

“War, Trauma, and the Humanities”

Governors State University, Illinois

- Late-start intensive course offered under an upper-division English special topics number during the fall semester 2017; course is team-taught by project co-directors Rosemary Johnsen (Professor of English) and Andrae Marak (Professor of History and Political Science and Dean of College of Arts and Sciences)
- 6-week training program for 5 embedded veteran-student discussion facilitators before course begins
- 2 outside speakers will be brought in to meet with class and offer public events
- Class culminates in a televised townhall featuring the student-veterans
- Following semester includes student-veterans participating in a roundtable during the university’s annual Research Day, as well as working with Johnsen on writing projects

Governors State University

Will County, Illinois



- Founded in 1969
- upper-division & graduate only until 2014
- ~6000 students
 - 370 military-connected students
 - 62% UG, 38% graduate
 - 70% female
 - 39% White, 39% Black, 9% Latinx
 - 9% 18-22 years old
 - 43% 23-29
 - 22% 30s
 - 15% 40s
 - 10% 50+

Successful proposal: project directors are key

- As project co-directors, the two of us brought complementary strengths to the grant project and the application process.
 - Complementary academic backgrounds: Marak's in U.S. history; Johnsen's in British literature
 - Strong institutional ties and knowledge: Johnsen is tenured faculty member with 10+ years of service at GSU; Marak joined GSU as Chair (now Dean)
 - Demonstrable personal and professional investments in the multiple areas touched on by this grant program and our project:
 - Scholarly qualifications and teaching experience in war-related humanities
 - Track record in curriculum development, administration, campus and community projects requiring collaboration
 - Strong commitment to the humanities, on campus and off (record of public scholarship and community engagement)
 - Ties to military service: Johnsen is daughter of a career Army veteran w/2 Vietnam tours; Marak served in the Army Reserve and the Wisconsin and New York Army National Guard
- These qualifications relate specifically to the “Dialogues on the Experience of War” program, but the principles of complementarity & commitment apply broadly when choosing project directors

Successful proposal: project directors lead

- Having chosen qualified, committed project directors, it is best to let them take the lead in designing the project, making decisions about content and process, and crafting grant application components. Campus resources should be consulted, but the work needs to be done by the project directors.
- We had an ongoing collaborative process we used for developing the core elements of our project and for the actual writing of the grant application. We held some meetings for consulting others, met for quick conversations at pivotal moments, but mostly relied on email to get material back and forth.
- We began with the model of a successful program funded the year before—these models are posted by the NEH on the website—and transformed elements to best fit our situation and our community.

Successful proposal: match grant program objectives to your community's circumstances

- The fundamental principle of grant applications is to show clearly and concretely how your project meets the grant program's objectives
- The flip side of that principle is also important. We drew on our institutional knowledge, and our commitment to our students and community, to show how our campus communities are well-placed to benefit from such a project *and* to contribute to its success:
 - GSU's non-traditional student body: these students bring lots of life experience to the study of literature and other humanities modes
 - Our location in the far south suburbs of Chicago: GSU serves an important role as the region's only public university, and many of our students have friends and family members with military experience
 - Presence of 370 veterans in student body
 - GSU's class scheduling, which offers most courses in once-weekly 3-hour blocks in the afternoon and evening, allowing us to offer a course at a time convenient for adult students, the student-veterans we wanted to recruit and train as discussion facilitators, and community members; the course is scheduled for Mondays, 7:30-10:20 p.m.

Early cooperation: campus & external partners

- Built on close relationship with the Veterans Resource Center in conceptualizing the project and to recruit veteran-students to serve as discussion facilitators; we have collaborated in the past on program articulations, joint service transcripts, and providing additional support to veterans.
- Worked closely with our Office of Sponsored Programs and Research, especially in relation to building our budget and understanding federal guidelines and expectations.
- Tapped into the talents of our events coordinator/marketing specialist for the Center for Performing Arts to recruit potential graduate students, produce marketing materials, and put together a PR plan for the grant and its public components.
- Both invited speakers, important contributors in relevant fields, were already known to co-director Marak:
 - As Vice President on the Board of Directors for the non-profit Making History Project (<http://making-history-project.com/>) , Marak has seen the organization's President, Patrick Russell, present oral histories of military veterans at academic conferences.
 - Marak knows veteran-author R.M. Ryan from his time in Milwaukee and knew that he was active in the local writing scene there
- Creation of our project advisory board was a suggestion of Dr. Elaine Carey, a co-author of Marak's and the Dean of the College of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences at Purdue Northwest; she has written a number of successful organizational grants in partnerships between universities, libraries, archives, and public history venues that have made use of advisory boards.
- Those agreeing to serve on the project advisory board include both on-campus leaders, including the Dean of Libraries and the Director of the Veteran's Resource Center, and external consultants, including Dr. Carey, project visitors Ryan and Russell, and Dr. Reinhold Hill, Vice Chancellor of Indiana University-Purdue University Columbus and a military veteran.

Ongoing cooperation and outreach

- We continued to consolidate and expand partnerships after receiving the award
 - Connections with veterans at sister institutions such as Prairie State College resulted in Marak being invited to give the Memorial Day address in a local community regarding our project; the address was co-written by project directors
 - Presentation at the Midwest World History Association Annual Meeting; meeting focuses mostly (though not exclusively) on pedagogy
 - Johnsen took advantage of NEH-provided opportunity to meet with congressional delegation in D.C. in June; this fall we will follow through on offers of assistance from the staff in those offices to involve elected officials and to promote our public events
 - Writing projects with veteran-student discussion facilitators will reach a range of external audiences; we envision op-ed and other public forms as part of that stage of the project
 - In addition to campus-produced profiles and press releases, Johnsen will be profiled by her alma mater as an NEH grant recipient
- These activities were not necessarily ones we envisioned during the application stages, but their success (or lessons learned) will inform future grant applications