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I-GIFT 2019 Application

“Education in Jesuit schools seeks to transform how young people look at themselves and other human beings, at social systems and structures, at the global community and the whole of natural creation” (Ignatian Pedagogy Abridged). With these goals of Ignatian pedagogy in mind, over the summer of 2019, I devised the final project—a digital humanities project—for my “History of the Holocaust” course at SHC, offered this fall. Using local archives at the University of South Alabama and the local Jewish congregations, interviews with community members, and resources from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, my students are researching the lives of Holocaust survivors who settled in Mobile, Alabama after 1945. Currently, several survivors’ stories are featured on the website of the Gulf Coast Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education. The students’ task is to research and place each survivors’ journey in a broader global context. Other students in the course are researching related topics, such as Mobile and Spring Hill College during World War II. Their research will be featured in an online exhibition hosted by Weebly that will be revealed to the public at a local Shoah Remembrance Day commemoration in April 2020, as well as SHC’s Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Several aspects of this project fit the goals of Ignatian pedagogy, such as experience, action, context, and reflection. First, I aim to teach students hands-on research skills. Beyond simply contextualizing survivors’ biographies using secondary sources, students are required to engage in primary source research using available resources to bring to light new information about their survivors. For instance, one survivor’s biography stated that his whereabouts between 1944 and 1949 were unknown. Through research on the US Holocaust Memorial Museum “Survivors and Victims” database, one student discovered the name of the displaced persons camp where the survivor had lived before migrating to the United States. These types of discoveries have not only provided direct experience with primary source research but have also helped the students further contextualize the survivors’ stories in a global context.

Second, I want students to gain practical digital humanities experience that would be useful beyond our classroom or their time at Spring Hill College. To this end, students are designing a Weebly website that will feature each survivor’s story. In addition to the technical skills that web design provides, students are also learning about the process of curating an online exhibition for a public audience. They will select a minimum of two primary sources to incorporate directly into their webpages that support analytical points related to the topic.

Finally, I wanted to stimulate investment in both our local history and community and a larger global history of the Holocaust. This project has transformed students’ understandings of how our local history intersected with a broader global Holocaust history. Furthermore, this research has pushed students to reflect on the difficult journeys many of our survivors took to travel to Mobile. On a larger scale, a project like this has served to foster their senses of compassion and empathy, especially at a time when refugee crises and displacement are again major issues on the US border and around the globe.

As an instructor, I am deeply invested in helping my students carry out this project. In order to ensure their success, I have implemented a scaffolded research plan with several checkpoints throughout the semester. By offering individual consultations and rough draft reviews, for instance, I have been able to offer positive encouragement and guidance on the project’s development. I am confident that the Holocaust survivors’ project has transformed my students’ awareness of the world around them and encouraged them to take a more compassionate and informed approach to current issues. Receiving an I-GIFT award would recognize my commitment to and deepen my interest in Ignatian pedagogy and the mission of Spring Hill College.

HIS 321: The History of the Holocaust

Final Project:

Surviving the Unthinkable: Placing Mobile's Holocaust Survivors in a Global Context¹

The Project and Its Purpose

The class will collaborate on a final project: putting together an online exhibition (hosted via a Weebly website) on Jewish/Holocaust/WWII history in Mobile. Mobile's Jewish history dates back to the late 1700s, when Jewish traders began moving through British West Florida and Louisiana. In 1823, Jews began permanently settling in Mobile. After 1945, fifteen Holocaust survivors from all over Europe settled in Mobile, AL. Far from being just a collection of individual stories, each person's/couple's story offers a unique lens into the broader global context of the Holocaust and its aftermath. By studying their stories and examining what circumstances led them to Mobile, we will gain a broader understanding of the Holocaust as a global historical event, and one that provides ongoing lessons and legacies for us today. Furthermore, the construction of a website will provide students invaluable experience in a digital humanities project that they may use in their future careers.

The Gulf Coast Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education, a local consortium that performs educational outreach on the Holocaust, has already compiled biographies of each survivor: (<http://www.gcholoocaustcenter.org/agnes/mobilesurvivors.html>). The goal of this project, then, is to build upon this foundation and further contextualize each survivor's life and journey. For example, Mobile was the home for many years to Hungarian survivor [Agnes Tennenbaum](#). When one reads her brief biography, a number of questions arise. What was the situation of Jews in Hungary prior to 1939? Why was her family deported so late in the war? What enabled her to travel to the US after the war ended? And finally: how did Tennenbaum recount her own story to later generations? Using primary and secondary sources, each student will be responsible for fleshing out stories such as Tennenbaum's in order to place her in a larger context. Collectively, the online exhibition will trace the different paths each survivor took from Europe to Mobile, highlighting the similar struggles and yet unique journeys each survivor took.

The Parameters of the Project

Each student will research either a survivor or an aspect of Mobile's Jewish/Holocaust/WWII history. Altogether, Mobile had fifteen survivors; several of these survivors were married couples whose stories were intertwined, meaning there are not enough for each student to research a survivor. However, Mobile's local history includes other critical topics to be researched, such as Mobile during the Second World War; Spring Hill College's reporting on the Nazi regime and the Holocaust; and Mobile's Jewish history prior to 1945. Those who do not get assigned a survivor will research and write on these related topics.

The Gulf Coast Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education, in conjunction with Spring Hill College and the University of South Alabama (USA), has assembled short biographies and primary

¹ We can always collaborate as a class to change the title—this is just a working title.

sources related to each survivor. USA's Marx Library also hosts the Agnes Tennenbaum Holocaust Library Collection, which includes hundreds of books and other sources. Furthermore, organizations such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the International Tracing Service, the Joint Distribution Committee, and Yad Vashem (among others) have documents available online (linked on Schoology). Finally, local experts such as Dr. Ruble and Dr. David Meola (USA), as well as members of the Gulf Coast Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education, are happy to provide guidance as requested. Depending on your topic, it may be possible to arrange interviews with local community members (grandchildren of survivors, members of the local Jewish community, etc.) who may have known our survivors.

The Website

The purpose of putting this information in an online exhibition on Weebly is twofold. First, it provides an incredible opportunity to connect the global history of the Holocaust to our local history while speaking to a broader public in Mobile. With this website, we are learning how to research, curate, and present narratives to a wider audience. Second, having digital humanities experience is an important skill in an increasingly competitive job market and allows us to pair our passion for history and the liberal arts with tangible research and technological skills.

We will have the opportunity to debut the website publicly in a few different forums: our classroom, the Undergraduate Research Symposium, and at the annual Shoah Remembrance Day in April.

Carrying Out the Project (45% of total grade)

We will select topics at the beginning of the semester. We will also collectively come up with a snappy title for our class project. Students will be responsible for conducting independent research. For those of you researching a survivor, Dr. Ruble recommends first looking at the Gulf Coast Holocaust Center website and getting a sense of who the survivor was and where they came from. Are there aspects of their story that pique your interest or could be fleshed out more? Take note of these questions and points of interest. For those of you researching another aspect of Mobile's Jewish history, you may look, for example, into the Springhill Avenue Temple website or the Ahavas Chesed Synagogue website, both of which offer histories of their congregations on their websites.

Development of each individual portion of the project will proceed in three parts:

Bibliography and Individual Consultation: 5%

Each student must meet with Dr. Ruble for 15 minutes to discuss his/her/their preliminary bibliographies, research progress, plans for writing, and any difficulties they are facing in conducting their research. This is your opportunity to get feedback before plunging into research and writing—take advantage of it!

Students must bring a preliminary bibliography of credible, academic sources (i.e. articles, monographs, academic websites—no History.com or Wikipedia) to the consultation. The bibliography should include a minimum of 2 primary sources and 8 secondary sources that

the student plans to use in researching their portion of the project. Students may, of course, always use more.

For primary sources, there are a variety available, ranging from the sources already available on the Gulf Coast Holocaust Center website to the collections in the South library to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum to documents that Dr. Ruble has in her personal possession.

For secondary sources, there are tons of reputable secondary sources on Holocaust history—students should be able to find credible, academic sources through Burke Library, Marx Library at South, or Interlibrary Loan. Bibliographies must be in correct Chicago Manual of Style formatting. Bibliographies (hard copies) will be due **Friday, October 11th**, at your individual consultations.

Rough Draft of Final Project: 10%

Each student will submit a rough draft of his/her/their contribution to the website. Rough drafts must be in correct Chicago Manual of Style formatting. Dr. Ruble will provide feedback. Rough drafts (hard copies) will be due **Friday, November 1st**, at the beginning of class.

Final Project: 30%

Each student will submit a roughly 2000 word essay in two formats: a hard copy of the paper (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, Times New Roman font, Chicago Manual of Style citations and formatting) and on the Weebly website. The text on the website should closely resemble the text of the paper, but may require slightly different formatting to incorporate images or documents as necessary. Final versions (hard copies and online versions) must be submitted by the beginning of class on **Wednesday, December 4th**.

Mock-up of the current webpage layout and design:

