

Overview of Course Development Project (Summer 2017 CAT/InFocus Grant)

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In order to incorporate the topics and programming of the InFocus initiative more substantively into multiple courses of a variety of levels devoted primarily to pre-modern literature/literary culture that I teach on a recurring basis, I have created a course module related to each of the Centers of Investigation that can be adapted for each of the courses. Typically, at least two (and likely three or more) of these courses are offered each year.

- ENGL 102 British Literature (an M2 survey course sampling 1500 years of literature, a significant portion of which is pre-modern)
- ENGL 104B – a section of The Experience of Literature course (M2) that I've recently re-designed as a 100-level survey course of medieval English literature and culture
- ENGL 330 Shakespeare
- ENGL 350 Chaucer
- ENGL 351 British Renaissance and NeoClassicism
- ENGL 355 Literature and Culture of Medieval Britain

Each module is grounded in a selected, course-appropriate reading or other resource related to the relevant InFocus theme and in an associated assignment or activity. The overarching “mechanism” connecting the readings across InFocus themes and incorporating them within each course is (given the chronological focus of the courses) an historicizing of the theme, which serves both to situate and to problematize the legacy of the issue as we've inherited it in contemporary culture.

The assignments and activities are designed to lead students to examine not only the durability of the issues highlighted by the InFocus cycle, but also the human persistence in trying to address these issues – sobering, but also perhaps fortifying. As activism and its instigation take many forms, even something as simple as an assignment or activity that challenges students to make links between legacy and contemporary expression of the InFocus issue and then to reflect on these links and on their own agency seems desirable and useful.

The modules will be assessed through graded student work and through end-of-project reflections by students and instructor, as well as by questions on course evaluations.

Below is the excerpt from my course descriptions that is intended to introduce students to InFocus and to explain to them how course readings and activities will be linked to the year's theme. The year's specific theme and selected reading are introduced in the first class, with discussion and activity scheduled within a few weeks, after students have had an opportunity to reflect on the selected reading and on its connection to the course subject matter/other readings. Attached as a sample is the syllabus for ENGL 350: Chaucer, which I will teach in SP18, and which will feature readings, discussions, and activities on medicine in 14thC England. Aspects of the course that constitute the module “InFocus: Health Care; Literary Context: late medieval England” are underlined in the attached description and syllabus. I am creating similar modules for each of the four InFocus themes and their connections with (1) early medieval England, (2) late medieval England, and (3) early modern England.

Excerpt from syllabus description: “**ENGL XXX and InFocus topics:** Each year, through the InFocus program, the College community engages in study, analysis, reflection, and activism regarding one of four rotating interdisciplinary themes that have been identified as particularly significant challenges confronting us today individually, as a society, and on a global scale. These four rotating themes are Sustainability, Health Care, War and Peace, and Poverty and Inequality. Through grappling with these complex problems and by examining

them from several different perspectives, the Program's goal is for Moravian's graduates to be better prepared to contribute to a just society and a vibrant democracy.

While, at first glance, each of these issues might seem an especially modern phenomenon, even brief reflection leads to the realization that each has deep roots in human history and experience. How does the durability of these issues manifest itself in the literature of the past? What can we embrace about the persistence in the past of people like ourselves in their efforts to resolve the problems associated with these issues or to reduce their impact? How can we learn or take inspiration from the past in order to redouble our own efforts to make even some small contribution?

To provide opportunities for students to consider these issues, selected readings and activities in the class will connect the InFocus theme for the year with the course subject matter. One of our readings at the beginning of the semester will introduce the connection and serve as a touchstone for the topic as we engage in subsequent readings and discussion during the semester. Please refer to the course syllabus for further details."