U of S SoTL Cluster Charter

Across Words and Worlds: students’ collaborative literary study at Ahmedabad University and the University of Saskatchewan

Description/Background

Of prime importance in the academic study of literature is the need for students to develop sensitivity toward similarities between literary texts that have been produced under very diverse conditions. It is our contention that a cross-cultural academic study of literature facilitates such development. In this project the key goal of teaching is to guide students as they refine their understanding of the plurality of voices that deal with dynamic cultural contexts, which span politics, history, ecology, and society. Such development helps not only in shaping a student’s approach to a literary text but also contributes to facilitating students’ identification of relevant issues in historical and contemporary contexts.

In this spirit, our interests originate in the field of inquiry called cultural literacies wherein learners’ existing competencies are considered as assets. In this educational paradigm, productive, collaborative learning experiences contribute to better outcomes in levels of cultural awareness and applications of rhetorical practices.

On a broad level, our research addresses how the activities, behaviours, and attitudes of teachers and their assistants can contribute to developing learners’ skills, especially for advanced learners of English.

This project is carried out to advance the Core Learning Goals of the University of Saskatchewan. Each set of goals — discovery, knowledge, integrity, skills, and citizenship — provides us with a theoretical and practical foundation for the activities our students are engaged in. Deserving particular emphasis in this description are the last category, the Citizenship Goals:

• Value diversity and the positive contributions this brings to society.
• Share their knowledge and exercise leadership.
• Contribute to society locally, nationally, [and] globally

(http://teaching.usask.ca/about/policies/learning-charter.php#CoreLearningGoals)

Here are some questions that frame this project.

• How do instructors’ and students’ readings of several works of short fiction differ according to their cultural and cross-cultural engagements with the texts?
• How might the experience of such difference in analytical and cultural approaches enhance the study of literature by undergraduate students?
• Further, in what ways does a cross-cultural study of literature enhance students’ acquisition of academically and professionally valuable skills and knowledge?

To answer these questions, we are seeking funding for the following activities:

1. Currently, to bring this SoTL Cluster’s international faculty collaborator, Dr. Payel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee (CLEF, the Centre for Learning Futures in Ahmedabad University; payel.mukherjee@ahduni.edu.in; https://ahduni.edu.in/payel-mukherjee) to the University of Saskatchewan for intensive planning sessions, the preparation of an paper for a conference in the field of international higher education, and workshops with researchers on campus who are interested in research on international collaborative teaching. This visit will make it possible for Dr. Chattopadhyay Mukherjee to meet with administrative leaders to strategize this initiative. She will also hold one or more public lectures, ideally in collaboration with or under the auspices of the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness.
2. To acquire the international rights to provide copyrighted literary works on the curriculum of this project free of charge to students participating at CLeF.

3. Subsequently, to present and discuss our initial findings at a relevant, prominent international conference and to prepare for publication an article on a more fully developed stage of our consideration of these findings.

The growth of international academic collaboration at the UofS depends on the development of usable, site-tested models. Such models are urgently needed in the humanities, where productive intercultural engagement is rapidly becoming a key skill for students.

**Cluster Lead:**
David J. Parkinson, Professor, Department of English

**Members of the Cluster:**
Lisa Vargo, Professor, Department of English
Ann Martin, Associate Professor and Undergraduate Chair, Department of English
Kara Loy, Coordinator, Undergraduate Research Initiative, OVPR
Payel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee, Faculty Fellow, CLeF, Ahmedabad University)

**Goals and predicted timeline (specific Deliverables/Milestones):**
- October–November 2017: conduct a pilot study with ethics approval consisting of a sequence of five lectures and two tutorials in Vargo’s and Parkinson’s current sections of English 110.6; these lectures would take place alongside a similar sequence of engagements at CLeF; lectures would be given electronically in real time, with Parkinson and Vargo lecturing to CLeF on selected texts by Canadian authors, and Chattopadhyay Mukherjee lecturing to the UofS classes on selected texts by Indian authors.
- February 2018: Chattopadhyay Mukherjee comes to the UofS for planning sessions, article preparation, workshops, and public lectures.
- February–March 2018: engage in an extended shared unit of study (six weeks in duration) involving a course at CLeF and a section of English 114.3 taught by Parkinson.
- March 2018: prepare a practical guide for instructors interested in participating in and/or conducting research on this model of international collaborative teaching and learning.
- April 2018: under Martin’s guidance, plan for a participating course offering in English in the upcoming fall term; advocate for the inclusion of such a course in the schedule of offerings; with the support of Wendy Roy, Head, Department of English, brief and support the instructor of that course, who will be invited to join this SoTL cluster.
- May–June 2018: offer a collaborative paper at an international conference on SoTL.
- September–December 2018: the 3cu course takes place in collaboration with CLeF.
- November 2018: Parkinson visits CLeF and participates in meetings, workshops, and public lectures.

**Envisioned process (specify how the group will function; e.g., frequency and types of meetings, how you will monitor milestones,):**
- We meet monthly. Parkinson provides the group members with regular e-mail reports on activities and developments and solicits comment and advice on process.
- Documents are distributed electronically for comment and revision.
- All correspondence and documentation is copied electronically to Carolyn Hoessler in the Gwenna Moss Centre. The paper copies of all students’ reflections are stored in the office of Kara Loy, in the Office of Strategic Research Initiatives; a randomized numeric system is assigned to the responses so that they are grouped by student while the students’ identities are not discernible.
Financial (specify how funding will be spent, can be high level criteria and processes for allocating funds rather than a specific budget; note any additional or matching funds):

Current fiscal year (now–30 April 2018)
1. Chattopadhyay Mukherjee’s visit to campus ($3,000 air and ground travel Ahmedabad–Saskatoon return; $1000 hotel for six nights; $200 subsistence): $4,200

Additional funding: ICCC grant for Engaging India project ($1,000)

Next fiscal year (May 2018–30 April 2019)
1. SoTL cluster members present their paper at an international conference: $6,000 (using existing fundings as well as funds requested as a SoTL Cluster)
2. Extended copyright permissions for readings selected for the syllabus of the participating course: $2,000
3. Parkinson travels to CLeF for meetings and lectures: $3,000 (funded in part by sabbatical travel grant, which will also be designated for costs of travel and subsistence for related consultations at the University of Leipzig in spring 2019):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>In-kind/Existing Funding &amp; Source</th>
<th>SoTL Cluster Requested Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Payel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee’s visit to U of S (air &amp; ground travel, accommodation and daily allowances)</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$4,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copyright Permissions</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Conference Presentation</td>
<td>$3,000 (individual PD funds; ICCC Engaging India fund)</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Copyright Permissions</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UofS proponents’ Travel to CLeF</td>
<td>$4,000 (designated institutional travel grants — sabbatical, etc.)</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$7,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$9,800</strong></td>
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Scope (Focus):

In Scope:
- Intensifying engagement within the SoTL cluster, including its CLeF member
- Increasing the impact of its findings institutionally and within the international scholarly community
- Securing the rights to use selected literary works on the curriculum shared between the internationally collaborating classes.

Not In Scope:
- Technical costs (software, hardware)
- Conference expenses at the UofS
- Course development costs
- Stipends and honoraria
## Constraints, Assumptions, Risks and Dependencies of Note

### Constraints
- A potentially significant constraint has to do with coordination across distance and institutional difference: we are attempting to carry out lectures and tutorials connecting students and teachers in India and Canada.
- It has been surprising how difficult it is to secure publishers’ permissions; one might almost think that such things are unheard of and unwished for. The time and effort involved can seem inordinate.
- A key constraint involves our uncertain prospects to attract additional supporters and proponents on campus, people who are willing to try our model of collaborative teaching in their own classes.

### Assumptions
- Ethics approval
- Continuing institutional support for curricular development
- Growing interest in institutional collaboration between AU and UofS
- Mutually sustained interest in the humanities as core to institutional vitality and students’ academic and professional success

### Risks and Dependencies
- Retirement of participating UofS faculty before sufficient momentum has been achieved
- Publishers’ and agents’ disinclination to negotiate permission to make curricular texts available electronically free of charge to participating Indian students; the sheer cost of paying per text per use for such permission
- Dependencies: we need a complete pilot study, a good on-site engagement with Dr. Chattopadhyay Mukherjee, an extended first running of the initiative, a fantastic conference paper, and an impactful, substantial contribution to published research

### What in-kind support would benefit your project?
Research analysis meetings, writing retreat, identification of potential journals, and support to contributing departments (principally English, but ultimately, ideally, other departments and programs in the humanities) related to implementing changes in teaching, courses and programs.