

Title: Philosophy and the Moving Image: Teaching and Learning with
Engaged/Public Philosophy and New Media

Dr. Robin James

Dr. Phillip McReynolds

Department of Philosophy

Abstract:

We seek a SOTL grant as a means to add a video production component to our curriculum in the initial form of an undergraduate course on community engaged philosophy through new media. New media including web-based video and web site construction is increasingly the means by which scholars and the public at large learn about, discuss, argue about, think through, and develop new insights about important philosophical issues. Developing a philosophically focused new media literacy is one way that the philosophy department can meet the challenge of producing graduates with relevant critical and creative thinking skills required for success in today's world. First, in addition to providing students with skills suited to today's communication outlets, a course in philosophical filmmaking would reinforce the department's commitment to such traditional scholarly skills of critical thinking, philosophical analysis, developing thesis statements, conducting research, compiling bibliographies, and writing cogent papers. But, importantly, students would learn how to conduct interviews and combine word, image, and music into an evocative teaching/publication tool that is rapidly becoming a new standard for collaboration and interaction in the culture at large. Importantly because the orientation of the course is towards public philosophy, that is, in taking up philosophical issues that are concern to the community, the course and its products would serve as an important form of community engagement by the philosophy department that will directly contribute to the mission of the university to serve its community.

Budget Request for SOTL Grant Year 2015

Joint Proposal? X Yes No
 Title of Project Philosophy and the Moving Image: Teaching and Learning with Engaged/Public
Philosophy and New Media
 Duration of Project 2 Year
 Primary Investigator(s) Robin James; Phillip McReynolds
 Email Address(es) rjames7@uncc.edu; mcreynolds@uncc.edu

UNC Charlotte SOTL
 Grants Previously
 Received (please names
 of project, PIs, and dates) None

Allocate operating budget to Department of Philosophy

Account #	Award	Year One January to June
Faculty Stipend	Transferred directly from Academic Affairs to Grantee on May 15	\$ -
911250	Graduate Student Salaries	
911300	Special Pay (Faculty on UNCC payroll other than Grantee)	
915000	Student Temporary Wages	
915900	Non-student Temporary Wages	
920000	Honorarium (Individual(s) not with UNCC)	
921150	Participant Stipends	
925000	Travel - Domestic	
926000	Travel - Foreign	
928000	Communication and/or Printing	
930000	Supplies	
942000	Computing Equipment	\$4,155.88
944000	Educational Equipment	\$4,484.70
951000	Other Current Services	
(TOTAL YEAR 1)		\$ 8,640.58

\$4485.00

Account #	Award	Year Two July to June
Faculty Stipend	Transferred directly from Academic Affairs to Grantee on May 15	\$ -
911250	Graduate Student Salaries	
911300	Special Pay (Faculty on UNCC payroll other than Grantee)	
915000	Student Temporary Wages	
915900	Non-student Temporary Wages	
920000	Honorarium (Individual(s) not with UNCC)	\$2400.00
921150	Participant Stipends	
925000	Travel - Domestic	
926000	Travel - Foreign	
928000	Communication and/or Printing	
930000	Supplies	
942000	Computing Equipment	
944000	Educational Equipment	
951000	Other Current Services	
	(TOTAL YEAR 2)	\$ 2400.00
	GRAND TOTAL	\$11,040.58

\$6885.00

Attachments:

1. Attach/provide a narrative that explains how the funds requested will be used.
2. Has funding for the project been requested from other sources? Yes No. If yes, list sources.

Budget Narrative: The project proposes to acquire the absolutely essential equipment to support this pedagogical enterprise. All prices from B&H Photo in New York City.

3 Canon 32Gb Vixia HF G20 HD Camcorders: \$2,697.00

Three consumer grade camcorders with external microphone jacks and HD digital video recording capacity are essential. The most cost effective choice of equipment is the Canon Vixia series. Three cameras are needed to allow students to use multiple cameras on a shoot and to permit more than one group of students to work on projects concurrently.

3 Audio-Technica Lavalier Microphones: \$296.85

Lavalier microphones are the standard audio device for interviewing individuals. The microphone built into the camcorder does not produce acceptable audio. These wired mics are substantially cheaper than wireless versions.

3 Sennheiser Shotgun Microphones: \$597.00

The shotgun or highly directional microphone is the standard audio device for recording multiple subjects or subjects who are a substantial distance from the camcorder. The microphone built into the camcorder does not produce acceptable audio.

3 Bescor Tripods: \$299.85

Tripods are essential providing adequate stability for camcorders, especially during panning and zooming.

3 Bescor 2 LED Light Kits: \$597.00

Lighting is critical for conducting shoots indoors. Also, one must have kits with sufficient lights to provide three-point lighting.

~~**2 Final Cut Pro X Software: \$599.98 (from Apple)**~~

~~Final Cut Pro X is one of two standard video editing software systems used by professional videographers. The other, Adobe Create Suite, is available only on a subscription basis and thus not appropriate for a one-time grant.~~

~~**2 iMac Computers: \$3555.90**~~

~~Apple has proprietary ownership of Final Cut Pro, meaning that the software will only operate on Apple computers. Two computers are needed so that more than one student or groups of students can edit video concurrently. Large external storage is required due to the heavy demands of video editing.~~

Funds for Video Lab Coordinator: \$2400

The initial course will be offered as a 3-credit course with a 2-credit lab, the latter being administered by a media arts professional.

Total: \$11,040.58



Office of the Dean

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November 4, 2014

SOTL Grants Committee
Center for Teaching & Learning
ctl@uncc.edu

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing in support of the proposal for “Philosophy and the Moving Image: Teaching and Learning with Engaged/Public Philosophy and New Media” by Drs. Robin James and Phillip McReynolds of our Department of Philosophy. I find this to be an interesting and potentially very valuable project to undertake. The purpose of the project is to add a new undergraduate course which focuses on using new media to explore public philosophy. Using topics that are significant in contemporary society, students would engage in extensive research, including conducting interviews with community-based sources, write scripts, produce and edit a video, and develop a web-site for the video. This pedagogical approach offers numerous advantages including the following: exposing students to significant issues and questions of public philosophy, providing new methods of delivery that students can use to explore philosophy, expanding the pedagogy of the department, providing students with technical skills in new media, and enhancing the community engagement of the department.

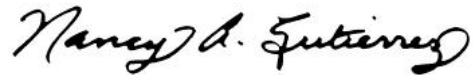
Drs. James and McReynolds bring the technical expertise, theoretical background, and pedagogical expertise necessary to make the project successful. The project is fully supported by the department and the new course that would be produced can be incorporated into the department’s curriculum. The budget appears to be a reasonable request for the equipment that would be necessary to make the project work, and the department can provide the necessary space for the project/course.

To their credit, Drs. James and McReynolds have formulated a rigorous evaluation protocol that includes standard course evaluations, public feedback, and a peer-reviewed article about the course. Similarly, they will actively disseminate the knowledge gained through the project. Students, for example, will construct and support interactive web sites and they will be

encouraged to submit their work to the Gold Reel Student Film Festival. In addition, Drs. James and McReynolds will share insights about their project with departmental, college and university colleagues, and they will produce the article mentioned above about using new media to teach philosophy. Such a publication would certainly reflect well on the department. I recommend the project for your consideration.

Please let me know if you require further information. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy A. Gutierrez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'N'.

Nancy A. Gutierrez, Dean
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Project Narrative:

One of the distinctive features of philosophy at UNC Charlotte is its emphasis upon applied philosophy both through its Masters of Arts in Ethics and Applied Philosophy and in its general orientation toward giving undergraduates the ability to engage philosophically with problems that are practical and urgent. In this way UNC Charlotte is ahead of a trend in which philosophers nationally are increasingly aware of and interested in making/keeping the discipline relevant by seeking to develop a practice of public philosophy. If it is anything other than a convenient catchphrase, public philosophy must become something more than publicizing philosophical ideas through popular channels such as “The Stone” blog at *The New York Times* or engaging with practical concerns of other academic fields such as engineering or medicine. Ideally, to quote Christopher Long, founder of *The Public Philosophy Journal*, public philosophy is

a collaborative activity in which philosophers engage dialogically with activists, professionals, scientists, policy-makers, and affected parties whose work and lives are bound up with issues of public concern. Public philosophy is thus not limited to questions concerning the practical applicability of theoretical problems, rather it is informed by the recognition that all theoretical problems are ultimately rooted in questions of wide public interest.¹

¹ Christopher Long, “What is Public Philosophy?” <http://www.personal.psu.edu/cpl2/blogs/TheLongRoad/2013/02/what-is-public-philosophy.html>, accessed October 27, 2014.

But in order to pursue this kind of civic engagement philosophers increasingly should look beyond traditional media in order to engage the public in philosophical inquiry. Increasingly new media such as films, videos, blogs, web sites, and social media are the places where philosophy is being practiced. Currently, however, UNC Charlotte doesn't offer students the opportunity to engage philosophically using new media,² a situation that is at odds with our department's and our university's commitment to civic engagement. Therefore we propose to augment our curriculum by offering a new media (primarily video production and web-design) course to our current philosophical offerings. The rationale for this is threefold:

1. By exploring the relevance of philosophical questions, techniques and topics through engaged learning in the community students will have richer educational experiences, at least in part by attaching cognitive skills to varied sensory modalities, and therefore better, at least in the sense of more lasting, outcomes than they would without such exploration.
2. This project will allow students with specific interests in new media to do philosophy in that develop skills in this vital area of communication while at the same time honing and improving more traditional skills involving analysis, writing, and argumentation. Moreover a multimodal learning environment such as is being proposed here provides benefits from an

² We do not currently offer students the opportunity to engage philosophically using new media beyond commercial social media, that is. There are currently no resources for podcasting, digital video, multimedia web production and so on.

accessibility point of view. As a bonus, the students would learn concrete job skills that employers want.

3. A new media component will help our program and our university to stand out nationally as leading the charge in innovative teaching and learning in digital humanities.

Specific Aims:

We seek a SOTL grant to support a new media component of our undergraduate and graduate education, initially in the form of an undergraduate course, “Philosophy and the Moving Image: Public Philosophy through New Media”. Such a component will help further the goal of publicly engaged philosophy in a very direct way: by bringing students into direct contact with issues of philosophical concern to the public and encouraging them to think in new ways through engaging these issues through new media. This component will bring philosophy in line with the college goal of developing 21st century skills in areas of discourse, media and culture. The component will also help build substantive connections between the philosophy department, the college, and the university with the local community through the process of filmmaking/video production itself and through the dissemination of the philosophical films that result from it. Finally, the course will raise the profile of the department and the university by taking the lead in the new and growing area of public philosophy.

Currently our students have only limited access to basic video production skills on our campus. Currently there are two video production undergraduate courses that have relatively few high definition cameras and rely on Final Cut

Express for video production. This popular class is offered every semester, but limited to 18 people. In the advanced class, which is offered intermittently, students usually provide their own cameras. Furthermore, Film Studies only allows access to their cameras for students enrolled in their production classes.

We currently have secure space in what was once the logic lab in 112 Winningham. At one time this space housed computers for students to do work in logic and educational design with an emphasis on logic. Since these courses have transitioned to online-only instruction, this space is no longer used for this purpose. Due to the performance and storage constraints required for video production students would need a space to work on producing and editing video footage (including interviews and supplementary materials).

The SOTL grant would enable us to purchase computers and video equipment (microphones, cameras, and lighting equipment) capable of handling the requirements of video production. We seek to purchase three consumer cameras that have the capacity to film in high definition, a format that is increasingly the standard online. These cameras are less expensive than professional cameras but provide better capabilities for producing quality video than currently available on other platforms such as the iPhone.

In addition to her work in philosophy, Dr. James maintains a creative research practice in digital sound art. She has experience in digital audio production, both for her artwork and for publicizing her research. For example, she hosts recordings of her public lectures on her soundcloud page. She also blogs extensively (for its-her-factory, Cyborgology, a blog dedicated to theorizing social media, and

xcphilosophy³), and has produced several video podcasts of her lectures. She has also assigned video and/or audio podcasting in various undergraduate philosophy courses, and served on the thesis committee of an MA student who produced a video about undocumented immigrants in Charlotte as her thesis work.

Dr. McReynolds is the writer, editor, director and producer of the documentary film *American Philosopher*, which engaged in conversations with such internationally renowned philosophers as Hilary Putnam, Richard Rorty, Joseph Margolis, and Bruce Wilshire on topics such as the idea of being an American philosopher, the role of philosophy in popular culture, the nature of truth, and others and presented these issues in a lively format that relied as heavily on the rhetoric of the moving image as in the logic of philosophical discourse. After completing this film, which premiered at the 2007 meeting of the Society for the Advancement of American philosophy, Dr. McReynolds continued to create and release philosophical videos through YouTube developing a popular audience and social community through this important new media channel. Dr. McReynolds will make a presentation on his work in digital video and the art of the philosophical interview at the Society for the Philosophy of Creativity session meeting in conjunction with the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Eastern Division of the APA.

The pedagogical impact of training students in the fundamentals of philosophical filmmaking has great potential to improve education in philosophy on a variety of levels. First, in addition to providing students with skills suited to today's communication outlets, a course in philosophical new media production

³ <http://www.its-her-factory.com>, <http://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/>, and <http://xcphilosophy.org>.

would reinforce the department's commitment to such traditional scholarly skills of critical thinking, philosophical analysis, developing thesis statements, conducting research, compiling bibliographies, and writing cogent papers. But, importantly, students would learn how to conduct interviews and combine word, image, and music into an evocative teaching/publication tool that is rapidly becoming a new standard for collaboration and interaction in the culture at large. Second, the pedagogy of the course itself involves the creation of philosophical videos.

Literature Review:

Peter Galison, Professor of Philosophy and History of Science at Harvard has used student-filmmaking to teach students the history of science and others, such as Leigh Johnson, who teaches philosophy at Christian Brothers University has incorporated student-filmmaking into her philosophy classes. Beyond this anecdotal evidence there is little literature about using the production of new media to engage students in the philosophy classroom, thus the importance for this grant. (An important exception to this is an article by Nathan Andersen listed below.) There is, however, a great deal of literature on the importance of active learning in the philosophy classroom, as for the humanities generally, a sample of which follows:

- Andersen, Nathan. "Filmmaking in the Philosophy Classroom: Illustrating the Examined Life." *Teaching Philosophy* 33:4 (2010): 375-397.
- Boylan, Michael, Ackerman, Felicia Nimue, and Palmer-Fernandez, Gabriel. "Using Fictive Narrative to Teach Ethics/Philosophy." *Teaching Ethics: The Journal of the Society for Ethics across the Curriculum* 12:1 (Fall 2011): 61-94.
- Cholbi, Michael. "Intentional Learning As a Model for Philosophical Pedagogy." *Teaching Philosophy* 30:1 (2007): 35-58.
- Coventry, Michael. "Cross-Currents of Pedagogy and Technology: A Forum on Digital Storytelling and Cultural Critique." *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice* 7:2 (2008): 165-170.

Papadima, Genovefa. "The Practical Implications of Constructive Learning for Modern Democratic Culture." *Skepsis: A Journal for Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Research* 22:1 (2012): 314-324.

Peschi, Markus F. "Modes of Knowing and Modes of Coming to Know: Knowledge Creation and Co-Construction As Socio-Epistemological Engineering in Educational Processes." *Constructivist Foundations: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 1:3 (2006): 111-123.

Methods:⁴

The pedagogical approach will be to closely supervise individual students and groups of students in the development of the academic and technical skills associated with philosophical filmmaking/video production. Specifically, students will learn how to write scripts, which requires rhetoric tied to visual images. Students will be exposed to sources of audio and visual materials. Students will learn the techniques of the philosophical interview and will be introduced to techniques for creating and thinking through new media production that are becoming the standard means of multimodal communication in contemporary culture. The course is not simply a video production course but an exercise in hands-on philosophy, one that takes students into the community to pursue philosophical questions, brings them back into the lab where they can refine their arguments and audio/visual rhetoric, and then returns the results to the community in the form of dissemination over the internet and through various local, national, and international forums for academically-robust video and web-content.

The initial step is to decide upon a topic. We will introduce students to current and previous efforts at public philosophy and take our cue from these

⁴ This section relies upon and benefitted greatly from language in a prior SOTL grant in the Public History Program entitled "Historical Documentary Video Production: An Innovative Teaching and Learning Tool for Public History."

efforts as well as student interest in terms of theme selection. Next we will spend some time discussing philosophical methods derived from our current graduate methods course though organized and somewhat simplified for the undergraduate level. This is followed by extensive research in philosophical books and journals related to the topic, as well as community-based resources. We will discuss the philosophical interview and have students practice interviewing one another, primarily to gain a better understanding of what it's like on both sides of the interview. Next the team will have to schedule interviews with individuals who can contribute to the project. Script writing is next, followed by editing the video. The students will then need to develop a web site for the video that helps situate it and that provides a space for public engagement in addition to hosting supplementary materials.

This project has the support of the Chair of the Philosophy department both in terms of its general outline and ambitions and also in terms of utilizing currently under-utilized space in the former logic lab in 112 Winningham.

Evaluation:

The success of the initiative will be evaluated on three levels. First, students participating in the course would submit assessments of the course to the chair of the philosophy department and to the dean of CLAS. Second, public feedback would be sought from philosophers engaged in public philosophy as well as the public at large through the associated web sites. Finally, the co-investigators will write up and submit an article explaining our rationale, methods, and outcomes to the peer-reviewed journal *Teaching Philosophy*.

Knowledge Dissemination:

This project, if funded will produce both first order and second order knowledge to be disseminated both locally and nationally. The first order knowledge is the knowledge produced by the students themselves. This will be disseminated over the internet in the form of interactive web sites created by the students not only to present their results but to begin to build a community around the philosophical issues they have been investigating. Students will also be encouraged to submit their work to UNC Charlotte's Gold Reel Student film Festival.

The second order knowledge is the pedagogical knowledge derived from observing how teaching through new media is best conducted and how it enhances student-learning outcomes. To disseminate this knowledge the co-investigators will write an article about teaching philosophy through new media production for the peer reviewed journal *Teaching Philosophy*. Moreover it is to be expected that the co-investigators will share their knowledge through informal contacts in the philosophy department, in the college, and in the university at large.

Human Subjects:

This is of course contingent upon the subjects of the interviews that make up the projects. Students will obtain approval to conduct and record interviews from UNCC's IRB.

Extramural Funding:

No extramural funding is being pursued at this time.

Timeline:

We would like to purchase video equipment as soon as funds become available in January. This would ensure equipment would be accessible for training in the Spring. (The equipment would also be made available to any MA students wishing to incorporate a video component into their Master's Thesis.)

Our chair has tentatively approved offering "Philosophy and the Moving Image" for Spring of 2016.

We would begin writing up results during the Spring and Summer for journal submission early Fall, 2016.