

Teaching Partner Grant Proposal

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I. Teaching Partnership Goals:

This teaching partnership will be conducted between two junior faculty members with the ultimate goal of collaborating in the creation of innovative pedagogical tools and reciprocating assignment ideas and insights that will both deepen and expand student's:

- 1) Appreciation for cultural difference and processes of cultural entanglement.*
- 2) Knowledge and curiosity about African cultures, histories and literatures.*
- 3) Analytical, creative and reflective skills beyond the classroom.*

This proposed partnership will take place between a faculty member from the History Department, African/African-American Program, and Women's Studies Program—Dr. Bridget A. Teboh, and a faculty member from the Sociology/Anthropology Department and Women Studies Program—Dr. Isabel P. B. Fêo Rodrigues. Both our courses — *Readings in the Anthropology of Women* (Dr. Rodrigues) and *Topics in History: African Novel as History* (Dr. Teboh)— engage, anthropologically and historically, comparable subject matter on Sub-Saharan African literatures, histories, and cultures. This partnership will allow us to re-design, re-think, and re-adjust our previous course content and course assignments to achieve the aforementioned goals.

Teaching Partnership Description:

We will both engage in the re-design of course assignments to meet the needs and learning styles of the UMD student population. We have identified common pedagogical challenges inherent to the teaching of cultural difference and alternative life-ways. One of the main challenges is to design assignments that adequately balance content goals (what is it that we want them to learn?) and the acquisition of critical and creative thinking skills (how is it that we want them to learn and *unlearn*?). Towards this end, this partnership will give us the opportunity to experiment new assignments and assess learning outcomes as well as discuss and share ideas about articulating our expectations as junior faculty members with student's own expectations. We envision this partnership as a symbiotic unique opportunity to share frank feedback about teaching effectiveness without the pressures associated with tenure track formal evaluations.

Despite the disciplinary divide between history and anthropology, our courses have been re-designed to include African literature in the teaching of anthropology and history of Africa. Thus, we want to jointly assess:

a) How effective is the use of African literature/s in our courses? Does it enhance student's curiosity and desire to learn about cultural difference, historical processes of cultural change, and cultural entanglement?

b) How do we design assignments that reflect our reading selections and genres? Can these assignments contribute to our students learning and *unlearning* about

the power of narration in formulating claims to historical and anthropological knowledge about Africa? What other voices and styles can we entertain in our courses without relinquishing rigorous course content?

c) Are our assignments effectively harnessing the students' creative potential?

How do we construct assignments that deeply blend analytical skills through the writing of "factual" essays and creative narratives?

Planned Activities

Our planned activities are designed to share and assess teaching experiences that enable us to re-think types of assignments, course expectations, and class activities. With this partnership, we plan to meet regularly throughout the remaining academic year to discuss and provide feed-back on the following:

- a) Syllabus design.
- b) Plan Assignments and hand-outs and re-think their learning goals.
- c) Discuss our reading selections and what we hope to accomplish with them.
- d) Conduct class observations (one observation each) & write up a report.
- e) Have an after /"out-of- class" activity—take students to an African restaurant.

We hope this experience will promote a continued dialogue not only about teaching, but also about how through--what we teach and how we teach it-- we can significantly impact our student's intellectual development and creativity, while simultaneously helping each other discover innovative teaching styles that best fit our aspirations.