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| Submission Started:   | September 14, 2021 3:06 pm                     |
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| Participant(s):       | Chris Holmes, Brendan Murday                   |
| Location:             | 42.407199859619, -76.515899658203              |

## Applicant Information

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| First Name           | Kasia  |
| Last Name            | Bartoszynska   |
| Ithaca College Email | kbartoszynska@ithaca.edu                                       |
| Department           | Literatures in English, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies |
| Title of Project     | The Matter of Black Lives in the Long 18th Century             |
| Duration of Project  | Fall 2021-Spring 2022  |
| Amount Requested     | 2020   |

## Project Description

I am seeking funding to develop a course for the English Department entitled *The Matter of Black Lives in the Long 18th Century*. I taught this course for the first time in the Spring of 2021 and am looking to enhance the course content by changing some of the required readings, and re-thinking the assignments. The course incorporates significant diversity content, and the enhancements that I would like to implement will serve in part to update that content and link it more concretely to contemporary conversations about racial justice.

The course examines the experiences of Black people in Britain during the Long 18th Century (roughly, 1660-1830), and representations of Blackness in literature and political writing of the period. This is paired with a consideration of how the 18th century is represented in contemporary fiction and film, particularly in works by Black British authors, and a reflection on what these texts from the past can teach us about race and racism in the present. The course also introduces students to ideas in critical race theory and Black feminism, as a theoretical framework for thinking about issues raised by the readings.

My primary goal is to do some more reading and research so as to make changes to the texts, in all three areas of course content: 18th century texts about Black life, contemporary fictional re-tellings, and critical essays and theory.

One of the strengths of the course is that it provides an opportunity for students to survey the longer history of race, racism, and anti-racist work, drawing connections between 18th century abolitionist struggles and Black liberation movements in the present. Students were eager to engage in this work, doing so with very little prompting. When we discussed *Oroonoko* and the representation of violence - the text includes a particularly graphic scene of torture - students quickly related our conversation about the ethics such representations to contemporary debates about whether or not videos of police killings of Black men should be shared on social media. These discussions were productive and extremely relevant to the reading, but they made clear to me the need for some shared texts that would provide us with a shared vocabulary for critical reflections on these contemporary issues. Writing on the events of the summer of 2020 would be especially relevant, as would essays reflecting on the strategies of the #BlackLivesMatter movement.

A second component of the course is to examine contemporary representations of the Black British 18th century - so many "period pieces" and works about the past present it as, simply, white, but increasingly, we find novels, poetry, films, and tv shows that include portrayals of Black life. Some of these texts are efforts to uncover a more accurate history, where others are closer to fantasy. One added benefit of this aspect of the course is that it introduces students to work by Black British authors! Many of our students unconsciously equate being Black to being African-American. They were particularly fascinated by texts that actively raised issues of the difference between Black British and African-American culture, such as Paterson Joseph's *Sancho: a Remembrance*. Another area of the course that could be updated is to include more recent examples of Black British work. The novel *Cambridge* by Caryl Phillips, for example, though a

fascinating text that gave us much to discuss, is from 1991, and could probably be replaced with something more recent.

I would also like to revisit the question of which primary texts about 18th century Black life to include. One of the major issues, for me, in planning the course was that I did not want it to center entirely around the issue of slavery and suffering. It was important to me to include texts that told stories of Black freedom, adventure, joy, and even mundane daily life. Ignatius Sancho's letters are excellent in this regard, as is the novel *The Woman of Colour*, and Equiano's autobiography (though much of his memoir discusses his experiences of slavery, he also relates tales of his travels to Turkey and the North Pole!). But I think adding even one more short text (perhaps the memoirs of Ukawsaw Gronniosaw) that speaks to the quotidian realities of Black life in London would be helpful.

The final aspect of the readings that needs to be revisited is the texts that provide historical and theoretical context. One area to update, as I've mentioned already, is to incorporate more critical reflections on the present. But I also want to make changes to some of the readings that introduce students to topics from Black Studies and Black feminist theory. I chose some of the texts, such as a chapter from Samantha Pinto's *Infamous Bodies*, or from Ramesh Mallipeddi's *Spectacular Suffering*, because they were discussing the literary works that we had read, but I think that some more general texts introducing theoretical concepts might actually be more effective. I need to spend more time reading around in the field to find those texts, but it will be easier, because having taught the course once, I have a better idea of what I need.

And certainly, a few more pieces to provide historical context are needed (in addition to the chapter from Gerzina's *Black London*) at the start of the semester. I particularly felt the lack of any theoretical or historical texts that would introduce students to the Haitian Revolution, and help them think about its impact. I am hopeful that some readings from a 2015 book by Janet Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders*, can provide some of this context, or perhaps Jean Casimir's *The Haitians: a Decolonial History*, but I need to read them, and some other texts, to make selections.

Fortunately, during the Spring of 2021, I spent 5 days at the annual meeting of the American Society for 18th Century Studies, where many of these topics were being discussed. I attended one panel on Concepts in Race and Pedagogy in 18th Century Studies, for example, and another one on new scholarship on *The Woman of Colour*. I left these presentations with long lists of recommended texts to read, and ideas for new pedagogical approaches, which I am eager to explore in more depth. The next annual meeting of the organization will take place in Baltimore in April 2022 in Baltimore, and although the conference program has not yet been finalized, I have no doubt that it will provide numerous opportunities to continue these conversations (the Call for Papers includes another panel on *The Woman of Colour* and on Concepts in Race and Pedagogy in 18th Century Studies, for instance, as well as panels on Race and Gender in the 18th Century Novel, Representations of Slavery, and Transatlantic Ties).

Indeed, the final component of the course that needs to be re-developed is on the pedagogical side, particularly, that of assignments. I intended the

blog post assignment to be a space where students could engage in low-stakes reflections on the texts. I provided some suggested topics for every reading, but I still found that students struggled with the lack of clear structure. I need to rethink this aspect, and come up with a more innovative, low-stakes assignment that will get them writing and thinking on a regular basis.

In doing this work I hope to collaborate with Dr. Kathleen Lubey (an alumna of IC's English Department). Indeed, my original inspiration for the course came out of a conversation with her, and an early look at a draft of her essay, "Teaching Eighteenth-Century Black Lives", that was recently published in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*. She will be teaching the course again in the Spring of 2022, and also attending the 18th Century Studies Annual Meeting, which gives us an opportunity to collaborate on ideas.

Thus, the primary task of course development and promotion of diversity content is extensive reading, some of which I would like to do in two different archives: one, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, in New York, and the other, the Beinecke Rare Books Library at Yale. The cost, aside from time, is primarily expenses for books, and travel to these archives, as well as travel to the Annual Meeting of the Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies in Baltimore in April. I can also use the Eighteenth-Century Collection Online, another incredible resource, with an extensive archive of texts to consider. Access to ECCO is now available at no cost to members of the American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies. I expect to be able to complete the majority of this work during the fall and winter of 2021, visiting the Schomburg Center during Fall Break, and the Beinecke during Winter Break, which will allow me to have much of it complete before I attend the Eighteenth-Century Studies conference, making the conversations that I have at the conference all the more productive. None of this will require any additional staffing. But the outcome will be an enhanced course with a better balance of readings and more structured assignments that will encourage students to reflect critically on issues of race and racism, both in the 18th century and today.

#### Estimated Budget:

Books: \$250

Membership to American Society of 18th Century Studies: \$85

American Society of 18th Century Studies Annual Meeting Registration Fee: \$150

Hotel in Baltimore for conference, March 31-April 2: \$500

Car travel to Baltimore, \$50

Per Diem: \$150

Bus travel to Schomburg Center: \$85

Hotel: \$300

Per diem: \$150

Car travel to Beinecke, \$50

Hotel: \$200

Per diem: \$50

Total:

\$2,020

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| Select Department Chair  | cholmes@ithaca.edu  |
| Select Dean  | bmurday@ithaca.edu  |
| Current CV   | <a href="https://ithacaedu-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/cmatisco_ithaca_edu/EazTuJIE2DVJq4haby9qvCEBkAJcyp5a9pU5sAmiutp-5g?name=/94700577_94700516__110908616_cv.doc">https://ithacaedu-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/cmatisco_ithaca_edu/EazTuJIE2DVJq4haby9qvCEBkAJcyp5a9pU5sAmiutp-5g?name=/94700577_94700516__110908616_cv.doc</a>                               |
| Letter of support from colleague   | <a href="https://ithacaedu-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/cmatisco_ithaca_edu/EVvdGhChG3VDh1tkYBHArIEBaMiHkD14yk5SGimq0d2DEg?name=/94700577_94700516__110908617_ChrisHolmesletter.doc">https://ithacaedu-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/cmatisco_ithaca_edu/EVvdGhChG3VDh1tkYBHArIEBaMiHkD14yk5SGimq0d2DEg?name=/94700577_94700516__110908617_ChrisHolmesletter.doc</a> |
| Applicant Signature (type name): If this grant is awarded, your signature on this proposal authorizes the Center for Faculty Excellence to share this application with your colleagues at Ithaca College to assist them in writing future proposals. | Kasia Bartoszyńska  |

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| <b>Department Chair or Program Director Approval</b>                       |  |
| As Department Chair or Program Director, I approve of the proposed project | yes  |
| Department Chair or Program Director Signature                             | Chris Holmes   |
| Comments, optional   | Excellent proposal to support an essential new course. |

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| <b>Dean Approval</b>                       |   |
| As Dean, I approve of the proposed project | yes   |
| Dean Signature                             | Brendan Murday  |
| Comments, optional                         | This project will help further inclusion efforts in the curriculum. |