

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: Deane Curtin
Dept: Philosophy
Rank: Professor
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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)	\$
1: Cost:	
2: Cost:	
3: Cost:	
Materials (e.g., books, printing, software, lab supplies)	\$ 1500
1: books (see attached	Cost: \$1200
examples)	
2: Office supplies	Cost: \$300
(ink/paper/files)	
3: Cost:	
Personnel (e.g., typist, transcriptionist, student assistant)	\$
1:	
2:	
Travel Costs (cannot include conference travel, see http://gustavus.edu/finance/travel.php for allowable travel expenses)	\$
Airfare:	
Mileage: Number of miles @ \$0.55/mile	
Lodging:	
Meals:	
Other Expenses	\$ 500
1: Stipend - Professor	Cost: \$500
2: Cost:	
3: Cost:	
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$
AMOUNT REQUESTED (not to exceed \$1500 + stipend commensurate with rank)	\$ 2000

Have you applied for, or received funding from, another source to help support this project? No

Proposal for a Research, Scholarship and Creativity Grant Summer, 2010

Deane Curtin
Department of Philosophy

Previous RSC Grants and Results:

1. 1989-90 grant: resulted in a book, *Cooking, Eating, Thinking* (Indiana University Press, 1992)
2. 1990-91 grant: resulted in two published articles. "Dogen, Deep Ecology, and the Ecological Self," *Environmental Ethics*, vol. 16, no. 2, (1994):195-213 and "Mothering: Moral Cultivation in Buddhist and Feminist Ethics," (with John Powers) *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 44, no. 1, (1994): 1-18.
3. 1993-94 grant: research in India resulted in "Gandhian Legacies: Indigenous Resistance to Development in India and Mexico." In *Mahatma Gandhi: 125 Years*, Manmohan Choudhuri and Ramjee Singh, editors, 24-34. Varanasi, India: Gandhian Institute of Studies, 1995. (To commemorate the 125th anniversary of Gandhi's birth.)
4. January Term, 1996: research on indigenous vs. development issues in Israel. Resulted in "'Liberal Imperialism' or Local Knowledge? Questions for the Population/Environment Debate," Also Chapter Two of my book *Chinagounder's Challenge* (Indiana University Press, 1999).
5. 1998, summer: completed article "Ecological Citizenship" published in *A Handbook of Citizenship Studies*, Sage Press, London.
6. 2002, research at the University of Arizona Center for Creative Photography on the use of photography in establishing a distinctively American sense of nature. Results published in my book *Environmental Ethics for a Postcolonial World*.
7. 2005, support for work on an environmental ethics anthology for college students. The book was originally intended as a single all-purpose anthology. However, with the economic slowdown publishers were not publishing these anthologies any longer in what they regarded as small markets. The book has been reframed as an anthology focusing on global (nonwestern) environmental ethics. It has been accepted for publication, and will appear next year.

Project Description:

a. Purpose:

I am requesting support for work on new book project, now titled *Ethics Before Good and Evil*. I expect to complete the book during my next sabbatical, which I hope to receive during the 2012-2013 academic year.

In the broadest sense, the topic of the book is a challenge to the mainline conception of ethics as the search for *rules* that allow us to distinguish between

good and bad actions or persons. It looks to "marginal" figures in both Western and non-Western philosophy to reconfigure the question of what we are looking for from ethical inquiry. These figures include Baruch Spinoza and Friedrich Nietzsche, the feminist "care tradition," as well as seminal, but largely unknown (in the West), Buddhist philosophers, such as Nagarjuna and Shantideva. The book argues that conceiving ethics as the search for universal principles of good and evil leads to an incoherent conception of ethics, and fragmented moral practices. In fact, ethics *could not be* the project that mainline Western philosophers have thought it to be. The moral domain is the sphere of life *before* distinctions between good and evil.

Immanuel Kant, for example, believed that the purpose of ethics is to elucidate an absolute moral principle, which universally establishes our duties. He termed this the *categorical imperative*. For Kant, this moral law establishes our duties non-empirically, and therefore, without any reference to future consequences.

On the other hand, Jeremy Bentham, founder of utilitarianism, tried to establish a universal moral principle capable of governing the moral lives of all (civilized) people, in terms of the consequences (pleasures and pains) brought about by actions.

So, on the surface, no two philosophers could be farther apart: Kant argued that we establish a universal moral principle through a universal law, and *never* looking to consequences. Bentham said the universal moral law is established by *only* calculating consequences. Seems like the have all the logical possibilities covered; it's not surprising that most of Western moral philosophy has involved fighting in the trenches between these two, apparently exhaustive, alternatives.

However, when we look below this surface disagreement, we find that they are profoundly in agreement about the basic task of philosophical ethics. Ethics is the discipline of discovering a universal moral principle that allows us to distinguish between the good and evil. Kant and Bentham just disagree about what this principle is.

Outside of this mainline tradition are major figures who conceive of ethics differently. Spinoza, paradoxically, wrote a little read masterpiece titled *Ethics*, in which he argues that ideas of good and evil are nothing more than anthropocentric projections of the human mind. Ethics is fundamentally (paradoxically) a nonanthropocentric project.

Nietzsche notoriously criticized the anthropocentric tendencies of Christianity (as he conceived it) and argued that real ethics must move "beyond good and evil". There is still much scholarly controversy over what this territory beyond good and evil is. I think his idea of "the will to power" is confused. However, Nietzsche scholarship over the past decade has shifted away from the existentialist distortions of previous decades and toward a new, naturalist and pragmatic

Nietzsche. It is significant, for example, that Spinoza's rigorous naturalism is one of the few approaches to ethics that earns Nietzsche's respect. Also, Nietzsche had a little noticed, but lifelong, engagement with Buddhism, which also gained his respect, although it is now widely granted that he had, at best, a partial understanding of Buddhism. So, there's great potential in Nietzsche to uncover elements that support a conception of ethics before good and evil, but there's still work to be done sorting out these elements.

The feminist care tradition in ethics has offered the most significant critique of ethics as universal rules. The critique, which began with Carol Gilligan's critique of Lawrence Kohlberg's Kantian assumptions about ethics, has evolved into a sophisticated alternative view based on contextual caring rather than noncontextual, abstract conceptions of justice.

Finally, major Buddhist philosophers such as Nagarjuna (called the "second Buddha" for his explication of the wisdom tradition in Mahayana) and Shantideva (who wrote the foundational book on compassion, also common to all the Mahayana traditions) offered fundamentally different conceptions of ethics based on an articulation of the practice of thoroughgoing compassion. Many authors in this tradition explicitly see themselves as criticizing ethics as the pursuit of a universal distinction between good and evil.

In the early chapters of the book, then, I bring out this important, but little noticed interaction between Spinoza, Nietzsche, the Feminist Care Tradition, and a Buddhist philosophy of compassion. In the later chapters of the book I use this alternative perspective to explore concrete ethical dilemmas that have eluded mainline thinking in ethics. I will show, for example, that the problem of abortion is partly caused by the Western concept of ethics, and therefore cannot be resolved within that tradition.

In short, the alternative approach to ethics is that it is:

Fundamentally nonanthropocentric. Nietzsche was right that ethics from the late Greeks through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was nothing more than a human attempt to project a narrow human conception of life onto the universe. Not surprisingly, according to one celebrated view, the whole universe is a Creation designed to triumphantly result in US.

However, it's also important to understand that ethics before good and evil is not relativistic, or bound to some totalitarian "will to power". (While Nietzsche's negative critique of ethics was on target, his positive prescriptions for ethics show an inability to imagine what is beyond the Western ethical project.) Here, the Buddhist critique of self is central. Where Nietzsche's remedy is the strengthening of the ego, the Buddhist/Spinozist remedy is to live in the face of reality, to live the truth that one's ego isn't Real. Out of this realization comes deep compassion for all beings.

Feasibility:

Qualifications for the project:

I have taught the department's course on ethical theory for twenty-five years and am thoroughly versed in the Western ethical traditions. I have taught seminars on Spinoza's ethics twice. I regularly teach a January travel course, Buddhist India, which is an introduction to Buddhism taught on-sight in India. The major Buddhist figures mentioned above are parts of this course. In addition, beginning next fall I expect to teach a new course annually at the 200 level titled Buddhist Philosophy. I also regularly teach the Gilligan/Kohlberg controversy.

In terms of publishing and scholarship, I have published several books and many articles on Western ethics, Buddhist philosophy, Spinoza, and the Feminist Care Tradition.

One recent development is my access to two of the foremost philosophers in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. As part of the planning for my January Term course, Buddhist India, I was granted access to Kalon Tripa Samdhong Rinpoche and Geshe Lakdhor La. Samdhong Rinpoche is currently the Prime Minister of the Tibetan government in exile. For thirty years he was chancellor of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, India, ranked by the government of India as one of the three best universities in the country. Samdhong Rinpoche is a brilliant philosopher whose work should be better known in the West. Geshe La is the director of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala, the institute that is responsible for preservation and dissemination of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. Like Samdhong Rinpoche, he is a brilliant philosopher. They are among the foremost authorities on the two Buddhist figures who interest me the most: Nagarjuna and Shantideva.

Both Samdhong Rinpoche and Geshe La have kindly offered to continue consulting with me as the book develops. Because I am in Dharamsala every January with my course I am not asking for travel funding in this grant. However, I plan to take a full year sabbatical to complete the project, and both contacts in Dharamsala have offered to support an application for a Fulbright Fellowship that would allow me to take a year.

Of the major areas covered in the book I need to do the most work on Nietzsche, especially because the scholarship on Nietzsche (as indicated above) has shifted so dramatically over the past fifteen year. I find these new directions in scholarship very promising, and read the leading texts last summer.

Since I need to do the most work on Nietzsche I plan to focus on him during the summer of 2010 during the period covered by this grant. However, the fertile thing about Nietzsche is that there are relatively unexplored areas of his thinking that connect directly with other areas of the project. For example, it is well known

that while Nietzsche was critical of Buddhism at various points, he was also sympathetic and engaged with a lifelong interest in Buddhism. It is also widely acknowledged now that he his understanding of Buddhism was based on early nineteenth century accounts of Buddhism that are now universally rejected. So the direction forward needs to sort out both his limited understanding of Buddhism, and the real points of resonance between Nietzsche and Buddhism, whatever Nietzsche himself thought.

Similarly, Nietzsche repeatedly mentions Spinoza as one of his rare heroes in Western philosophy. But similar issues attend his admiration for Spinoza and his admiration for Buddhism: what did he understand Spinoza to be saying, and how does this engagement look now in light of contemporary scholarship?

The result is that, in working this summer on Nietzsche I am also working on all the connections that need to be made in the book.

Project Design:

I spent last summer developing my conception of the project as a whole, and reading enough of the relevant texts to be convinced that there are real and fertile connections of the sort I outlined above. This summer I plan to begin with the focus on Nietzsche at the beginning of the summer, and move on to writing a first draft toward the middle to end of the summer.

Since I have travel and consultations already covered in other ways, my need from the Faculty Development Committee is almost exclusively for books and office supplies. Obviously, my conception of the book covers an enormous amount of territory. Dozens of books have been written on small areas of Nietzsche or Spinoza scholarship alone. So, to be credible, I need to establish scholarly competence in several major, independent areas of scholarship.

On an attached page I provide titles of some of the major texts I would acquire with this grant.

Complete budget for the project: Attached.

RSC Application Checklist: Attached.

Deane Curtin

Sample Bibliography of Books to be Acquired with RSC Funding:

- Ames, R., W. Dissanayake, et al. (1994). *Self as person in Asian theory and practice*, State Univ of New York Press.
- Arnold, D., J. Garfield, et al. *Buddhist Philosophy: Selected Primary Texts*.
- Batchelor, S. (1990). *The faith to doubt : glimpses of Buddhist uncertainty*. Berkeley, Calif., Parallax Press.
- Batchelor, S. (1994). *The awakening of the west : the encounter of Buddhism and Western culture*. Berkeley, Calif., Parallax Press.
- Batchelor, S. (1997). *Buddhism without beliefs : a contemporary guide to awakening*. New York, Riverhead Books.
- Batchelor, S. (2004). *Living with the devil : a meditation on good and evil*. New York, Riverhead Books.
- Blackmore, S. J. (2004). *Consciousness : an introduction*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.
- Blackmore, S. J. (2006). *Conversations on consciousness : what the best minds think about the brain, free will, and what it means to be human*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.
- Chödron, P. and H. Berliner (2005). *No time to lose : a timely guide to the way of the Bodhisattva*. Boston, Mass., Shambhala Publications.
- Churchland, P. S. and T. J. Sejnowski (1992). *The computational brain*. Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press.
- Code, L. (2006). *Ecological thinking: The politics of epistemic location*, Oxford University Press, USA.
- Curley, E. M., P.-F. Moreau, et al. (1990). *Spinoza : issues and directions : the proceedings of the Chicago Spinoza Conference*. Leiden ; New York, E.J. Brill.
- Dogen and H. u. T. Maezumi (1978). *The way of everyday life : Zen master Dogen's Genjokoan*. Los Angeles, Zen Center of Los Angeles.
- Dogen, G. o. Nishijima, et al. (1994). *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*. Woking, Surrey, Windbell

- Publications.
- Damasio, A. R. (2001). *Unity of knowledge : the convergence of natural and human science*. New York, New York Academy of Sciences.
- Damasio, A. R. (2005). *'Descartes' error : emotion, reason, and the human brain*. London, Penguin.
- De Dijn, H. and B. d. Spinoza (1996). *Spinoza : the way to wisdom*. West Lafayette, Ind., Purdue University Press.
- Donovan, J. (2007). "Caring to Dialogue." *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader*: 360.
- Mistry, F. (1981). *Nietzsche and Buddhism : prolegomenon to a comparative study*. Berlin ; New York, W. de Gruyter.
- Morrison, R. G. (1997). *Nietzsche and Buddhism : a study in nihilism and ironic affinities*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.
- Olson, E. T. (1997). *The human animal : personal identity without psychology*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Park, J. Y. and G. Kopf (2009). *Merleau-Ponty and Buddhism*. I anham, Md., Lexington Books.
- Parke, G. (1991). *Nietzsche and Asian thought*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Shantideva (1997). *The way of the Bodhisattva : a translation of the Bodhicaryavatara*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Shantideva and S. Batchelor (1979). *A guide to the Bodhisattva's way of life*. Dharamsala, Library of Tibetan Works & Archives.
- Shantideva, K. Crosby, et al. (2008). *The Bodhicaryavatara*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.
- Shantideva, V. A. Wallace, et al. (1997). *A guide to the Bodhisattva way of life = Bodhicaryavatara*. Ithaca, N.Y., USA, Snow Lion Publications.
- Shantideva (2003). *Guide to the Bodhisattva's way of life : a buddhist poem for today*. Glen Spey, NY, Tharpa Publications.
- Shantideva (2003). *Guide to the Bodhisattva's way of life : how to enjoy a life of great meaning and altruism*. Glen Spey, NY, Tharpa Publications.
- Stambaugh, J. (1990). *Impermanence is Buddha-nature : Dogen's understanding of temporality*.

Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press.

Streng, F. J. (1967). *Emptiness: a study in religious meaning*. Nashville,, Abingdon Press.

Westerhoff, J. (2009). *Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka : a philosophical introduction*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.

Xu, W. (2008). *Eating identities: reading food in Asian American literature*. University of Hawaii Press.

Yasutani, H., P. Jaffe, et al. (1996). *Flowers fall : a commentary on Dogen's Genjokoan*. Boston: Shambhala.