



COIL Partnership Awards – Sample Application

UNC-Chapel Hill Applicant

Name: Patricia Sawin

Title: Associate Professor

School/Department: College of Arts & Sciences, Department of American Studies

Collaborating Faculty and Partner Institution

Collaborating Faculty: Tiber Falzett, Assistant Professor/Lecturer in Folklore and Ethnology

Partner Institution: University College Dublin

Previous Engagement with Faculty or Institution: Prof. Falzett will assume his position as Assistant Professor/Lecturer in Folklore and Ethnology at University College Dublin on 1 August 2020. He has held a lectureship in the UNC Department of English and Comparative Literature for the past two years. He and Prof. Sawin have taught their own versions of two of the same courses that are cross listed between FOLK and ENGL, including the UNC course that we propose for the COIL partnership. So we are already familiar with each other's work and have a good sense of the overlaps and valuable divergences in our approaches to the topics we propose for the COIL students to study together.

COIL Activity

UNC-Chapel Hill Course: FOLK/ENGL 487 Everyday Stories

This course involves students in exploring several kinds of “everyday stories”—both the personal narratives in which we share and make sense of our own experiences (mundane and significant) and the rumors, legends, and memes through which we explore issues and events that may or may not be true, but that raise anxieties and force us to question our social values. We will focus on the issues that inspire the sharing of these stories, the qualities that make them effective and memorable, and the ways that different contexts and audiences influence performance and meaning.

Course at Partner Institution: IRFL20020 Material Culture

This course is an exploration of the physical manifestations of tradition, dealing with a broad range of aspects of vernacular material culture in Ireland, including vernacular architecture and furniture, traditional crafts and technologies, foodways and clothing. Its main focus is on nineteenth- and twentieth-century rural Ireland within a wider European and international context. Issues discussed will include the role of innovation and adaptation in material culture, the impact of family and social structure, and the effects of the global economy on local lifeways and subsistence strategies.

Semester Taught: Spring 2021

Planned COIL Activity: Prof. Falzett is teaching a course on Material Culture (traditional craft, clothing, buildings, landscapes, and foodways). Prof. Sawin is teaching a course on Everyday Stories (the informal narratives that ordinary people share about their experiences and values). Our overlapping unit will explore ways in which people either employ objects (present or remembered) as repositories of memory that spark stories or create objects as tangible extensions of the narrator's art. Each course was already planned to involve the students' writing three 1200-word papers. Our collaborative exercise will involve the second paper of the semester.

We plan a three-week shared unit involving the following.

Students will cover a set of common readings and will probably read an article or two that the other class covered earlier in the semester in order to master some basic concepts.

We will arrange a pair of guest lectures, either by the professors or by museum/archive professionals at the Ackland Art Museum and the Southern Folklife Collection at UNC and UCD's National Folklore Collection, one of the most comprehensive archives of oral tradition and cultural history in Europe and inscribed to UNESCO's Memory of the World Registrar for its global significance upon whose collections the students will draw.

Each student will select one item (a handmade object, foodway, building, item of clothing, or landscape) that is significant to them and about which they will be assigned to write a 1200-word essay that describes and analyzes the item, its creation, history, aesthetic power/meaning and the story it tells or for which it serves as an integral extension of narrating experience and memory.

The students will engage in an ice-breaking activity in groups of four to six. One possibility is for each class to come up with a list of about a dozen contemporary items, images, words, or musical clips significant in narrating their own experience through autoethnographic lenses. These can be posted on a shared website. During the icebreaker the students from the other country will have to try to guess what these are or mean. We envision that much laughter will ensue as the students explain the others' mistakes, but that this will also serve as a means of exploring similarities and differences in their everyday lives and identifying what each group thinks of as distinctive to their country. The professors will contribute a shorter list of items and words that we expect will be equally mystifying to any generation Z member anywhere on the planet and hence to both UNC and UCD students. Our hope is that puzzling these out together will serve as an empathy building exercise.

We will pair the students--one from UNC, one from UCD--(or possibly create some groups with two UCD students if that course has a larger enrollment), aiming to pair students with related interests. They will share photographs of their chosen object on the shared website so their partner(s) can see it. The student pairs will participate in two online conversations, which they will record so as to more easily draw upon them for their later writing. They will engage in dialogic ethnography, trading reflections about their backgrounds and interests in the course, why they chose a particular object and why it "spoke" to them, and what story it tells or gets told about it. In the second conversation they will read each other's papers and provide feedback. This should enable them to learn about different academic styles and expectations in the two countries.

Each student will write a 1200-word paper about the object that they chose or create a podcast, blog, vlog, or exhibit panel. These will draw upon the reflections they shared and things they learned while talking with their partner(s) in the other country. Either as part of the paper or creative application or as an appendix, each student will offer a comment on whether and how their pair conversations helped inform and strengthen what they learned and what they wrote.

If we can secure permission and collaboration from the museums and archives, we will develop a website involving photographs of the objects and the students' analyses. Ideally these might be linked to the archives/museum's websites/social media to dynamically narrate diverse and multivocal stories to the public, highlighting the many voices their collections' objects have to share. In the context of course outcomes and degree outcomes for students in our field, such engagement will provide them with invaluable skill sets beyond the classroom. Most employment in the field involves, public folklore programming. This public use of students' work will prepare them to think about communicating and sharing experience in volatile and ever-changing global circumstances that we as a species collectively face and that will contribute to a student's resiliency as both local and global citizens.

Anticipated Number of Students Involved: 25-27 at UNC, up to 50 at UCD

Type of Support Requested: ___ Faculty Graduate Student ___ Faculty and Graduate Student

Describe the student's role: We have two possible student roles in mind, depending upon which of several UNC graduate students in American Studies or Folklore is available to participate:

- 1) The graduate student would assume primarily a coordinating and advising role. They would coordinate the student pairs or groups, help students at both universities settle on the material items about which they plan to write, be available to troubleshoot technical problems or cases where the international pairs weren't working well, and possibly give feedback on paper drafts.
- 2) The graduate student also holds a curatorial role at the Ackland Art Museum. Her role would be to coordinate with an archivist at the National Folklore Collection who will be presenting items to the Irish students, identify a matching and/or contrasting collection of traditional North Carolina craft items from the Ackland's holdings, and help introduce the students to the distinctive stylistic elements and craft processes of the items on which we will focus.