

Grant Proposal

(A) Project Title:

Examination of Early New York City Crime Pamphlets, 1790 to 1840

(B) General Summary:

The project focuses on specific documents housed at the American Antiquarian Society (AAS) in Worcester, Massachusetts. These primary documents are not available at this campus and some cases at any other research institution. The documents provide an insight into the social structure of the early nineteenth century from a historical standpoint. All of the documents that I want to analyze are related to crime and punishment in New York City in the late 1700s and early 1800s. All of these provide information that will contribute to the independent study I will be completing during the summer of 2009 and this project will also contribute to my senior thesis in the fall. Furthermore, the AAS offers access to a number of databases including *The American Historical Newspapers* database, a tool that simplifies the collection of data from local newspapers of the era and significantly cuts down research time. Also the experience of visiting and completing research at an archive, such as the AAS, will aid in my development as a historian and assist in my preparation for graduate school.

(C) Background:

The main focus of this project will be on four court trials between 1793 and 1809, however, I would also look at least one other document that is only available at AAS. In chronological order they consist of, "Report of the trial of Henry Bedlow, for committing a rape" (1793), the document contains the final arguments of both the defense and prosecution; "Narrative of the life, last dying speech and confession of John Young"

(1797), a narrative that would have been sold at his execution, containing the details of his life and his murder of a sheriff's deputy; "Impartial account of the trial of Mr. Levi Weeks, for the supposed murder of Miss Julianna Elmore Sands" (1800) a record of Mr. Weeks murder trial and outcome; finally "Trial of Captain James Dunn for assault, with an intent to seduce Sylvia Patterson, a black woman, the wife of James Patterson" (1809). These four documents will make up the core of my research; however, these have only been found using the AAS online database, while actually at the archive I hope to find other pamphlets that will aid in my research. There is in fact one other document that I would wish to examine, "Prostitution exposed; or a moral reform directory" (1839) that in the United States can only be found at the AAS. The information from these documents will greatly expand my understanding of violent crime during this era and provide examples of such cases that are rare during this period.

(D) Goals of the Project:

The primary goal of this project is to research and produce a paper analyzing the documents discussed above and their relation to the social structure, values, and gender in New York City during the era. In addition, to further research crime in New York City during the Early Republic in an effort to better prepare for my senior thesis. Also, in an effort to be competitive and better prepare for graduate school as well having the experience of completing research at a major archive.

(E) Specific Methods:

The methods involved in this project involve a document-based research and analysis categorizing these documents using a number of different factors such as gender of the perpetrator and the victim, the weapon used, time period, and section of the city in

which the crime is committed. Keeping a historical context in analysis this information will help better understand this era.

(F) Role of the Student and Faculty Sponsor:

My role as student is to travel to the AAS, gather the documents, and research the material stated above and develop the analytical paper that would follow. Dr. [REDACTED] role is to supervise my progress and provide any assistance needed during the project as well as review and critique the paper upon completion.

BUDGET PAGE

Please refer to BUDGET INFORMATION (page 2) before preparing.

STUDENT APPLICANT NAME(S): [REDACTED]

FACULTY SPONSOR NAME(S): [REDACTED]

PROJECT TITLE: Examination of Early New York City Crime Pamphlets, 1790 to 1840

List all items requested for funding and provide a brief narrative to justify requested expense.

\$300 Student Fellowship(s) [not to exceed \$500 total for project]

Note: A fellowship is a non-wage award related to an academic endeavor and is subject to IRS regulations. Students who are awarded fellowships will be paid only after presentation at Student Research Day.

Name(s): [REDACTED]

Amount: \$300 \$ \$ TOTAL: \$300 (Not to exceed \$500)

\$ _____ Supplies/Materials/Minor Equipment: List and describe below.

\$406.50 Travel: Include air/train fare, mileage (current mileage rate is \$0.55/mile), lodging, per diem (*check www.gsa.gov for accurate per diem rates by location*), ground transportation, parking, tolls and any other travel expenses required specifically to conduct the research or creative activity (see Budget Information on page 2).

\$214.50 for mileage. 390 miles at \$0.55 per mile

\$192.00 for lodging. Three nights at \$64 per night.

\$20 Other Expenses: Describe expense.

Copies of the Documents Examined at \$0.40 per copy

TOTAL REQUEST: \$726.50 (not to exceed \$1,500)

FACULTY SPONSOR FORM

This form must be completed by the primary faculty sponsor, printed and signed, and included in the grant package for submission by the application deadline (noon, 16 March 2009). Additional pages are allowed for narrative comments, which will be strongly considered in the review process.

STUDENT APPLICANT(S): [REDACTED]

FACULTY SPONSOR COMPLETING THIS FORM: [REDACTED]

PROJECT TITLE: Examination of Early New York City Crime Pamphlets, 1790 to 1840

Rate the quality of the student(s) and their ability to carry out and complete the project.

1 Excellent 2 Very good 3 Good 4 Fair 5 Poor

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Familiarity with work in the applicable field | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ability to organize work |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Perseverance in pursuing goals | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Self-reliance and independence |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Potential to complete project | <input type="checkbox"/> Laboratory skills and techniques, if relevant |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ability to work cooperatively with others | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ability to communicate effectively |

Rate the student(s)' contribution to this proposal, including originality of ideas, background research, and writing.

< 25% 25-50% 50-75% 75-100%

In the space below and additional pages (if needed), please comment on the following:

Originality of the project and its significance to the relevant field of study.

(see attached letter of support)

Your role in developing the proposal and how you will facilitate completion of the project.

The applicant(s) potential to carry out the proposed research or creative activity; compare the applicant(s) with other students you have supervised or with other successful students you have known.

Additional remarks:

Signature of Faculty Sponsor(s):



History Department

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(607) 436-3326 Fax: (607) 436-2689

13 March 2009

Senate Committee on Research
State University of New York, Oneonta
Oneonta, NY 13820

Senate Committee on Research:

Please consider this letter my formal recommendation of [REDACTED]. Although only a third-year student, [REDACTED] already has a reputation as a solid student among the members of the history faculty. This is the first semester that I have had the pleasure of working with him; he is enrolled in my HIST 290: Junior Seminar—a research methods course that explores the theme of crime and punishment in New York City. As a result of his achievement in that course, and the work we have done and plan to do this summer and during the fall 2009 semester, I highly—and without reservation—recommend [REDACTED] for a Student Research Grant.

As a result of his work in my HIST 290: Junior Seminar course [REDACTED] has developed an interest in crime and trial pamphlets (cheaply produced chap-books from the eighteenth and nineteenth century). For two weeks this semester, the course explored crime pamphlets that explored rape trials and murder trials. Instead of reading these to determine the plight of the condemned, students were encouraged to analyze how the documents reflect issues of gender, power, ethnicity, and race. During those weeks, [REDACTED] produced a very impressive series of essays that attempted to demonstrate how and why a murderer—John Banks—killed his wife. His analysis focused on clues the murderer left behind in statements. During and after class, I told [REDACTED] his analysis was superior.

That discussion started a series of conversations that led to this grant application [REDACTED] wants to expand the work he is doing this semester on court pamphlets by enrolling in an independent study course during the summer 2009 semester and complete a senior thesis (which is not a requirement for the major). He wants to travel to and research the collections of the American Antiquarian Society (Worcester, MA). The American Antiquarian Society (AAS) has one of the premiere collections of early American trial pamphlets, therefore there is no other location he could visit and obtain such a wide array of primary documents—its holdings are a treasure. [REDACTED] researched the collections of the New York Public Library, the New-York Historical Society and the AAS. He determined the collections of the AAS offered him the best selection of archival material not available elsewhere. As a result of his research he has developed a collection of documents and newspaper databases he would like to explore at the Society. In short, this is a true student-initiated research grant, since the student developed the idea, did the background research and wrote the entire proposal (I gave advice and edited the text twice).

Based on the work he has completed, his ability to focus on a series of career goals (graduate school, etc) and his interest in the project, there is no doubt in my mind that he will complete this project in a timely

manner. He is committed to completing the research required and in participating in Student Research Day (spring 2010). This research has the potential to have a long term impact on [REDACTED]. It will be his first visit to a major archive and it will provide him a window onto what, how and where historians do their work—it is comparable to taking a student to a major research lab and introducing him/her to the process of doing research. These pamphlets have been housed in the AAS for years; therefore, it would be impossible to argue that the product of this work will be path-breaking. However, [REDACTED] does have a unique approach; he is not interested in the cases themselves, but how the statements made in the pamphlets reflect issues of working class masculinity. According to [REDACTED], the working class men who committed crimes did so with a purpose—it was a means of reclaiming their manhood, or asserting their masculinity over a partner, a lover or an enemy. While many historians have used the pamphlets, it is rare to find someone who wants to use the works in this manner. Therefore, I do believe the work has the potential to be very interesting and certainly exciting. If his research this summer proves successful, I do believe that he will be able to transform his research into a senior thesis; and that process will make him better positioned when it comes time to apply to graduate schools.

I support [REDACTED]'s application for a Student Research Grant. He is a promising student who is only beginning to explore his interest in the discipline. I encourage the committee to carefully review his application. If the committee needs additional information, then please contact me. I may be contacted by electronic mail at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Assistant Professor of American History and Urban Studies