Additionally, they suggest that these goals be focused on learning objectives rather than performance objectives.

IV.   SAINT OLAF: https://wp.stolaf.edu/cis/web-community/
AUBURN UNIVERSITY (EXAMPLES) http://wp.auburn.edu/writing/eportfolio-project/eportfolio-examples/

Experiential Learning Research and Examples:

V.   Lewis and Williams (1994) offer the following definition of Experiential Learning, which precisely describes the innovation within this course:

"In its simplest form, experiential learning means learning from experience or learning by doing. Experiential education first immerses adult learners in an experience and then encourages reflection about the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking."

VI.   In addition to factual learning about the travel location itself, educational travel and study abroad has been linked to a number of learning outcomes, including but not limited to intercultural competence, self-confidence, communication skills, and development of a more complex world view (for a review, see, Stone & Petrick, 2013), Going beyond the idea that "school is a necessity for learning," Morgan (2010) argues that travel can be a key impetus of transformative learning for students.

VII.   Chapman, McPhee, and Proudman (1995) have outlined a series of key characteristics that define successful experiential learning environments:

Mixture of content and process: There must be a balance between the experiential activities and the underlying content or theory.

1. *Absence of excessive judgment*: The instructor must create a safe space for students to work through their own process of self-discovery.
2. *Engagement in purposeful endeavors*: In experiential learning, the learner is the self-teacher, therefore there must be "meaning for the student in the learning." The learning activities must be personally relevant to the student.
3. *Encouraging the big picture perspective: Experiential activities must allow the students to make connections between the learning they are doing and the world. Activities should build in students the* ability see relationships in complex systems and find a way to work within them.
4. *The role of reflection*: Students should be able to reflect on their own learning, bringing "the theory to life" and gaining insight into themselves and their interactions with the world.
5. *Creating emotional investment*: Students must be fully immersed in the experience; not merely doing what they feel is required of them. The "process needs to engage the learner to a point where what is being learned and experience strikes a critical, central chord within the learner."
6. *The re-examination of values*: By working within a space that has been made safe for self- exploration, students can begin to analyze and even alter their own values.
7. *The presence of meaningful relationships*: One part of getting students to see their learning in the context of the whole world is to start by showing the relationships between "learner to self, learner to teacher, and learner to learning environment."
8. *Learning outside one's perceived comfort zones*: "Learning is enhanced when students are given the opportunity to operate outside of their own perceived comfort zones." This doesn't refer just to physical environment, but also to the social environment. This could include, for instance, "being accountable for one's actions and owning the consequences" (Chapman, McPhee, & Proudman, 1995, p. 243).

Key characteristics of Experiential Learning	How this characteristic is incorporated into the design of French/American Studies 231: Americans in Paris: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the City of Light
1. Mixture of content and process	Onsite visit, journals
2. Absence of excessive judgment	Journals
3. Engagement in purposeful endeavors	Onsite visit, journals
4. Encouraging the big picture perspective	Student completion of the presentation and portfolio
5. The role of reflection	Journal, presentation, portfolio
6. Creating emotional investment	Journal, presentation, portfolio
7. Re-examining of values	Sequential assignments
8. Presence of meaningful relationships	Onsite visit, presentation to peers
9. Learning outside one's perceived comfort zones	Onsite visit, presentation

References

Chapman, S., McPhee, P., & Proudman, B. (1995). What is Experiential Education?. In Warren, K. (Ed.), The Theory of Experiential Education (pp. 235-248). Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

4. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

To assess the learning represented by this specific piece as well as our Paris visit more generally, we propose comparing a pre-trip essay (similar to the one previous students wrote in 2017) to a second essay written their return. In addition, this second essay (as well as the journal they will keep in Paris and their final project, all these items to be collected in a portfolio) will allow students to reflect not only on how their understanding of World War II experiences has changed after their visit, but also will allow us to evaluate the impact of the entire visit on their comprehension of the larger subject. That is, our assessment will evaluate both the specific piece funded with the Mellon grant (American soldiers) and also the whole learning trajectory of the course.

In other words, we propose to assess the success of our proposed experiential learning by having students do a series of preliminary assignments that will allow students to compile materials (written, photographic and digital) pertaining to their visit to Paris. The portfolio will contain daily diary entries of their stay and a short reflective essay (see above) about the value of being onsite in France, specifically about the impact of going to the Normandy beaches. They will be required to make a short presentation to their peers at the Newhouse Center upon their return (we will compare this work to their preliminary essays and also to essays submitted by students who did not go to Paris in 2017). By evaluating these materials, we hope to document how students have acquired a better understanding not only of the geography of Paris but also a more nuanced understanding of what it was like to be an American in France, based both on their visit to Normandy and on their stay in Paris. The symposium of their work will be attended by colleagues from both our departments, two of whom we will ask to assess the students' work.

Our goal in this presentation of portfolios is to:

1. Showcase skills, experiences and learning while promoting reflection.
2. Provide students with a tool to connect the academic with the experiential.
3. To have students demonstrate intercultural knowledge; in other words, what expectations did they have about France and French culture before their visit? And how did those perceptions change after their visit?
4. Global learning: Based on their own personal experiences in France and their class work, to have students consider the differences between France and the US and how those differences have played out historically and how they play out in the present.
(see https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics)