Dialogues on the Experience of War Grant Program
NEH Division of Education Programs Webinar for GRC Members
August 22, 2017
What are the Humanities?

History

Classics

Art History

Philosophy

Literature
Dialogues on the Experience of War: A Standing Together Program

Deadline: November 2, 2017
Up to $100,000
Duration: 12-36 months
An institution can apply for up to three grants
Division of Education

Grants strengthen teaching and learning through new or revised curricula and courses, collaborative study, seminars, and institutes.
Dialogues on the Experience of War: Humanities Discussion Programs

Humanities-based discussion programs on the experience of war
- Preparatory program for NEH Discussion Leaders
- Following the preparatory program, convening of at least two discussion programs conducted by NEH Discussion Leaders

"War" by Sakari Suzuki, Library of Congress
NEH INITIATIVES

- The Common Good: The Humanities in the Public Square
- Standing Together: The Humanities and the Experience of War
Audience: Military Veterans

- Primary audience: U.S. military veterans
- Others can be included as appropriate to the project: men and women in active service, military families, and interested members of the public.
Eligible Organizations

• Colleges and universities
• Veterans’ centers
• Libraries
• Museums
• Cultural centers
• Other community venues
What are some possible Dialogues projects?

• A college English department and a campus veterans center jointly design and prepare student veterans to lead public discussion groups for veterans in the community.

• A museum or a theater company prepares local veterans and affiliated scholars to co-lead a discussion series with local veterans in conjunction with exhibition visits or theatrical performances and readings of classical and modern literature and memoir.

• A state humanities council works with a local VA hospital to host a reading and film discussion series for veterans and hospital staff.

Dialogues Program Resources Page: https://www.neh.gov/grants/education/dialogues-the-experience-war
Discussion Programs: Historical Scope

- Projects must consider at least two historically distinct conflicts
- One must come from the earliest wars through World War I
- The second must come from the wars after the First World War
Discussion Programs: Humanities Sources

- Discussions must be focused on humanities sources in history, literature, philosophy, the visual arts, and film.
- These sources should also include writings and other testimonials by those who have served.
- They should come from at least two distinct genres (such as fiction and historical writings, or memoirs and artworks, or philosophy and film).
- See Potential Resources for examples of possible humanities sources.
What are Possible Humanities Sources?

- Literature: novels, short stories, poetry, drama, memoir
- Historical writings: essays, speeches, historical documents
- Visual Arts: painting, photography, sculpture, ceramics
- Film: fictional features, documentaries
- Philosophical writings
- Performing arts: theater productions, dance, music
NEH Discussion Leaders 
Preparatory Program

• Close study of humanities sources
• Modeling and practice in the art of leading discussions of humanities sources
• Developing awareness of backgrounds and perspectives of veterans
• Development of a network of discussion leaders
Preparatory Program Staff

- Humanities scholars and professionals
- Staff members at the host institution
- Military veterans and/or active duty service men and women
- Professionals who specialize in working with veterans
Preparatory Program: NEH Discussion Leaders

• Trained to lead humanities-based discussion groups
• Recruited by the grantee organizations
• After the training, will lead discussion groups
Resources

NEH Web site

Guidelines

Program Officers

Other NEH Programs Supporting Veterans

State Humanities Councils

Standing Together Related Projects in Education
Stages of Review

Peer Review Panel → NEH Staff → National Council → Chairman
Grant Writing Tips

Prepare

- Read the guidelines
- Consult resources
- Talk to program officers
Make your case

- Start with the criteria
- Show the project’s intellectual significance
- Make work plan explicit, and show it’s doable
- Demonstrate likely impact
Review Criteria

V. Application Review

Evaluators are asked to apply the following criteria when judging the quality of applications:

1. Intellectual quality

- Does the proposed discussion program effectively address significant themes and draw on intellectually rich humanities sources relating to war and military service?
- Does the program cover at least two wars from the designated time periods?
- Does the program include humanities sources from at least two distinct genres?
- Are multiple viewpoints and intellectual balance evident in the themes, questions, and sources to be considered?
- Are the proposed preparatory activities for NEH Discussion Leaders grounded in themes and sources that are convincingly related to the discussion programs themselves?
- Is the proposal clear, free of academic jargon, and accessible to nonspecialists?

2. Feasibility

- Does the proposal provide a well-defined structure and syllabus for the preparatory program for NEH Discussion Leaders?
- Are the key personnel in charge of the preparatory program qualified by background and relevant experience?
- Does the proposed preparatory program include useful activities and resources for modeling and practicing discussions of humanities sources?
- Is the preparatory program likely to increase the NEH Discussion Leaders’ knowledge of the diverse backgrounds and experiences of veterans and other members of the military?
- Is the recruitment and selection process for the NEH Discussion Leaders well designed?
Think About Your Audience

- Accessible and clear
- Avoid jargon
- Address the criteria
- Show reviewers you know what you’re doing
• Gather supporting materials
• Send in Preliminary Sketch by **August 1st** and get comments
• Proofread!
• Ask for comments and reapply
Questions?

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“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
Blurred Boundaries: The Experience of War and Its Aftermath

• Writing the Grant:
  • Share the load
  • Work to your strengths
  • Budget for course release
• Conduct:
  • Regular planning meetings
  • Coordinate with colleagues
  • Guest speakers
  • Ongoing assessments
• Our minefields
  • The Civil War
  • Effort required