

SOAR Summer Project Faculty Proposal

Title of Project:

Encouraging Emergence / Writing the Women of Moravian College Past and Present

Faculty Mentor:

Crystal N. Fodrey, Assistant Professor of English

Student Researcher:

Savannah Brown, English Major

Duration of Project:

Monday, June 1- Friday, August 7 (10 weeks)

Description of Project:

This multifaceted critical and creative writing project asks the student researcher, Savannah Brown, to first read scholarship on feminist rhetorical theory, feminist archival and oral history research methodology, and feminist theories of composing. Then, utilizing the archive of images and catalogs of the Female Seminary at Moravian College available through the library, Savannah will embark on a quest to uncover the stories of the women portrayed in the photographs while also reflecting on her own journey in order to compose an autoethnographic multigenre multimodal creative composition that ultimately takes the shape of Savannah's choosing, but may contain themes related to being and becoming a strong woman within the context of the Moravian College experience. Our collective hope is that the research and writing completed for this project is not just a means to an end; it will very likely help Savannah better define her senior Honor's project and help her to choose her area of specialization within English Studies for graduate school. (She is currently interested in both creative writing and writing and rhetoric studies, and this project is meant to promote growth and in-depth experience in both of those areas.) We also anticipate that Savannah's completed SOAR project will be of great interest to Moravian College and Theological Seminary students, faculty, and administrators, and if this project is funded, we also anticipate Savannah sharing her work with the college and larger Bethlehem community via a public reading.

During this process, I will be working on an article tentatively titled "Encouraging Emergence: Immersion as Socially Situated Inventive Practice" in which I argue for what I call a "Praxis of Emergence." This praxis is a theorized creative nonfiction writing pedagogy that integrates the study of stylistics alongside discussions of how creative nonfiction functions as literary public discourse, the study of *kairos* (i.e. ways of seizing an opportune moment for a communicative act) alongside discussions of immersion (autoethnographic, archival) research methods, and the study of audience alongside discussions on the nature of creative nonfiction's reality claim. I have the belief that such a praxis can lead student writers—especially undergraduates new to composing creative nonfiction—to generate socially situated personal writing meant to emerge toward others. I plan to utilize aspects of this pedagogy with Savannah in our early meetings and then integrate a narrative of my experience of working with her into my article (which is a common practice in writing studies research). I also plan to offer a course in Immersion Writing in the future, and my experience learning from Savannah's research and writing process will help me in the development of that course.

Roles and Responsibilities of SOAR Project Participants:

- **June 1 to June 19:** Dr. Fodrey and Savannah Brown will meet twice weekly to discuss assigned readings in feminist rhetorical theory, feminist archival and oral history research methodology, and feminist theories of composing. During this time Savannah will compose a literature review and/or annotated bibliography of these sources and draft a research plan for her project based on an agreed-upon methodology that emerges from previous discussions of scholarly texts.

- **June 22 to July 17:** Savannah will conduct archival research, collect oral histories, and begin to reflect on the multiplicity of narratives that emerge from this process. She will then be asked to reflect on what her narrative is and how it fits with the narratives of female students of Moravian College from the past. During this process, I will also ask Savannah to reflect on the research process itself, and I will begin to add Savannah's voice into my own research on creative writing pedagogy. By July 17, Savannah will submit a writing prospectus, outlining her purpose, her intended audience, what shape she anticipates her written product to take (genre conventions), and what she anticipates her "so what" or center of gravity might be.
- **July 20 to August 7:** Savannah will compose and revise a draft of her critical/creative writing project with the expectation that more revision may be necessary beyond the scope of the ten weeks of SOAR. During this same time, I plan to complete my article and submit it for publication to *Assay: A Journal of Nonfiction Studies*.

How the student will be engaged in discipline-appropriate scholarly research:

English Studies is multi-disciplinary, drawing from literary history, the rhetorical arts, the study of writing, and the study of language. This project asks the researcher to familiarize herself with feminist rhetorical epistemologies and research methodologies often studied in undergraduate rhetorics of gender courses taught in English Departments across the country (and about which Savannah already has a baseline of knowledge from taking my Writing and Rhetorics of Everyday Life course during the Fall 2014 semester) and then complete in a creative writing project that engages with feminist theory in a way that Savannah and I deem appropriate. Savannah, also a Sociology minor, will be able to utilize her knowledge from previous relevant Sociology coursework during her work on this project as well.

How the work of the student will contribute to the discipline and opportunities the student will have to share his or her work with other students, faculty, and the community:

Savannah's participation in *my* research project will provide teachers of college-level creative writing and composition the insights of a student engaged in a cutting-edge socially relevant writing project. Savannah's final written product has the potential to bring greater power to the narratives of Moravian College women. She could participate in a public reading of her work. She could potentially give the college permission to print or link to her work on Moravian's website, allowing it to be used as a recruiting tool for future students. Beyond Moravian, I will encourage Savannah to submit her finished piece of writing for publication in an undergraduate literary journal or other appropriate publication space. I will also encourage her to use what she has written for this project as her writing sample for graduate school.

SOAR Summer 2015 Project Student Statement of Purpose

Title of Project:

Encouraging Emergence / Writing the Women of Moravian College Past and Present

Student Researcher:

Savannah Brown, English Major, May 2016 – On-campus housing will not be requested during this project.

Faculty Mentor:

Dr. Crystal N. Fodrey, Assistant Professor of English

Rationale for my participation in this project:

My role in this project is to create an autoethnographic multigenre creative composition that connects the past women of Moravian College's experience that shaped them into the women they became, and also encompasses my own journey at Moravian College as I become one of those strong, educated, confident, and ambitious women. This project incorporates the history of these women, the history of feminism, and how each of these has created and strengthened the community of women at Moravian College that it is today. Initially, I will be reading scholarship on feminist rhetorical theory, feminist archival and oral history research methodology, and also feminist theories of composing that Dr. Fodrey assigns me. I will then collect images from the archive of images and catalogs of the Female Seminary at Moravian College that is available through the library. Every person has a story to tell, and some pictures are worth a thousand words. Literally, I plan to use these archived photos of the women of Moravian College to present their stories and what the photos alone show viewers about the women portrayed in them through rhetorical criticism and critical theory.

As a participant, I plan for this project to create a hybrid academic and personal narrative that incorporates memoir through the description and connections of the women in these archived photos and myself. My hopes for this project will be to create a composition that entails choosing compelling photographs of some of the women in the archived photos, writing a rhetorical analysis on the photographs that use feminist criticism to understand what the photos show the audience about these female Moravian College alumni, creating either a fictional or nonfictional account of their experience, and finally including my own memoir about being a part of Moravian College's past, present, and future after my experience and knowledge acquired about these women. Dr. Fodrey and I concluded upon an idea of trying to reach out to the women in these photographs to interview them and ask them a few questions about their experience at Moravian College, which would also include immersion to allow myself to submerge my writing in the women of these photographs. This will allow me to create a nonfictional account of their experience. However, since Moravian was founded in 1742 as the first boarding school for young women in the United States, with the Female Seminary being incorporated in 1863 that was allowed to grant baccalaureate degrees, and then becoming the Moravian Seminary and College for Women in 1913, I hope to encounter some photographs that are much older, which would allow me to create a nonfictional piece about the woman portrayed in one of the photographs and her experience at Moravian.

There are many ways that this project could unfold. I find this project and its many opportunities captivating, and rather than try to control the outcome of what these pictures show, I plan to let their stories speak for themselves through my writing. As a participant of this project, I plan to weave the oral histories of the women in these photographs in with my own story, which can either be done through italics between my work with each photograph or simply as an introduction and a concluding memoir that incorporates my own experience at Moravian College and what this project has taught me about the exceptional Moravian College women alumni. Furthermore, I will extrapolate the stories of these photographs using my knowledge from previous creative writing, immersion, rhetoric studies, and sociology studies combined with my growth and in-depth experience with these areas given the assigned readings, which I will use to develop a well-rounded multi-disciplinary composition about the extraordinary

women of Moravian College and what their stories and experiences have to offer Moravian College faculty, staff, students, and the community.

My expected outcomes for this project:

My expected outcome is to complete a creative writing project that promotes the growth of my knowledge regarding multi-disciplinary and multi-genre studies, as well as creating a multifaceted critical and creative writing composition that entertains, enlightens, and creates a sense of community for Moravian College. The sense of community that this composition creates could possibly be used as a recruiting tool for the future generations of Moravian College women who are interested in attending the college. The value of my research will span to the many generations of past, present, and future women of Moravian College in an effort to rhetorically and sociologically express the impact that Moravian College has had on its women students, which has caused them to become strong and independent women that are destined for great things.

The areas of interest concerning my project coincide with Dr. Fodrey's research regarding an article she is writing on a praxis of theorized creative nonfiction writing pedagogy that combines the study of stylistics with discussions about how creative nonfiction serves as literary public discourse, the study of kairos (seizing an opportune moment for a communicative act, which I also studied in Dr. Fodrey's class in the Fall 2014 semester: Writing and Rhetorics of Everyday Life), discussions of immersion (which I am currently working on for an essay in Dr. Fodrey's Creative Nonfiction class), research methods, the study of audience, and the nature of creative nonfiction's reality claim. The purpose of Dr. Fodrey's article is to generate socially situated personal writing that is meant to emerge toward others. I believe Dr. Fodrey's interests are similar to mine because they encompass many of the same genres, and that her knowledge of rhetorical criticisms, which includes feminist criticism and nonfiction will further my knowledge and guidance during this project. Dr. Fodrey and I plan for this project to better define my Honor's project for the coming year and subsequently help me choose which area of specialization I would most like to work with in graduate school as I have found myself interested in creative writing and writing and rhetoric studies after the courses I have taken during my experience thus far at Moravian College.

My hopes for this project are that it will not only guide my future as a graduate student and scholar, but that it will also provide Moravian College women and the community with a sense of pride and multidisciplinary knowledge of the experiences that the college's previous women endured, and how these experiences at Moravian College shaped them into the women they became. Knowledge is empowering, and I believe my research will uplift the Moravian College community and provide students with a sense of belonging because it is at Moravian College that they will begin to find themselves and shape the rest of their lives with their own personal experiences and the knowledge they obtain. Dr. Fodrey and I believe that this project will serve as a great interest to Moravian College and Theological Seminary students, faculty, and administrators, could be used as a recruitment tool on Moravian's website, and that if funded, sharing my project with a larger audience will further this multidisciplinary knowledge with the larger Bethlehem community through a public reading, possible submission for publication, and finally could be used as a writing sample for graduate school as well.