AAR Regional Grant Proposal

World Religions in California Contexts:
A faculty workshop to develop an online resource for the public understanding of religion in California

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Overview

Religion topics are claiming many headlines in the United States lately, on subjects ranging from the growth of the religiously unaffiliated "nones" to the new role of religion in international diplomacy to perennial analyses of the religious motivations of terror attacks. These stories reflect increasing awareness of the significance of religion in public life, even as public discussion of these issues—as illustrated, for instance, in the online comments these stories often generate—often showcases the high level of American religious illiteracy. The growing complexity of religious identity and its relation to other dimensions of civic life creates further challenges for public understanding. This grant would fund a two-day workshop for AAR Western Region members to draft the plan for a set of online resources for K-12 educators and others on world religions in California contexts and support the initial setup of the website that will house these resources. Materials on the site will include primers on beliefs and practices of the range of religions present in California; video interviews and mini-documentaries, interactive maps and calendars of regional religious life; and short, accessible analyses by expert scholars on such topics as religion in California schools, immigration and religious identity, religion and civic engagement, and sites of religious conflict and cooperation.

Background

This project builds on a Wabash-funded conference, "California Local Religion Projects: When the Community is the Classroom," hosted at CSU, Chico in September 2012. That meeting brought together 15 religion scholars from six different California universities to discuss their work on the connections between the study of local religion, civic participation, and student engagement. We discovered in the course of these presentations and discussions that California religion itself—racial-ethnic connections, the complexity of congregational membership, and hybrid religious identities—is in need of analysis and reflection, and that any effort to engage the public in informed conversation about religion will need to treat the subject in a way that is (1) place-specific; (2) attuned to changing patterns of belief and practice; and (3) linked to sites of civic concern: public schools, local and state government,

the military, prisons, and social service agencies. We envision a set web resources that a teacher might turn to when she needs accurate information about the Sikh community in the Central Valley for a unit on California history; where local policy makers might find models of constitutionally sound interfaith initiatives; where a journalist might find brief scholarly analyses of religious dynamics in California prisons, religious attitudes to gay marriage, or the emergence of new atheist organizations across the state; and ordinary citizens might discover accurate information about their neighbors' religious traditions.   While the faculty of CSU, Chico will be the initial designers of the project, content for the site will be developed by invited religion scholars from around the state, building on the network established at last year's conference. In addition, the site will offer an opportunity for California religious studies students to showcase outstanding reports on religious sites around the state. The Center for the Public Understanding of Religion at CSU, Chico will host the World Religions in California Contexts project on its website; a portion of this grant will be designated for website development.

Project details
The workshop will be held over two days in March 2014 at California State University, Chico. Members of the CSU, Chico Religious Studies faculty will invite two other scholars to join us on this phase of the project: Vincent Biondo of CSU, Fresno, with whom we collaborated at the California Local Religion conference and who is involved in ongoing work on the public understanding of California religion through an NEH project on "Ethics, Religion and Civil Discourse" and Rebecca Moore of San Diego State University, who also participated in the California Local Religion Conference and who coordinates the Metropolitan Area Pluralism Study (MAPS) in San Diego and studies religious change in Southern California.

Targeted outcomes of the workshop are:
- An outline of the World Religions in California Contexts website: what to include and how the different components will intersect. Initial categories are likely to include world religion primers, mini student–produced site reports on selected California religious communities and events, and expert analyses of historical and contemporary patterns in California religion.
- Identification of 15-20 AAR western region members to invite to contribute to the project
- Contract for initial website development by CSU, Chico Web Services and Graphic Design

Once the project is designed and the website built, we will set a series of deadlines for submission of the initial components of the project, with a targeted launch of the site in Fall 2015. Once the site exists, larger grants will be sought to develop the more complex elements like documentaries[1] and interactive maps.

Benefit to AAR Regional Members
The World Religions in California Contexts questions is designed to bring together scholars from the largest state in the region on a project that will (1) create opportunities to showcase their research on local religion; (2) foster connections with regional publics, (3) develop networks for ongoing research on California religion, and (3)offer resources for use in classroom teaching. This project speaks directly to the AAR's commitment to broadening the public's understanding religion, and will specifically promote the AAR Guidelines on Teaching about Religion in K-12 Public Schools both to AAR members and to a wider public. If successful, we will aim to present results of this project at the Western Regional AAR Meeting in March 2015.

Application to Other AAR Regions
Increased attention to the public role of religion requires that scholars engage with the place-specific and contested dynamics of religious life. This projects serves as a model of state- or region-wide collaboration on that engagement in a way that will advance public understanding and demonstrate the relevance of the study of religion. If successful, we will aim to present results of this project at the AAR Annual meeting in November 2015.

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[1] We are in consultation with the Visual Anthropology Lab at CSU, Chico, which trains students in documentary film-making and has already produced a number of videos on local religious communities.

Budget

Participant Stipends (10 x $ each)	$
Travel for 2 out-of-town participants: (1 at $, 1 at $)	$
Meals	$
Phase I Website development (mid-range estimate; see proposal below)	$
Total	**$**

Prepared by Roberta Roebuck, Web Services & Graphic Design
July 8, 2011

Tasks for a Phase 1	Cost Range
Develop New Site Structure	$64 - $128
Template Creation	$32 - $64
Content Insert @ $16/hr	$96 - $160
Find and Format Photographs @ $16/hr	$32 - $64
Custom Website Styles	$320 - $480
Google Implementation (maps, calendars)	$640 - $960
Copy Editing @ $16/hr (grammar, university, style)	$48 - $80
Technical Proofing (web standards, accessibility, etc.)	$96 - $192
Application Testing and Final Changes	$96 - $192
Go Live	$16 - $32
Cost for Phase 1	*$1,456 - $2,384*

Ongoing Work	
Website Support and Maintenance	$320 - $480
Cost for Ongoing Work	*$320 - $480*

Tasks for Phase 2	
Additional Website Pages (3-6) @ $16/hr	$48 - $96
Interactive Section for Exhibit Hall	$480 - $800
Cost for Phase 2	*$528 - $896*

Total Cost for Website	*$2,304 - $3,760*

NOTES
- All work is billed at the rate of $32/hour, unless otherwise noted.
- Estimate is subject to change if scope of project changes.