

Cary Henson
Dept. of English
Radford 212
UW Oshkosh
920-424-7282
henson@uwosh.edu

May 15, 2006

Global Studies Program
Attn: Scholar Access Grants
University of Wisconsin-Madison
301 Ingraham Hall
1155 Observatory Drive
Madison, WI 53706

Dear Grant Committee:

In the summer of 2005, I was able to conduct research at the University of Wisconsin Madison on a Scholar Access Grant through the Global Studies Program. Now that the 2005-2006 academic year has concluded, I would like to report on the ways in which I was able to implement this research in several courses this year.

The most significant applications came in my Theme-Based Inquiry Seminar for first-year students entitled Genocide in the Twentieth Century. Three facets of my grant work last summer proved the most useful in making revisions to this course. The first involved increasing the breadth of my research related to ancillary topics in genocide studies, such as human rights and international law. The second, unexpected development arose from research on the former Yugoslavia. Finally, consultation with Professor Scott Straus provided several important insights into genocide topics specifically and the teaching of genocide in general.

First, as I had hoped, I was able to review a dozen or more working papers kept on file in the Global Studies Program reading room. While not all of these, of course, made a direct impact on my course preparation, they did increase my understanding of issues related to, but outside the current focus of, my course on genocide. In particular, articles on predicting ethnic group demands, global restructuring and international law, and confronting former governments' human rights violations augmented my knowledge in these areas and made me more competent in dealing with these issues when they arose in class. For someone trained in English and Comparative Literature, and not in International Studies, Law, or Political Science, the increased familiarity with both the methods and topics in these fields proved beneficial. In fact, just this past spring one of my students used one of these articles in his final paper on genocide prevention and intervention.

The second aspect of my research last summer was rather unexpected but led to important, positive revisions to the course. I had not anticipated conducting a great deal of

research on specific genocides, since this was really the strongest aspect of the course—I felt quite comfortable with my understanding of the genocides that we cover, and, as I stated earlier, my intention was to strengthen my knowledge in other areas. Nonetheless, when I started reviewing some primary texts related to the former Yugoslavia available at the Memorial Library, I knew immediately that these would become key components in this year’s courses. Specifically, the definitive edition of Vuk Karadzic’s poetry collections, a bilingual copy of Prince Njegos’ epic *The Mountain Wreath*, and a reprint of a Serbian Academy of Sciences demographic study from the 1980s all became important readings in our coverage of the former Yugoslavia. Students’ reading of the nineteenth-century poetry fostered an engagement with the development of Serbian ethnic and national ideology that surpassed anything I had been able to accomplish in previous sections of the course, and the excerpts I provided from the demographic study allowed them to see first-hand how serious scholarship can become intertwined with devastating ideological objectives.

The final major impact of my grant work arose from my meeting with Professor Scott Straus, who was gracious and generous with his knowledge and expertise. First, he drew to my attention several sources I have been able to consult to help in my preparation for the course (from a Cambodia video resource, to a Sudanese memoir, to his own recently published work on Rwanda). Second, he shared his own personal insights into the Rwandan genocide, which is an important focus in several of my courses. Having an expert such as he share his knowledge and experience face to face was invaluable. Finally, Scott and I discussed teaching methods in light of the challenges a course on genocide presents. His emphasis on students’ reading of narratives and viewing of films reinforced changes I was contemplating (and which, serendipitously, the Serbian research also contributed to). The more primary sources students can engage, the better, and Scott’s recommendations have led me to follow his method of providing more of the history, background, and context via lecture so that more of the students’ work load can be placed on narrative sources (literature, film, memoir, etc.).

Although the TBIS Genocide course is arguably the most important course I teach (the most sections, and, as a first-year seminar, with a significant impact on students’ academic careers), it is not the only one I was able to use the grant period to help develop. For example, in a revised version of my Literature and Film course, which focuses on representations of violence, I was able to use some sources identified by Scott (such as the 1948 ethnographic study by Jules Sasserath) to supplement my teaching of a new novel about the Rwandan genocide. In addition, his views of this novel and of the various films about Rwanda were also quite valuable. For background reference, I was able to further my research into literature-film adaptations related to war and mass violence, adding several sources to my work-in-progress bibliography of such narratives.

For two other courses, the Humanities Confront Violence and Aggression and Introduction to English Studies, most of my research during the grant period focused on South Africa, as the South African novel *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee is a key text in both of these courses. I came across two working papers that proved helpful in improving my knowledge of the apartheid era, especially one dealing with South African regional strategy in the 1980s. Most crucial, and agonizing, however, were the collection of videotapes, the South African

Broadcasting Corporation's Truth and Reconciliation Committee Special Report series. I must have watched at least ten tapes, only wishing I had had time to view many more. It is impossible for me to encapsulate all that I garnered from these videos: the background information, the documentary evidence, the viewing of testimonies, and much more. I have, of course, read many books on South Africa, apartheid, and the TRC, but there is nothing like watching these tapes. I cannot doubt that my teaching of Coetzee, and of anything in which we address the apartheid era and its aftermath, has been aided tremendously by viewing this video series. Sadly, I have not been able to find a way of obtaining this series for myself, and I plan to return to Madison soon to make further use of this extraordinary resource.

I hope that this brief overview indicates some of the most notable ways in which the work I conducted during the grant period made significant impacts on several of my courses. I had an exceptionally productive week that has had and will continue to have a significant influence on my teaching. Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail at henson@uwosh.edu. Thank you once again for the opportunity that the Scholar Access Grant afforded me.

Sincerely,

Cary Henson