

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN COURSE PROPOSAL

Dr. Shannon L. Baker

HIST 4370 (changed to 4380)

Mexican American History since 1940: Research Seminar

Thursday, 2:30-5:30, Rhode Hall, 268

PROPOSAL:

This Research Seminar in Mexican American History since 1940 provides students with the opportunity to combine the skills they have learned in their previous courses to prepare a major research project. This proposal allows students to experience both research and professional engagement through a variety of activities planned throughout the semester. Research will be fundamental to this course: students will enhance their knowledge of Mexican American history, their analytical acuity, and their writing skills by preparing primary document analyses based on sources found here at the South Texas Archives and undertaking oral history interviews. But students will also enjoy a variety of professional engagement opportunities. All students in the class will have the opportunity to meet with two top scholars in the field of Mexican and Mexican American history, who will visit Texas A&M University—Kingsville campus, each accompanied by one graduate student. The students will make scholarly presentations on campus in a series of American Democracy Project Paper Presentation Forums. Following a process of selection similar to that which scholars undergo to present at academic conferences, the best four students will be selected to present their projects at a national conference in spring, 2006. If they meet the criteria, their analyses will be selected for possible inclusion in a Mexican American primary documents reader that I am coediting with colleagues. Texas A&M University Press and Thomson Wadsworth Press have both expressed interest in this book-length project. These research activities will engage students in the field of history by teaching them skills that professional historians actually utilize. It will also better prepare students for graduate school, law school, and teaching. The professional engagement activities will give students the opportunity to meet with top scholars in the field, learn more about what it means to be a professional historian, and present their research. The top students will merit a national presentation and possibly a publication--all before even entering graduate school.

RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:

- **EDITING:** Students will be engaged in peer editing throughout the semester, but as one of their first in-class endeavors, they will edit a chapter that I have written for the primary-documents reader. This will enable them to see a model of what is expected for their major projects during the semester, become active participants in writing a book, and see that writing always can be improved through editing.
- **HISTORIOGRAPHY:** Students will be required to write a brief four-to-five page historiographical essay pertaining to the topic area about which they plan to do primary research. If they plan to read and analyze documents about the Chicano Movement, for example, they must write a paper assessing how other historians have written about that movement.

- **ORAL HISTORY:** If possible, students will locate a subject with whom to conduct an oral-history interview regarding their topic area. They will receive instructions regarding how to conduct oral history interviews and how to assess them in class. They will turn in a typed transcript of the interview, permission to utilize the interview, a tape of the interview, and an introduction and analysis of the interview. Students unable to conduct an interview will be required to complete an additional primary-document analysis.
- **PRIMARY-DOCUMENT ANALYSES:** Each student will be required to complete three primary-document analyses. Students will be given guidance regarding materials available at the South Texas Archives as well as elsewhere in the region. Students will also receive training regarding proper use of archival sources from Mrs. Cecilia Aros Hunter, Director of the South Texas Archives. Each analysis will include a copy or transcription of the document as well as a four-to-six page analysis regarding the meaning of that document. Students will do additional research in secondary and other primary sources to reach their analytical conclusions.

PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:

- **VISITING SCHOLARS:** During the course of the semester, two historians will visit the Kingsville campus: Dr. William H. Beezley and Dr. James A. Garza. Dr. Beezley teaches at the University of Arizona and is one of the top scholars in the world regarding the history of Mexico. He introduces the concept of a “Greater Mexico,” emphasizing the connectivity between Mexican and Mexican American history, in his widely used college text *El Gran Pueblo*. This idea will be fundamental to my Mexican American history class. Dr. Garza teaches at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln and is one of my coeditors for the Mexican American documents reader. He is also conducting a book-length project on the Borderlands. Both scholars will meet with the class personally in an informal classroom setting to answer students’ questions about research. They will also discuss primary documents that they have used in historical research, demonstrating how they have analyzed those sources. They will also make formal presentations for the entire Kingsville community as part of Hispanic Heritage Month. Their presentations will include conclusions based on the sources that they shared with students in class, enabling the students to see how professional historians utilize documents in finished work.
- **VISITING GRADUATE STUDENTS:** Graduate students will accompany Dr. Beezley and Dr. Garza. Each Kingsville student will have an individual conference with one of the graduate students during the semester, at which point the graduate student will assist my students with document analysis or editing. In addition, the graduate students will meet with the group (in the absence of their graduate advisors) to discuss the realities of graduate school, as many students in a research seminar are considering attending graduate school.

- **A CHICANO SYMPOSIUM:** Members of the campus community are planning A Chicano Symposium as part of Hispanic Heritage Month. This event will feature presentations by some of the leaders of the Chicano Movement who were active at Texas A&I, including Carlos Guerra and Jose Angel Gutierrez. Academics will also be invited to make scholarly presentations about the significance of the Chicano Movement and the actions of A&I students. My students will be required to attend some of these events to learn more about the Chicano Movement, as well as the nature of scholarly presentations.
- **ADP PAPER PRESENTATION FORUMS:** Each student will participate in a paper presentation forum to be sponsored by the American Democracy Project. Students will present one of their primary-document analyses in a formal, yet collegial, environment that will be open to the university community. Professors and graduate students will provide commentary designed to improve the students' research and writing and the audience will be invited to ask questions. These forums will not only provide a friendly arena in which to practice for those students selected to go to the national conference, but it will prove to be a good experience for all the students as they prepare for job interviews, teaching, graduate school, or other conferences. These Forums will also provide an excellent opportunity for members of the Kingsville community to learn local history from university students.
- **ROCKY MOUNTAIN COUNCIL FOR LATIN AMERICAN SCHOLARS:** Using selecting criteria similar to that employed in many areas of academia, my coeditors and I will select the most promising four students (based on the quality of their papers and presentations) to accompany me to RMCLAS in Spring 2006, where they will present the primary-document analyses together on a panel. This experience will enable them to receive feedback on their work from leading scholars in the field, allowing them a better chance of achieving the ultimate goal of seeing their work published in our primary-document reader. The conference will provide greater opportunities than this however. Students will be able to meet graduate students and possible graduate mentors from universities around the country—an opportunity that could help them make important decisions about the future. They will be able to share this information with other students upon returning to Kingsville, thus increasing the value of this research trip.

- **PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITY:** I am currently leading a project to create a primary-source documents reader in Mexican American history. My coeditors are Dr. Garza and Dr. Víctor Macías González, at the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse. Texas A&M University Press has expressed interest in this project. We plan to begin assembling chapters this summer and continue our work into the next academic year. The students selected to attend the conference would also have the opportunity to become contributors to this reader, although they would have to meet the same high writing and research standards as professional scholars. In addition, they would be subject to the same process of outside review as we undertake the long, and frequently, tedious process of publishing. Nonetheless, those students willing to commit the effort would earn a reputable publication credit along with their Bachelor's degree.

STUDENT LEARNER OUTCOMES:

- Students will improve their analytical skills by working with a variety of primary documents and preparing a historiographical essay.
- Students will improve their writing skills by preparing a variety of papers.
- Students will improve their editing skills through peer editing exercises performed in class.
- Students will become more poised talking to leading professionals, better preparing them for graduate school, law school, and job interviews.
- Students will become more experienced at making formal conference presentations and answering questions in front of a group, again preparing them for professional life.
- Those students selected to publish analyses in my book will learn first-hand the rigorous review process of academic writing, and in doing so, will dramatically improve the quality of their scholarship.

ASSESSMENT MEASURES:

- All students' papers will be graded for content. For example, did they place their primary document successfully both in a historical and analytical context?
- Students' work will also be assessed based on their use of grammar. If they are not able to present their writing well and correctly, they will not receive a high grade.
- Success of the class will also be determined by students' dedication to each other, in the form of peer editing during class in order to help each other to succeed.
- The ADP Paper Presentation Forums will assess the class in two ways:
 - Professor and audience commentary of student performance, as well as my grades of the students' performances.
 - Good attendance would indicate community interest in this local-history endeavor. Audience members will also complete a brief survey indicating opinions regarding event.
- Students will go through a partially blind review process to attend RMCLAS, with their work being read by my coeditors, as well as myself. We will select the four best students to go to the conference.

- Once at RMCLAS, a professional historian from another university, who will serve as the commentator for their panel, will assess students. In addition, members of the audience will also provide feedback for the students.
- Students submitting their work for publication in the primary documents reader will be subject to the same assessment as professional scholars submitting work to such a project—editing suggestions from myself and coeditors. This student writing will also have to bear up to the scrutiny of outside reviews during the publication process. Success will be based on the ultimate publication of the book, and subsequent reviews and sales of it.

RESOURCE REQUEST:

COST

1. COURSE RELEASE

\$3000.

I request the course release to allow me additional time to work one-on-one with students to insure success on research projects. For example, to ensure that students write papers good enough to meet the criteria necessary to present and publish, I will want to assist students in the archives, as well as with editing their papers. I also request the course release to allow me additional time to work on the primary-documents reader, making work on the book a more interactive process for the students, and making the goal of publishing students' writing be realized more quickly.

2. VISITING SCHOLARS:

Dr. William H. Beezley and Graduate Student

Airfare for two from Tucson (September 19-21)	\$293x2=	\$586.
Hotel (September 19-20)	\$65x2=	\$130
Food	\$35x2peoplex2days=	\$140

Honorarium for Hispanic Heritage presentation		\$500.
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Beezley subtotal: \$1356

Dr. James A. Garza and Graduate Student

Airfare for two from Omaha (October 3-5)	\$290x2=	\$580.
Hotel (October 4-5)	\$65x2=	\$130
Food	\$35x2peoplex2days=	\$140

Honorarium for Hispanic Heritage presentation		\$500.
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Garza subtotal: \$1350

3. A Chicano Symposium

no resources requested

4. ADP Paper Presentation Forums

no resources requested

5. RMCLAS

Airfare for four students plus myself(to Denver)	\$298x5=	\$1490.
Hotel (typical conference rate)	\$120x3nightsx3rooms=	\$1080.
Food	\$25/dayx3.5daysx5people=	\$438.
Shuttle	\$20x4=	\$80.
Conference Fee	\$20x4=	\$80.

RMCLAS subtotal: \$3168

TOTAL REQUESTED: \$8874

This course could be completed in the future by taking students to local conferences for their presentations and having them participate in the editorial process of future editions of the primary-documents reader. The course would still require outside support to cover the cost of bringing in outside scholars.

