

Professors Off Campus Initiative Proposal

Abstract

This proposal outlines a public service program that links the University of Utah with students in local high schools through the medium of film. I am excited for the opportunity to apply for the Professors Off Campus initiative; the award will make it possible for myself and community partner, the Salt Lake Film Society to significantly extend the reach and depth of our current community service work bringing international film to local high school students.

Project Description

For the past three years, I have partnered with the Salt Lake Film Society (the non-profit arts and education organization, headed by Executive Director, Tori Baker, that runs both the Tower Theatre and the Broadway Theatre complex) and the San-Francisco-based Global Film Initiative (GFI) to bring award-winning and challenging films from around the world to students in Salt Lake high schools. In this partnership, we have arranged for a limited number of students in both public and private high schools to attend one of two morning screenings at the Broadway of films chosen from the current GFI touring program, known as Global Lens. During these screenings, I have facilitated discussions of the visual strategies, cultural practices and political events that the selected films explore. Based on student engagement with the films and discussions, and feedback from their teachers, this public service program has been a valuable experience.

The Professors Off Campus initiative will allow us to take this community service project to a new level. One aspect of this project would be to encourage students to see films from around the world on the big screen. Collaboration with the Salt Lake Film Society, which has an educational outreach element as part of its mission, will allow this to happen. During mornings, the theaters are often unused; however, local schools have limited funds to access school buses to transport students to the venue. Funding from this initiative will allow us to schedule more morning screenings during the time the Global Lens series is in town in September; release-time would enable me to provide on-site screenings and additional supported curriculum related to the films within the schools themselves during the following months. Thus, I will be able to utilize my expertise in world cinemas to develop strategies for high school teachers to connect students with cinematic traditions beyond Hollywood. (We hope to be able to arrange an event for teachers at the Broadway—on a weekend or during fall break—thus using the theater as a community resource space.)

Goals

This public service project speaks directly to the three goals outlined in the Tanner Center's call for proposals.

1. To create meaningful public service programs based on University faculty expertise to benefit groups and individuals throughout the community

My scholarship is in world cinemas, specifically those of Africa and the Middle East. (I recently published a co-edited volume on the history of Middle Eastern Cinemas.) This project allows me to transmit my expertise as a researcher to high school teachers in order to create educational opportunities for high school students in which they learn to link narrative story and the visual

techniques of film with a development of critical awareness of regional, national and transnational historical processes.

2. To foster an appreciation of service work by academics

This project impacts this goal in two ways. First, feedback from high school teachers on my current service work indicates that they value efforts to bring the Global Lens programming and discussion to their students. (If required I can provide testimonies from teachers.) I believe that development of this project will serve to connect students and high school teachers further with the University of Utah—and indeed encourage possible enrollment at the University in the future. Second, moving outside of the university campus—and my own research agenda—has played a large role in keeping me grounded and in touch with the students who newly arrive in my classrooms each semester.

3. To create relationships and connections based on tolerance and understanding

This goal speaks directly to the shared missions of the Global Lens series and the Salt Lake Film Society, and also my own belief that increased exposure to the artistic forms of other cultures (perhaps especially those of the Middle East) is invaluable in producing tolerant individuals capable of civil discussion. The limited awareness that young people have of real lives beyond U.S. borders breeds misunderstanding and mistrust of difference. The visual and narrative power of film can cut through these barriers and open up room for dialogue and awareness of what we all share.

Methods

This public service project would take place during the Fall 2011 semester. It will incorporate multiple screenings of selections from this year's annual Global Lens series in September at the Broadway (where it is scheduled to play to regular theater patrons in the evenings). I will coordinate with teachers in local high schools to bring students to special morning screenings at which I will introduce the film and lead discussion afterwards. This initiative's funding will allow school districts to rent additional school buses so that more students can attend these 35-mm "big screen" events than has been possible in previous years.

During the following months, I will try to bring further 35mm prints, depending on funding and availability. I will also arrange follow-up activities and supplementary screenings on DVD in the classroom. Specifically, I will stage DVD screenings of previous Global Lens films in local high schools across the valley. I hope to provide teachers with a choice from at least five films: *Enough!* (Algeria), *Masquerades* (Algeria), *Of Love and Eggs* (Indonesia), *Night of Truth* (Burkina Faso), or *My Tehran for Sale* (Iran)—all works that have proved to be highly engaging for high school students. Along with these screenings, I will facilitate discussion with students and also provide preparatory and follow-up educational materials and activities for teachers to use film to instigate further study of a regional, national, or trans-national relationships.

Budget

Item	Amount
One course reassigned time – Fall 2011	\$5,000
Royalty Fees and Shipping for DVDs/one 35 mm print	\$840
School Bus Rental	\$1,240
Projectionist for morning screenings	\$120
Copying of Educational Materials and Activities	\$100
Total Project Budget (includes monies provided to department, professor and partner)	\$7,300

Letters of Support

Tori Baker, of the community partner in this service project, the Salt Lake Film Society, and Kevin Hanson, my department chair, will be e-mailing you their letters of support.

I am sending this document via e-mail and also through campus mail.

Thank you for your consideration.