

# APPLICATION CHECKLIST

## Presidential Faculty/Student Collaboration and Publication Grant

**Deadline February 15<sup>th</sup> (or following Monday if a weekend)**

Please print and complete this checklist and attach it as the cover page of your grant application. For more information about Presidential Faculty/Student Collaboration and Publication grants, please see <http://gustavus.edu/facdev/GrantOpportunities/PresidentialGrant.php>.

### Faculty information

Name: Thia Cooper Dept: Religion

Email: tcooper@gac.edu Rank: Assistant Professor

### Student Information

Name: Dominic Xiong Year: Junior (Graduating 2011)

Email: dxiong@gac.edu Major: English

### Checklist

#### Project Details

- ☒ Brief description of the proposed project including its collaborative nature
- ☒ Clear statement of anticipated outcomes
- ☒ Likely placement for publication or performances
- ☒ Anticipated research completion date

#### Participant Details

- ☒ Names and brief biographies of all participants
- ☒ Explanation of how this project fits into the career of the faculty
- ☒ Explanation of how this project fits into the educational trajectory of the student  
(include year of graduation; student eligibility is limited to full-time returning students)

- ☒ Presidential Budget Proposal Form attached as last page of application
- ☐ Nine (9) copies of completed application (including this checklist) to be submitted to the John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning (SSC 119)

If successful, my proposal can be used as an example to assist future faculty applications.  
This decision will not in any way influence the evaluation of my application.

Yes

## Project Details:

### 1. Brief description of the proposed project including its collaborative nature

How does faith influence economic and political practice and decision-making? Answering this question is crucial for two reasons: 1. it enhances our understanding of the purview of faith and 2. it helps to explain how faith, economic and political systems intersect in the actions of people daily. There is little scholarship researching the impact of these intersections, particularly with regard to Christianity. It is deeply important to identify and deal with the faith-based values that underlie many world systems.

My (Thia's) first book *Controversies in Political Theology* spoke to these issues. In working with faith-based development organizations in the UK and Brazil, I found that there was disagreement over democratic capitalism/capitalist democracy. In the UK (and in the USA) there was an assumption among Christians that Christianity, democracy and capitalism formed a coherent process which, when applied to poorer countries, came to be known as 'development'. In contrast, I found that in Brazil, this notion of 'development' was rejected, as was its 'assumed' basis in Christianity. From within the Christian tradition, there was a search for alternatives that would be faithful to Christianity, e.g., liberation theology.

Over time people trying to put faith into practice became critical of theologians in both regions. Theologians failed to deal with the reality on the ground: the poverty of the world's majority. Practitioners are still searching for a coherent theological worldview for their economic and political practice. They argue that: 1. Theology should reflect on practice; and 2. Practice should be theologically grounded. Is there a theological understanding of the world that correlates with the reality of the majority of the world's Christians: a life in poverty?

In beginning the research for my second book, I posed these questions within a community of Brazilian immigrants in Framingham, MA. Brazilian-Americans have encountered differing and contradictory worldviews: the poverty of the few Christians amongst the majority of the rich (USA) and the poverty of the majority of Christians amongst the few rich (Brazil). This provided an opportunity to identify and examine their worldviews.

Their focus was on immigration itself. Questions emerged including: what is the theology behind migrating? How should the migrants act? How should the hosts act? In Christian theological language: who is my neighbor and how should I treat my neighbor?

In essence, the economics, politics, and theology that I addressed in my first book come together over particular issues. The Brazilian community articulated them within immigration. Thus, this has become the focus of my second book. While there have been tomes published on the religion of immigrants there is very little published on how host and migrant views of immigration intersect through economic, politics, and theology. Yet the vast majority of migrants into the USA are Christian and almost all bring a religious tradition with them. Faith underlies their daily lives.

Having unpacked some of these intersections in the Brazilian-American community, I want to broaden the conversation to another group of migrants to be able to draw together some overall threads. This grant proposal is for fieldwork with the Hmong community, which will become one chapter in my book.

I have thought about working with the Hmong community for some time but I wanted to be able to collaborate with someone inside the community. Dominic is the perfect collaborator for this project. I first met Dom as an excellent and engaged student in my Faith, Religion and Culture class. He then applied to be a CF in my building (I'm head resident of the International Center). Originally a nursing major, he has several qualities that made him stand out to me when I thought about this research: first, he is Hmong; second, one of his parents is Christian and the other practices the traditional religion; third, as a nursing major he gained experience with the qualitative and quantitative methods necessary for this research; fourth, he has changed his major to English. His writing skills are excellent and he has the background both in the Hmong community and in religion to co-author this chapter with me.

In this piece of the research, we will pose the questions to the Hmong community in the Twin Cities that emerged from the Brazilian research. During the summer, we will conduct fieldwork and analysis in this community. Dominic is already working to get together the relevant contacts. By working alongside Hmong Americans in the cities, we will better understand their worldviews, how they live these views out in practice, and the implications for integrating faith and action in a wider context. We will then analyze and begin to write up the emerging data.

In terms of our timeline, we plan first to do some background reading during the spring and the first two weeks of our work together. The next four weeks will be composed of intensive fieldwork and interviews. The final two weeks we will continue to analyze the data and write up a draft. This draft will be revised during the fall semester and in light of the responses to our paper presentation at the AAR conference.

We want to briefly introduce the Hmong situation. First, the Hmong have never had a homeland. One of the ethnic groups to migrate south from southern China, the Hmong settled in the mountains of Laos. First colonized by the French, and then living as a minority when Laos gained its independence, they never held political power. In addition, used by the Americans to help fight the Vietnam War and to try to eradicate communism in Laos itself in the Secret War, they are considered enemies of the state. Not only were many killed in the war itself but they were cleansed after the end of the war when the USA left Laos and Vietnam. Many Hmong fled to Thailand in the 1970s where some still live in refugee camps today. After the Vietnam War, the Americans left the Hmong to fend for themselves. The USA has responded to this huge refugee crisis by allowing some of the Hmong refugees to enter the USA where they reside mainly in Minnesota, Wisconsin and California. It is still not safe for the Hmong to return to Laos, although the Thai government is now closing the last few refugee camps in Thailand and shipping the Hmong back over the Laotian border.

I (Thia) chose the Hmong community to compare with the Brazilian-American community for several reasons. First, the Hmong are considered political refugees while the B-A community are considered economic migrants. Second, the remaining Hmong in Thailand are being returned to Laos where they are still in danger. Hence the situation, is topical. Third, while the Brazilian community tended to be Christian prior to their arrival in the USA, the Hmong have had to decide whether to remain in their traditional religions or to convert to Christianity. Fourth, many Hmong have converted to Lutheranism, which provides a broader perspective alongside the Catholicism and Pentecostalism of the Brazilians. And finally, the Hmong population in the Twin Cities is one of the three such largest communities in the USA.

We will use the methods of participant observation and qualitative data analysis (from sociology and anthropology) to see what is happening in the communities. I (Thia) have found that short but intensive periods of fieldwork are the most effective way to engage with community organizations, especially among poor populations where the participants are constantly changing. We will write daily fieldnotes, gather information, and then analyze the data using a qualitative data analysis program to find the emerging themes. We will then focus the remaining fieldwork around these themes. I (Thia) combine this with theology, which I define as the mixture of beliefs and practice that emerge from a faith-based community, a notion stemming from liberation theology.

This theological method is known as the hermeneutical (interpretive) circle, integral to liberation theology. In this method of theological reflection, communities first become aware of their own situation, for example poverty. Then they analyze this situation from the perspective of the social sciences (economics, politics, etc) and from the perspective of their faith. They combine class analysis, for example, with interpreting scripture on poverty. Spirituality and reality are integrated with each other, speak with each other. Finally, this reflection should lead to further action on the part of the community, for example, concrete projects to eradicate poverty. Our role is to reflect more widely on themes in theology and in the social sciences, to draw together the threads of reflection in these various communities.

Where have faith and practice integrated? Where do the gaps remain? How is the practice changed by these analyses? It is this work we will undertake in the Hmong community.

This research will culminate in a chapter of my (Thia's) second book, aimed primarily at students in religious studies. I have begun to organize the book around the data emerging from the previous fieldwork and its analysis. This will be adapted based on this summer's research. I plan to write the book for publication during my sabbatical. (There has already been interest from the *Reclaiming Liberation Theology* Series Editors at SCM Press).

The tentative outline of the book thus far is:

Part I: Theologies of migration in the creation and settlement of the USA;

Part II: Theologies of migration in recent U.S. history;

Part III: How are Christians responding to the issue of migration? Two case Studies

Part IV: Where should Christians go from here?.

2. Clear statement of anticipated outcomes

Dominic and I will write a draft of the case study to be included in my book *Theologies of Immigration* as a chapter. We will present our findings either at the national or regional annual conference of the American Academy of Religion. I have already submitted a proposal to the annual conference.

3. Likely placement for publication or performances

See above.

4. Anticipated research completion date

September 2010 with revisions based on the feedback we receive at the conference.

Participant Details

1. Names and brief biographies of all participants

Thia Cooper:

I am an assistant professor of religion here at GAC and also teach courses for Latin American, Latino/a, and Caribbean Studies. I completed my PhD in Theology and Development Studies at the University of Edinburgh where I focused on the intersection of faith and practice in two aid and development organizations: Christian Aid, UK and the Center for Studies and Social Action, Brazil. In 2007 I published my first book *Controversies in Political Theology*. I also have a forthcoming chapter in the *Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* on a liberationist perspective of religion and violence and I have an article on liberation theology and the sex trade that will be published in *Feminist Theology*. I regularly present on topics related to liberation theologies and I am chair of the Liberation Theologies Consultation in the American Academy of Religion. I am a reviewer for the journal *Political Theology*. I am also head resident of the Carlson International Center here at GAC and advise the Crossroads Program.

Dominic Xiong:

I am currently a Junior English major at Gustavus. I was born in Eau Claire, Wisconsin to a Hmong Christian-following mother and a traditionally religious Hmong father but I never noticed any religious tension. As a child, I was exposed to both Christian-based views and traditional Hmong values. In 2007 I graduated from Hastings High School and am the first grandchild to attend college from either side of my family. At Gustavus, I first encountered Thia Cooper in the *Faith, Religion and Culture* course. Through it, I garnered interest in the effects of interacting, and sometimes conflicting, cultures and religions. I pursued a Nursing degree from Gustavus up to the first semester of my Junior year. I decided to shift to an English major to polish my writing and verbal skills in preparation for graduate study in either law or collegiate administrative work. I have also been a Collegiate Fellow at Gustavus for the past two years, and will perform the duty for a third this next fall. I have enjoyed dealing with diverse people on very personal levels and trying to create a positive environment.

2. Explanation of how this project fits into the career of the faculty  
This project will be a chapter in my book on theologies of immigration. It fits well into my career path in four ways.

First, working with Dominic in the Hmong community will help me gain entry into a new community for fieldwork, one more Minnesota-oriented than my previous work with Brazilians and Brazilian-Americans.

Second, it will extend my expertise in the area of migration from the Brazilian community.

Third, it will help me to gain a broader view of the issue of immigration and its relation to political theology.

And finally, it will allow me to gain expertise in a community from where a portion of our students come, enabling me to better respond to and connect with them in the classroom.

3. Explanation of how this project fits into the educational trajectory of the student.

The fieldwork uses and develops the qualitative and quantitative skills that I've gained through the courses I've taken for nursing. It also presents a perfect mix of those qualities with the humanities I've begun to study at Gustavus. It will help my research and writing skills, learning to craft and be as precise as possible in creating a valid argument. I have never written with someone before. Being able to write with someone who has more experience will also benefit me greatly. The project will also help me assess what path I take in my graduate studies, whether it is in regard to law or collegiate education.

I hope to take the information that I learn through my collaborative research with Thia Cooper, and apply it in a positive manner towards helping my own people. Previous views of Hmong in Minnesota have generalized us negatively: hunting, fishing, religion. The Hmong dynamics within the family are very different to American culture, comfortable in a way you have experience yourself. I can be both a participant and observer and translator, learning to better understand my culture.

The research will also help me understand what is happening to Hmong youth, especially those who are poor inner-city occupants, and where they are typically going in terms of their education. It seems to me that the Hmong going to college leave much of their tradition behind. This topic in particular, is an important issue for the future of my people and the way they will develop in the oncoming years.

Whether I choose law or collegiate education, the completion of this project will be important to the way I choose to help my own people as they deal with the effects of integration.

A History of The Hmong: From Ancient Times to The Modern  
Diaspora ~ Thomas Vang \$64.24

Tragic Mountains: The Hmong, the Americans, and the Secret Wars  
for Laos, 1942-1992 ~ Jane Hamilton-Merritt \$23.89

Hmong in Minnesota (People of Minnesota)~ Chia Vang \$10.88

I Begin My Life All Over: The Hmong and the American Immigrant  
Experience Lillian Faderman Professor \$19.80

Cultural Conflict and Adaptation: The Case of Hmong Children in  
American Society ~ Henry T. Trueba, Lila Jacobs, Elizabeth  
Kirton 47.95

Hmong Means Free ~ Sucheng Chan \$23.12

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down~ Anne Fadiman \$10.20

New Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin ~ Jo Ann  
Koltyk, Nancy Foner \$25.73

Hmong and American: Stories of Transition to a Strange Land  
~ Sue Murphy Mote \$39.95

Bamboo Among the Oaks: Contemporary Writing by Hmong  
Americans ~ Mai Neng Moua (Author) \$11.21

Healing by Heart: Clinical and Ethical Case Stories of Hmong  
Families and Western Providers ~ Kathleen A. Culhane-Pera ,  
Dorothy E. Vawter, Phua Xiong, Barbara Babbitt, Mary M.  
Solberg 32.97

Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation  
(JOSSEY-BASS HIGHER & ADULT EDUCATION SERIES)  
(Paperback) \$36.45

346.39

# **Presidential Faculty/Student Collaboration Grant BUDGET INFORMATION**

**Faculty Stipend** (\$300 per week, up to \$2,400)

**Student Summer Stipend** (\$400 per week, up to \$3,200)

**Student Summer Campus Housing** (\$XXX per week, up to 8 weeks)

ITEM		AMOUNT
Equipment (e.g., transcription machine, camera, cassette recorder — but not to include computer hardware)		\$
1:	Cost:	
2:	Cost:	
3:	Cost:	
Materials (e.g., books, printing, software, lab supplies)		\$346.39
1:	Cost:	
2:	Cost:	
3:	Cost:	
Travel Costs (cannot include conference travel, see <a href="http://gustavus.edu/finance/travel.php">http://gustavus.edu/finance/travel.php</a> for allowable travel expenses)		\$ 825
Airfare:		
Mileage: Number of miles 150 @ \$0.55/mile x 10		
Lodging:		
Meals:		
Stipends & Housing		\$5,950
Faculty Stipend	\$300 per week, up to \$2,400	\$2,400
Student Summer Stipend	\$400 per week, up to \$3,200	\$3,200
Student Summer Campus Housing	\$43.75 per week, up to 8 weeks, \$350	\$ 350
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$7120.39
If granted the 6450, I will cover the mileage from my stipend		
AMOUNT REQUESTED		\$6450

**Have you applied for, or received funding from, another source to help support this project?**

**Funding Source:** RSC

**Amount:** \$2,200 to complete project on my own. I will not accept the RSC if granted the Presidential

**Please explain how the Presidential will be used in addition to the other funding.**