

APPLICATION CHECKLIST
Research, Scholarship, and Creativity Grant

Deadline February 12th

Please print and complete this checklist and attach it as the cover page of your grant application.

Faculty information

Name: Sean Cobb

Dept: English

Email: scobb@gustavus.edu

Rank Assistant Professor

Checklist

☒ **Description of previous projects (and outcomes) funded by RSC grants**

☒ **Complete project description, including separate statements of:**

1. **Purpose.** What are the intellectual, conceptual, or artistic issues? How does your work fit into other endeavors being done in this field?
2. **Feasibility.** What qualifications do you bring to this project? What have you done/will you do to prepare for this project? What is the time period, i.e. summer, summer and academic year, academic year only? Is the work's scope commensurate with the time period of the project?
3. **Project Design.** This should include a specific description of the project design and activities, including location, staff, schedules or itineraries, and desired outcomes.

☒ **RSC Budget Proposal Form attached as last page of application**

☒ **Nine (9) copies of completed application and budget (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 No (please circle one)

Research, Scholarship, and Creativity Grant BUDGET INFORMATION

Faculty Stipend

(\$500 professor; \$600 associate professor; \$700 assistant professor)

Expenses

Faculty may apply for up to \$1500 to pay for the cost of equipment, materials, personnel, and travel associated with the project to be funded by the RSC Grant. All expenses must be necessitated by the project to be funded by the RSC Grant.

ITEM		AMOUNT
Equipment (e.g., transcription machine, camera, cassette recorder— but not to include computer hardware)		\$ 0
1:	Cost:	
2:	Cost:	
3:	Cost:	
Materials (e.g., books, printing, software, lab supplies)		\$ 200
1: Films	Cost: \$ 200	
2:	Cost:	
3:	Cost:	
Personnel (e.g., typist, transcriptionist, student assistant)		\$ 800
1: Ian Ingersoll, student assistant for one month		
2:		
Travel Costs (cannot include conference travel; see http://gustavus.edu/finance/travel.php for allowable travel expenses)		\$ 0
Airfare:		
Mileage: Number of miles @ \$0.55/mile		
Lodging:		
Meals:		
Other Expenses		\$ 0
1:	Cost:	
2:	Cost:	
3:	Cost:	
		\$
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$ 1,000.00
AMOUNT REQUESTED (not to exceed \$1500 + stipend commensurate with rank)		\$ 1,000.00

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

Funding Source:

Amount:

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

Sean Cobb
RSC Grant Proposal
February 11, 2010

1) Purpose:

This project investigates the role of comedic political films in relation to what Hannah Arendt refers to as the collapse of public political space. Hannah Arendt's 1963 book *On Revolution* contrasts with the period's predominantly Marxist interpretations of political revolution by arguing for the importance and long-lasting consequences of the American Revolution over and above the contributions of the French Revolution and other European revolutions. Arendt contends that the American Revolution was successful because it instituted public political spaces in the form of councils and town halls, which sought to preserve the initial revolutionary spirit in long-lasting institutions that would guarantee the public freedom and public spirit that the revolution fostered. While Arendt claims that the French Revolution began in much the same way as the American Revolution, she argues that the French Revolution became sidetracked with "social questions," namely concerns about economics and social justice. Ultimately, Arendt argues that the United States also failed to preserve its revolutionary tradition:

Obviously, what was lost through the failure of thought and remembrance was the revolutionary spirit...We have mentioned these principles before and, following eighteenth-century political language, we have called them public freedom, public happiness, public spirit. What remained of them in America, after the revolutionary spirit had been forgotten, were civil liberties, the individual welfare of the greatest number, and public opinion as the greatest force ruling an egalitarian, democratic society. This transformation corresponds with great precision to the invasion of the public realm by society; it is as though the originally political principles were translated into social values. (Arendt, *On Revolution*, 222)

In order to preserve the political stability of the new American republic, political principles, according to Arendt, were perverted by social values that transformed the political ideals of public freedom, public happiness and public spirit into the baser values of civil liberties, individual welfare and public opinion. For Arendt, political freedom entails the right to be a participator in government. And when the American political structure failed to ensure these public political freedoms, civil rights and opinion became the only avenues for the expression of freedom by the American populace.

Researching the history of the political comedy genre, beginning with films like Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*, Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith goes to Washington*, Preston Sturges's *All Hail the Conquering Hero*, Elia Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd* up to more recent examples, such as *Wag the Dog*, *Charlie Wilson's War* and *Swing Vote*, I intend to examine how political comedy signals the triumph of persons and personality over public political space and, in a way, reverses the feminist credo that "the personal is political" by underscoring how the personal trumps the political. I

argue that there is no political or social in these political comedies because these categories have been superseded by the charm of the individual and the personal.

2) Feasibility:

I have written a conference paper on this topic that focuses on the film *Swing Vote*, the type of right-wing populism represented by Joe the Plumber in the 2008 election, Hannah Arendt and Richard Hofstadter's "The Paranoid Style of American Politics." I would like to continue with this topic by expanding the research to other films and other periods in American politics. I have written many conference papers on film generally and have published articles on film. I would like to use the time provided by the grant to produce an article on the topic. I anticipate that this project can be completed during the summer of 2010. I plan on purchasing and reviewing the films in the lead up to the summer so that I can spend most of the summer writing and editing the article.

3) Project Design:

The project is intended to enlist the help of a freshman Ian Ingersoll, who is interested in pursuing an English major. Ian has been in my English 142: Film as Art, my J-Term course on the Horror genre and is currently enrolled for my Contemporary American Literature course (excessive, I know). I plan on having Ian watch and review a large selection of films, writing up small reports on those films. I will be responsible for watching and reviewing another selection of films. Once summer begins, I plan on meeting with Ian daily and reviewing what we watched and discussing the feasibility of including specific films in the article. The article is not intended as a review, so we will need to decide on the most salient examples of political comedies. Once Ian and I have hashed out the films to discuss, we will watch the films together and sketch out how we plan to utilize the films in relation to the main argument. After we have found a representative example of films and narrowed down how we "read" those films in connection to the argument, Ian and I will begin to structure the article. I'm anticipating that this initial, pre-writing process will take two weeks. Once this process is done, I'm anticipating that it will take a month to produce the first draft of the article and another two weeks to edit, revise and polish the article. I plan on meeting Ian in the library basement, next to the film collection, so we can write, discuss and screen the films as needed. I don't anticipate needing any other resources besides purchasing the films that the library doesn't own. The final result of the project will, I hope, be a co-written article that can be published in a journal and all the incentive that Ian needs to become a major.