

Description of the Project: Conference Travel AY 2012-2013

Project Aims and Objectives

This academic year I have been accepted to attend and present at two conferences this fall, the Society for the Study of American Women Writers (SSAWW) conference (Denver, Colorado: Oct. 9-14) and the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) conference (Oakland, California: Nov. 7-11). Acceptance documentation to these conferences is included in the supplementary materials. In May I also need to attend and chair panels I organize for SSAWW at the American Literature Association (ALA) conference (Boston, Massachusetts: May 22-27, 2013). While I have no formal documentation of this duty, I would be happy to provide a letter from SSAWW's president, if documentation is required. Finally, I am organizing a panel for the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) biennial conference (Lawrence, Kansas: May 27-June 2, 2013).

Travel to these four conferences will allow me to:

- 1) present research related to my current book project, "The American Adrenaline Narrative;"
- 2) receive feedback on my developing research;
- 3) fulfill duties related to my role as Vice President for Development for the Society for the Study of American Women Writers;
- 4) share and learn innovative teaching practices; and
- 5) take advantage of professional development and networking opportunities provided at the conferences.

In addition to these research, pedagogical, and professional development objectives, my conference travel will also support the Stockton's learning, engagement, global awareness and sustainability initiatives.

For SSAWW I organized the panel, "American Women's Place: Geographies of Belonging and Alienation." My paper, "Risky Women Writers: The Gender Politics of Extreme Adventure," presents part of chapter two of my book manuscript (research completed during my 2011-2012 sabbatical). I was also asked to facilitate a small group discussion at SSAWW's mentoring breakfast addressing the theme of "Academic Networking through Social Media." Additionally, I will be presiding over SSAWW's award ceremony, which presents the book, edition, and lifetime achievement awards that I was charged with creating and administering this past year. While at the conference I will also be participating in running the conference and attending SSAWW board meetings. These activities particularly highlight learning (professional and research development; ER1, ER2) and engagement (contributions to the field; ER4).

At NWSA I am a member of a roundtable, "Student-Faculty Collaboration 2.0: Exploring Feminist Alternatives to Independent Projects with Students." My presentation, "The New and Improved Research Assistant: Zotero and Student-Faculty Research," will provide hands-on instruction for using this free bibliographic tool with undergraduate research assistants. My presentation highlights Stockton's innovative learning and engagement pedagogies. I will also

serve as the moderator for “Women Working the Net: Theorizing Gendered and Racial Bodies in Social Media Networks.” The conference will also provide opportunities for faculty development in the area global awareness: the conference theme, “Feminism Unbound: Imagining a Feminist Future” focuses on twenty-first-century feminism in the context of “contemporary patterns of global interconnectedness,” and provides a range of academic and professional development plenaries, panels, and workshops.

The two panels topics I will organize for SSAWW at ALA in May will seek papers that advance global and regional approaches to American women writers. One panel will focus on the global-regional nexus of early and nineteenth-century American women writers and the other panel will focus on this same theme in twentieth- and twenty-first-century American literature by women. This theme fits with the society’s increasingly global membership. I will also attend SSAWW board and membership meetings at the ALA.

Finally, by November 15, I will submit the panel, “Extreme Identities: Adventure and the Limits of Nature,” that I am in the process of proposing for ASLE’s May 2013 conference. The other panel members are Elizabeth Mazzolini, Visiting Assistant Professor of English at Virginia Tech, and Breyan Strickler, Associate Professor of English at Loras College. My proposed paper, “Extreme Adventure and Eco-terrorism” presents part of my book manuscript’s final chapter. I will discuss the connections between extreme adventure’s and extreme environmental group’s (sometimes labeled eco-terrorists) representations of nature in the literature that discusses their activities. Our panel, like my paper presentation at SSAWW that also builds from my book manuscript, will advance the college’s sustainability theme (S9).

Background Work Accomplished

I have applied and been accepted at two conferences this fall. I drafted these presentations over the summer and am making final revisions this fall. I have initiated the planning for SSAWW’s panels at ALA (the call for papers to our membership will not go out until after our conference in October) and have identified the other panelists for ASLE and begun to draft the panel proposal for submission by the November 15 deadline.

In terms of the status of my book manuscript, I completed necessary background reading of primary and secondary texts, wrote detailed chapter outlines based on this reading and research, and completed drafts of the manuscript’s introduction and chapter one during my 2011-2012 sabbatical. Additionally, I presented sections of chapter three at the 2011 National Women’s Studies convention, portions of the introduction and chapter one at the 2012 American Literature Association conference, and chapter two’s working argument at the 2012 International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture conference. This series of presentations along with the month I spent at New York University as a Faculty Resource Network summer scholar (June 2012) provided me with early feedback on the manuscript’s introduction and first three thematic chapters. My work over the next academic year focuses on incorporating these recommendations and completing another chapter.

Methods and Contribution to the Field

My current research on adrenaline narratives conducts a close reading of literature from an interdisciplinary perspective to identify a genre's unique characteristics and cultural implications. Specifically, I use literary, environmental and feminist theories to contribute to humanistic inquiry into the ways society simultaneously safeguards, dismantles, and remakes the beloved space of wilderness. This topography has been used as a means to justify and valorize colonial and imperial practices and policies, including the conquering of indigenous peoples. It simultaneously offers the defining iconography of the environmental movement and the adrenaline narrative. The project joins scholars such as Timothy Morton who are assuring the humanities participates in the analysis of the current environmental crisis.

Although I call my reading and by extension myself eco-feminist, I accept some characteristics generally thought to be eco-feminist while rejecting others. My methodology resists pure essentialist arguments that women are naturally closer to nature than men. I rely instead on feminist theory that posits that the forces producing sexism, racism, and environmental destruction are related.

This project contributes to the study of American literature broadly and to the study of nature and travel writing specifically. No published monograph currently combines an eco-feminist methodology and the study of extreme adventure tales. My attention to this understudied literary genre will converse well with the established scholarly works that address environmental literature, such as Laurence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) and *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001), Carolyn Merchant's *Radical Ecology* (1992), and Stacy Alaimo's *Undomesticated Ground* (2000). My research also carves out new terrain by focusing on extreme tales, by connecting travel and nature writing, and by identifying the adrenaline narrative's place both within and outside established literary traditions. The analysis of these wildly popular stories, thus, offers a chance to take the racing pulse of America's environmental imagination, which will, in turn, offer insight into the American environmental movement.

Further Research and Outcomes

The opportunity to present my research to a range of audiences over the 2012-2013 academic year is vital to the testing and honing of my book manuscript's argument. I will use this feedback to complete and revise the chapters out of which these presentations emerge. Participation in these conferences also fulfills and enhances my academic and professional obligations to both Stockton and the Society for the Study of American Women Writers.

My conference presentations will lead to publication. Given Stockton's annual 24-credit teaching load and service obligations, I expect to complete the third and fourth chapters, conclusion, and conduct revisions and editing of the completed manuscript over the next two years. I will then submit the book manuscript to The Ohio State University Press, which has asked to review the full manuscript.