

Application for Tier III Capstone Development Grant

I am proposing a revision of a currently taught course, AN370 “Culture, Power, and Protest,” for consideration as a Tier III capstone. The course takes an ethnographic and global perspective on the topic of social movements. It examines a wide array of cultural practices, some that involve an implicit critique of, and resistance to domination and oppression; and some that are more explicitly political, entailing mass public protest and international networks.

Topics include:

- 1) the role of ethnographic methods in the study of social movements
- 2) activism and ethics
- 3) theoretical perspectives concerning why movements succeed or fail
- 4) the legacy of the 1960s on our understanding of social movements
- 5) the impact of culture on the formulation of social movement agendas and strategies
- 6) cultural practice as resistance
- 7) international women’s, gay/ lesbian, and disability rights movements
- 8) anti-globalization and sweatshop movements
- 9) language right movements
- 10) grassroots environmental and peace movements
- 11) right-wing social movements (such as evangelical)

Outcome 1

My revision will make the interdisciplinary aspects of this course more explicit. These aspects include anthropology, environmentalism, history, political science, sociology, and women’s studies. Students will be asked to evaluate course themes, issues, and examples from multiple perspectives.

Outcome 2

This course is a natural for a service-learning component. The two previous times I taught this course, I required service learning. The first time I set up service-learning projects that involved working with neighborhood activists, the Women’s House of Peace, the New American Citizenship Project in Pittsfield, and a local Human Rights and Relations Task Force. The second time I taught it, the students (with some help from Sue Birns’s “Social Policy” class) organized the Hunger Banquet for the college community.

I will continue to include a service-learning component in this class. The Hunger Banquet ties together many course themes and is easily replicable. The planning of this event is amenable to joint ventures with other classes, and perhaps even the local high schools.

Additionally, I may want to periodically teach this course during the spring and integrate a curricular Alternative Spring Break component that involves travel and service learning. Appropriate projects might be designed for working on Native American

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reservations or with indigenous Hawaiians. I recently accompanied Alternative Spring Break students to the Navajo Nation and I've taken students on a travel course to Hawaii, so I am well-positioned to figure out some travel-based, service-learning possibilities. I also have connections with the East-West Center in Honolulu. Students will be expected to keep a dialogical experiential journal. This journal format requires the students to reflect on the way in which course readings inform their service-learning experiences and the way in which their service-learning experiences inform insights gained from the reading.

Outcome 3

Students will be expected to demonstrate their mastery of class material in a variety of ways. These include two essay exams, weekly, single-page written reflections on course reading, and active participation in class discussion.

Additionally, students will be expected to conduct open-ended interviews with any kind of social activist. They will be required to develop 10 open-ended questions and submit them along with typed interview transcripts. Students will also be required to write three-page analyses of their interviews using class readings. Moreover, they will be required to present their findings to the class at the end of the semester.

Outcome 4

If the students do the Hunger Banquet, they will be required to work in small groups, as well as the group as a whole. Small group work will involve creating personal stories of individuals from different countries who are poor, middle class, and elite. These stories will be distributed on cards to be read out loud by the audience at the time of the event (the event is loosely modeled after one that Oxfam has designed). Small group work may also include simulating protests of relevant global groups, and contacting relevant local community groups to encourage their involvement. Whole class work will involve coordinating the tasks of small groups.

If the students participate in curricular Alternative Spring Break projects, they will be expected to give a campus-wide presentation on their return.