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Chad Luck CD Summer 2010

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NAME: **Chad Luck**
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 DATE SUBMITTED: 9/19/11

Title of Grant Award: Course Development Grant (Summer, 2010)

Project Goals:

Student Learning Goals	Teaching Innovation to Achieve the Goal
1. Provide students with an interdisciplinary methodological foundation for analyzing (and for teaching) texts in a variety of disciplines and formats.	In addition to traditional literary texts, students will analyze a wide range of media including paintings, music, film, and theater.
2. Encourage students to develop a trans-historical perspective on literary analysis so that they can link older texts to contemporary concerns.	Students will perform a comparative analysis of Poe’s antebellum work and later adaptations or translations of that work.
3. Develop students’ ability to conceptualize new rhetorical situations for literary analysis and to then enact them.	Students will produce an “exhibit” and an “exhibit description” for the class’s web-based Poe archive.
4. Further develop collaborative and student-to-student interactivity skills.	Students will work in small groups to coordinate and execute web-based “exhibitions” of Poe materials on class website.
5. Demonstrate for students the ways in which criticism and analysis of a literary text can be productively linked to creative work.	Students will produce their own written or multi-media adaptation of a Poe work.
6. Help students cultivate critical self-awareness of their own interpretative and creative processes.	Students will write a reflective self-analysis of their own Poe adaptation

When Implemented:

Winter, 2011

Brief Description of the Project:

This project aims to develop for the English department a new and rigorously interdisciplinary course in the work of Edgar Allan Poe. Traditionally, Poe’s work is taught in a fairly circumscribed fashion: it is viewed as a product of the nineteenth-century Gothic and the grotesque, and it is closely bound to established forms of antebellum writing. My course, however, re-frames Poe as a persistently influential

cultural phenomenon that reaches well beyond the middle of the nineteenth century, stretching instead across the last 175 years. Students will read Poe in relation to both his contemporary, mass-market culture and, more provocatively, in relation to a range of subsequent Poe-influenced works and adaptations. In addition to cultivating an interdisciplinary, “cultural studies” methodology, students will produce and analyze their own creative adaptations of Poe’s work. This is a pedagogy designed to demonstrate ways in which creative and analytical thinking can be linked in productive synthesis. More broadly, the course asks students to rethink the ways in which literary texts are produced, and reproduced, across both time and aesthetic genre. In so doing, the course informs and empowers student analysis by encouraging them to develop a historically sophisticated and theoretically supple approach to textual interpretation.

How the Project was Implemented:

Key components of the project were implemented just as I planned in the project proposal. Students performed comparative analyses of original Poe works alongside their twentieth-century adaptations. So, for instance, students first read and analyzed Poe’s short story, “The Black Cat,” and then put that analysis in dialogue with the 1934 Edgar Ulmer film adaptation. While engaging Poe adaptations across different media (painting, music, film, etc.), students developed cross-disciplinary skills of analysis. In short, they learned how apply analysis to different cultural forms. Students also produced their own alternative media adaptations of a chosen Poe work and produced a reflective analysis of that adaptation.

The major difference between my implementation and the original plan was the removal of the web-based Poe archive. There were two reasons for this: (1) online research revealed the previous existence of several extensive multimedia Poe archives; (2) the 10-week scope of the course did not provide enough time to include the web-development activities.

Results of the Project:

The class was a rousing success. The comparative analyses of original Poe works and their subsequent adaptations provided students with a firm foundation for their writing success in the final analytical paper. In it, they were asked to analyze how Poe’s novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, was taken up, adapted, and reframed in Yann Martel’s 2001 novel, *Life of Pi*. Students developed innovative lines of inquiry with which to link the two novels and did a remarkable job of excavating the shared thematic and philosophical concerns of both books.

Even more impressive were the creative student adaptations of Poe’s work. In a range of media—including sculpture, song, dance, and painting—students produced an inspiring caliber of artwork adapting and building on the looks, feelings, and ideas of Poe’s original works. Perhaps most rewardingly, students were able in their reflective analyses to theorize the process of adaptation itself. They were actively questioning conventional

notions of originality and authorial intent as they themselves transformed one work of art into another.

Additional Comments:

Next time I teach the class I plan to emphasize two or three specific theoretical paradigms for approaching Poe's work. This time around, we used a grab bag of theoretical lenses (historicist, formalist, deconstructive) but the presentation was a bit more haphazard than I would like. So, in the next version of the class, I plan to foreground psychoanalytical and feminist lenses as two especially productive perspectives from which to approach Poe's work and the adaptations that build on his work. I think Poe's body of work is highly amenable to theoretically-inflected analysis and I'd like to leverage that quality the next time around.