

Global Experiential and Learning Program Application
The Medieval Monastery

[REDACTED]
History of Art and Architecture
May 21, 2014

I am requesting a Global Experiential and Learning Program phase two grant. The GELT program is an exciting new way to enhance my students' learning experience in medieval architecture. The seminar for which I would use the GELT funding is HIAA 1440: *The Medieval Monastery*, which is already scheduled to be taught in spring 2015. I have also taken students to France for over 30 years as part of my archaeological research. This has often been done as part of the University's UTRA and GISP programs. I therefore have much experience with engaging students in global experiences.

The seminar:

The Medieval Monastery examines the art, architecture and material culture of medieval monastic life. In intensive weekly discussions, we examine the variety of evidence, both visual and documentary, for this important phenomenon in medieval life. While some monks lived an enclosed life removed from secular concerns, many were often involved in political and economic exchanges. They were leaders in the transformations of the landscape in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, clearing forests, introducing new crops and agricultural techniques, and harnessing water for industrial as well as ritual purposes. In the seminar, we trace the development of monastic forms, and analyze how changes in belief structures can influence architectural choices. We also look closely at the rural or urban context for monastic houses and the ways in which these communities interacted with their neighbors. Understanding the three-dimensional spaces we study, and linking them to past technologies and rituals is always challenging for students. A GELT grant will allow me to provide students with the opportunity to visit selected sites that we have studied together. With GELT funding, I would plan to take the students enrolled in the seminar to continue their study of medieval monasteries in France at the beginning of the summer. There, we will not only visit sites we have studied in the course, but students will also have the opportunity to collaborate with me in my research by participating in the excavation of the Carthusian abbey of Bourgfontaine.

Site visits:

Three of the touchstone monuments in the course are the Cistercian abbey of Fontenay (in Burgundy), the Benedictine abbey of Mont Saint Michel (at the edge of the region of Normandy) and the Augustinian abbey of Saint-Jean-des-Vignes (in Picardy). We would visit these sites at the outset of the trip. We would then go to the remote forest site where the Carthusians founded the charterhouse of Bourgfontaine.

Bourgfontaine:

The Carthusian monastery of Bourgfontaine was established in 1323 by Charles, count of Valois. Charles died later in 1325 with the construction at the monastery unfinished. His son Philip completed the project. When Philip ascended to the throne in 1328 as the first

Valois king of France, the foundation became a royal one. Bourgfontaine survives today as a working farm. The church and precinct wall framing the great cloister, are all that survive above ground of the monastic portion of the site. A number of buildings in the outer court, including a gate and guest chapel also survives.

I have worked since 2006 at the site of Bourgfontaine, doing detailed measurement and survey. The site is one of very few surviving charterhouses in Europe. Bourgfontaine continues to be held as private property and is thus virtually unstudied and unpublished. My team has been awarded complete access to the site for the duration of the project.

French collaborations:

I have very strong research collaborations in France. In 2002, I was *professeur invité* at the Sorbonne (Paris I). I maintain close ties with faculty and students there. In addition, I have for the past decade collaborated closely with colleagues in geophysics at Université de Paris VII and XI. We worked together at Bourgfontaine to carry out a geophysical survey of the site, and the results of that collaboration are being presented at a geophysics conference in Belgium this June. Our radar and resistivity studies in 2007 and again in 2013 revealed excellent survival of walls and substructures at Bourgfontaine.

Archaeology on site:

Excavation will begin at Bourgfontaine this coming summer (2014) with the investigation of a private chapel attached to the east of the church. The chapel was added as a place for royal burial, and in the 14th century was created to hold the heart of the king. One of the “gifts” bestowed by royal patrons on their religious foundations was often their own body, or a body part, for burial at the abbey. Of course, lay, or even non-Carthusian, burial posed a potential problem for a Carthusian house, as it did for houses of other reform orders. The twelfth-century Carthusian customs explicitly forbid burial of non-Carthusians in Carthusian cemeteries. One of our research questions investigates the tensions between the religious withdrawal of the religious community and the presence of royal patrons at the abbey.

Excavation is planned for 2015 in the area of the great cloister. There, the brothers lived in silent isolation within their individual cells. Radar evidence has allowed us to locate a well-preserved individual cell, where we will excavate the living quarters, garden and underground water management system. Very few medieval Carthusian cells survive, and the only fully excavated example exists at Mount Grace in Yorkshire. We hope to learn more about the diversity of practices with the Carthusian order, and about the daily life and material culture of the brothers. Material evidence may tell us more about the production of devotional objects, which texts tell us occupied the brothers at least during the early modern period. With paleobotanical analysis we also hope to recover seed remains that will tell us about the medieval environment and about the brother’s diet.

The GELT program promises to provide a wonderful opportunity to teach my students about medieval architecture in context, and to involve them in my research. This is something I try to do through slides and digital humanities strategies, but there is no substitute for bringing them to engage with the real building and site.

**PRELIMINARY BUDGET:
DESCRIPTION**

Costs

RT airfare-Providence-Paris	\$1200	x 12	=	\$14,400
Ground transportation (van rental)				\$ 1,000
Gasoline				\$ 350
Room and board in France	\$1550	x 12	=	\$18,600

TOTAL \$34,350