

Abstract:

I propose to design, develop, implement, and arrange for evaluation a web-based learning module that will complement a web site introducing theory to undergraduate students. At this present time, no such site exists anywhere on the world wide web; indeed, there is currently a paucity of means by which students can learn about the theories that pervasively and increasingly affect a vast number of courses in English and Foreign-Literature courses. Building on the Undergraduate Guide to Theory, work on which will be funded by Purdue's Center for Undergraduate Instructional Excellence in the spring semester of 2002, I will create stand-alone, asynchronous learning modules that will walk students through each of the theories explained on the larger web site, including narratology and film theory, Marxism and cultural materialism, theories of gender and sexuality, postmodernism, psychoanalysis, and poststructuralism. The interactive modules will allow students to begin hands-on interpretations of actual texts within individual theories. I am requesting \$16,812 from IPSE/IHETS to cover the cost of a scanner, a teaching assistant, and two months of summer salary to cover my summertime work on the modules. Dino Felluga

1. NEED AND AUDIENCE

There can be no denying that critical theory has now begun to affect undergraduate education in various disciplines at the nation's preeminent universities. Faculty members in English and foreign-literature departments across Indiana currently examine literature and culture in their classes through the lenses of various critical theories. In the English department at Purdue alone, not counting the 500-level courses that are primarily populated by graduate students, 35 different undergraduate courses taught by fifteen different professors, sixteen different teaching assistants, and one instructor have introduced theory on some level (based on a survey that I distributed to the department of English in January 1998). These include not only specialized courses that are taught irregularly but almost all of the popular and required courses that are taught numerous times each year to not only English students but also many non-majors. Fifteen professors, sixteen teaching assistants, and one instructor all responded in the affirmative to the question, "Might you foresee using the Undergraduate Guide to Theory in a future undergraduate course?" The survey response seems to make one point clear: critical theory influences and affects undergraduate education throughout the English department, impacting thousands of students across not only the Purdue campus, but Indiana campuses at large. The current prototype site, which I discuss below, already receives 500 "hits" per week, with a yearly access rate of 24,000. That figure will increase dramatically after I implement the expansions discussed in this proposal.

2. DEMONSTRATION THAT NEED IS UNMET

There currently does not exist an easily accessible source to guide undergraduate students who seek help with the often-difficult ideas being discussed in their courses. The essay collections and introductions that have been published tend to be expensive, as well as narrow in their interests and emphases, often concentrating on only one approach. Such collections are also often pitched at a level too difficult for undergraduates to access easily. Although the World Wide Web provides an easily accessible locus for such a guide, at this present time no such site exists anywhere on the internet.

An indication of the need is the fact that professors using the prototype version of the site in their classrooms have already contacted me expressing their gratitude, sometimes inviting me to participate via listserv in classroom discussions (as I did in one class discussion at Illinois State University, where Rebecca K. Webb used my prototype site in 1998 as part of an introductory literature course). Even in its current highly limited form, my Guide to Theory has already become an integral part of classroom discussion in other courses across the United States. One example is a Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Literature undergraduate course taught at Ohio State U by Natalie Tyler in Fall 1998. Given that the undergraduate population is precisely the constituency that I hope to aid with my proposed project, evaluations of the site by her students should serve to illustrate the potential effectiveness of an expanded Guide to Theory: "I've always heard of these methods of interpreting texts but I wasn't sure of the specifics. Felluga's [site] helped to clarify concepts where I wasn't certain"; "Although I'd heard most of the words before and had an idea what they meant, it was nice to see them clarified in some detail"; "I found Professor Felluga's [site] to be extremely helpful; it is one of those [sites] which clears up annoying terms which we are supposed to know, but can never quite define other than vaguely"; "I have heard of some of these [concepts] before in my anthropology classes but I believe they are explained better here"; "The [site] was helpful in giving definitions for words I have heard (superego, introjection) but never had a concrete definition for"; "I am currently studying various theories in my Engl 398 class and [this site] helped me to better understand the theories"; "I like the way it breaks down the different criticisms—It's nice for future easy reference. However, it is limited in its scope.... There's more than just the ones he mentions." As these comments demonstrate, the current Guide to Theory fulfills a need among undergraduates, who appreciate a resource that explains the critical terms that they hear about in classes but do not yet fully understand. What is required now, however, is a walk-through module and self-exam function, which would provide concrete suggestions both to students seeking to master these concepts and to instructors seeking to facilitate classroom discussion about theoretical concepts.

3. RATIONALE FOR TECHNOLOGY

The World Wide Web offers a way to help the widest number of students with the theoretical concepts that they are almost sure to face at some point through their progress in the English major. Nearly every single student in higher education now has easy access to internet technologies and all students are expected to be proficient in the use of such technologies in order to succeed in their studies. Web sites like the one I propose are, therefore, easily accessible to all students in Indiana. To ensure perfect compatibility, I will be using Macromedia's Dreamweaver because it writes beautiful, clean code and is available across both Macintosh and PC platforms.

The internet also has a major advantage over textbooks when it comes to learning new methodologies like critical theory. Textbooks do not allow for the sort of interaction and active participation in interpretation that is made possible by hypertext on the World Wide Web. In order to achieve a maximum amount of interaction and to provide users with hands-on training, I will be using Macromedia's CourseBuilder Extension for Dreamweaver 4. This software will enable me to create interactive Web pages with engaging web-based learning content and to deliver them across multiple platforms and browsers. CourseBuilder extends the Macromedia Dreamweaver HTML editing functions by generating logic-based objects that interact with users, as well as external computer-managed instruction (CMI) applications that track and score user input. Indeed, the module would allow other teachers with the same software to collect results from a set of multiple-choice questions, summarize these results, and send a score back to a tracking system. You can even indicate passing time to users as they complete a question or scenario. You can time a single interaction or coordinate several timed responses or actions from an interaction on a page, thus allowing students to prepare for future exams in their own courses. You can also track student

progress scores directly to a Lotus Pathware learning management system, or save the information in a database, such as Microsoft Access, SQL Server, or Oracle. Complex interactions created in Macromedia CourseBuilder for Dreamweaver do not require any plug-in or applet downloads. The content is Web-native (HTML, DHTML, and JavaScript) and therefore compatible with both Netscape and Microsoft Web browsers, ensuring maximum availability to Indiana students.

4. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND DELIVERY

At the moment, the Undergraduate Guide to Theory exists in a prototype form at the following URL: <<http://omni.cc.purdue.edu/~felluga/theory2.html>>. The current site explains four theoretical schools: new historicism, cultural materialism, psychoanalysis, and feminism. The site also provides examples of the approaches by pairing each critical school with a heuristic reading of two sonnets by the Renaissance poet, Edmund Spenser. At the moment, the site is extremely provisional; indeed, it was written nine years ago when I was still a graduate student and consequently has only a limited scope. During the spring semester of 2002, I will be dedicating my time to turning the site into the preeminent internet locus for students seeking an introduction to critical theory. At that time, I will be relieved from my teaching duties thanks to a grant from Purdue's Center for Undergraduate Instructional Excellence. The new site will offer an introduction to the most prominent theories currently influencing undergraduate education, including a major expansion of my prototype discussion of the four theories currently highlighted on the site.

During the fall semester of 2002, I plan to use the course release I would secure through the Module Development Grant in order to develop stand-alone learning modules that will walk students through the most influential critical schools. The modules would be accompanied by a Macromedia CourseBuilder self-test that I would make available to other instructors. What these modules will do is provide students with a chance to analyze individual texts and then to compare their own readings with those provided within the module. The problem with most introductions to theory is that they do not provide students with an opportunity to apply the theoretical approaches themselves. The introductions either collect famous (and difficult) essays written by scholars within a given school (for example, Simon During's highly successful Cultural Studies Reader) or they provide an in-depth, highly-specialized introduction to a single approach (for example, Malcolm Bowie's Lacan) or they provide general definitions of key terms (for example, Frank Lentricchia's and Thomas McLaughlin's Critical Terms for Literary Study). Such introductions tend to be not only difficult but expensive, as well as narrow in their interests and emphases, often concentrating on only one approach. They are generally pitched at a level too difficult for undergraduates to access easily and they do not allow students to practice what is preached. What is missing is an introduction to theory that allows the students actively to engage the approaches through hands-on applications and interactive learning.

5. HOW DESIGN SERVES AUDIENCE

The internet offers an easily accessible medium for day-to-day classroom discussion. One thing that is so liberating about a web-based textual project is that it functions not at all like a textbook, since it is both infinitely customizable and, through LCD projectors, readily available for in-class discussion. In the case of my Guide to Theory, the web allows teachers to place their own course-specific content on their web sites with links, when helpful, to sections of the Guide to Theory. As my 1998 survey also makes clear, the internet makes the site available to a variety of courses, from those concentrating exclusively on critical theory to others that discuss theory in passing or in connection to cultural analysis. Indeed, twelve teaching assistants and three professors responded in the survey that such a Guide to Critical Theory would be especially useful in English 101 and English 102, two composition courses that are required for students across the Purdue undergraduate population. As Patty Harkin, a former associate professor and faculty mentor of

teaching assistants in composition, wrote to me as part of her response to my survey, "I'm interested in your web site in the context of my mentoring of graduate students who teach ENGL 101 and 102. Certainly the composition courses I design for my mentees are influenced by what you call 'critical theory,' both in the assignments for first year students and in my accounts of and rationales for those assignments in our mentor meetings." The modules I propose would aid not only the thousands of students entering such required composition courses across Indiana but the graduate students and mentors seeking ways to facilitate the instruction of various theoretical approaches to literature and culture.

6. EVALUATION PLAN

Immediately following the initial implementation of the modules in the summer and fall of 2002, I would then teach two sections of our department's undergraduate introduction to literary studies: ENGL 201. This experience will give me a chance to test the beta version of the site directly on seventy of my own students, following which I will have students comment on the site using Purdue's well-established "cafeteria forms" from the Center for Instructional Services (CIS). I will also distribute a follow-up survey to my department, asking faculty and teaching assistants to evaluate the new site, modeling the survey on the one I previously distributed to faculty in 1998. Finally, I will ask Dr. Michael Eberle-Sinatra, editor of Romanticism on the Net, the preeminent on-line journal dedicated to Romantic Studies, to evaluate the navigability and effectiveness of the completed modules. In addition, not only will I encourage users to contact me by e-mail with suggestions and evaluations, but I will provide an evaluation form on the site that I will encourage educators to distribute to their classes and then return to me, as I did with Natalie Tyler's Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Literature course at Ohio State U in Fall 1998 (the responses from which I document in Section Two of this application). All of this feedback will allow me to trouble-shoot problems on the site and to continue improving the quality, navigability, and usefulness of the modules.

7. UTILIZATION POTENTIAL

Critical theory has served to transform scholarship and pedagogy in numerous disciplines other than English—Communication, Foreign Languages and Literatures (FLL), Women's Studies, Visual and Performing Arts, Sociology, Philosophy, Anthropology and Humanistic Geography, among others. Indeed, I have already had responses about the prototype site from two professors in Purdue's Foreign Languages and Literatures department: Beata Alert (German) and Ben Lawton (Italian). As Ben Lawton wrote to me in 1998, "You may add my courses (Italian 341—Intro to Italian Medieval and Renaissance Literature—and Italian 330—Italian Cinema) among the courses which will recommend and use your Undergraduate Guide to Critical Theory. Very nice and very useful!" An easily accessible web site dedicated to the introduction of critical theory to undergraduates would serve to help scholars and students from many different disciplines in their exploration of shared critical constructs. The global nature of the World Wide Web also makes possible an impact beyond the confines of Indiana. Indeed, the prototype Guide to Theory has already been put to use in English courses by not only members of the Purdue English department but professors and teaching assistants at Princeton U, U of California at Santa Barbara, Illinois SU, Ohio SU, U of Tennessee, San Jose State U, Cumberland College (Kentucky), U of Montana, Murray SU (Michigan), Georgia Southern U, Georgia Institute of Technology, S.U.N.Y. at Stony Brook, St. Vincent's Academy (Georgia), Bolton High School (Tennessee), Gilroy High School (California), Alpena Community College (Michigan), U of Calgary (Canada), Brock U (Canada), and National Taiwan U (Taiwan). I have been contacted by students, teachers, and professors using my Guide to Theory in high schools and universities from across not only this country but also Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Romania, Puerto Rico, Italy, India, Tunisia, Lebanon, the Netherlands, and Australia. A dramatically expanded site with a prominent pedagogical component

that walks students through hands-on interactive modules would continue to promote Indiana to the world as a leader in both computer pedagogy and critical theory.

8. STATEWIDE SIGNIFICANCE

As the response in my survey from Purdue instructors illustrates, Indiana colleges are in need of an easily accessible guide to theory. The best universities in the state have recognized the prevalence of critical theory in English studies and have tailored their most recent hires accordingly. Increasingly, these approaches have transformed the sort of education students receive not only in English but in other disciplines as well. One can extrapolate from my survey findings that almost all students in Indiana who enter an English major, as well as countless others, will be faced at some point with such theories. And yet there is no easily accessible resource to which students can turn when they are introduced to often quite difficult theoretical concepts.

It is also a truth that the humanities are underrepresented among the on-line guides for students of Indiana pursuing degrees in higher education, despite the fact that the internet is an increasingly important tool in the humanities classroom. On-line resources are in extremely high demand throughout the country and in the state of Indiana. This project will allow for the in-house development and on-line delivery of a quality product made in the state of Indiana.

9. MARKETING PLAN

In order to build on the significant traffic the site already receives, I will seek to couple the web site with a textbook introducing theory to undergraduates. The textbook and the site should advertise each other and build a significant user group for the modules. My department head, Tom Adler, has also approved a mailing to English departments across the Indiana higher-education system, which will advertise the site to educators across the state. The distribution list is already in place thanks to the Indiana Association of Departments of English.

10. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND COMMITMENT

Purdue has already shown its support of this project by granting me a 50% course release in the 2000-2001 school year through the Center for Undergraduate Instructional Excellence. For the time I would be working on the Module extension of the Guide, my department will offer an additional 25% of course release for me; in exchange, I seek funds to supply the department with a teaching assistant to take over a course in my place, as well as funds to support my summertime work on the site. The department also supplies me with the basic hardware I will need to complete the project, including an up-to-date Power Macintosh. I attach a letter of support from Professor Margaret Rowe, the Dean of the School of Liberal Arts at Purdue, counter-signed by the head of my department, Tom Adler, and Purdue's IPSE representative, Dean Philip Swain.

PROJECT SCHEDULE:

During summer 2002, I will construct the bare bones of the modules, figuring out the general design and navigability of the site. In fall 2002, I will use my course reduction to load the content of the individual learning modules. At the same time, I will teach a graduate introduction to critical theory that will facilitate me in generating the theoretical content of the modules, thanks to help from my graduate students: not only will I make the Guide to Theory an integral part of the class, but I will seek to cull from student applications of the theories as I create the individual learning modules (always with permission, of course). During spring 2003, I will then teach two 35-person sections of my department's introduction to literary studies, ENGL 201. That group of seventy students will serve as the test group for the beta version of the modules. I will then use the beginning of summer

2003 to implement final changes to the site based on evaluations from students in ENGL 201, after which the site will be advertised to English departments across Indiana.

Budget Narrative:

SALARIES AND WAGES

The institutional share of the cost of the site development includes a 25% course release for Prof. Felluga during fall 2002 to facilitate the creation of stand-alone modules in connection with his Guide to Theory. This amounts to \$16,435 (\$11,852 plus \$4,583 in fringe benefits). Purdue has also shown its commitment to this project by providing a 50% course release for Prof. Felluga during spring 2002 through Purdue's Center for Undergraduate Instructional Excellence. \$11,670 is requested from IHETS to compensate Prof. Felluga for time spent working on the modules during summer 2002 and summer 2003 (amounting to two months of summer salary, \$9,480, plus \$2190 in fringe benefits). In addition, \$4,892 is requested to supply the department with a Teaching Assistant (\$2878 plus \$2014 in fee remissions), who will teach the course normally taught by Prof. Felluga in the fall.

FRINGE BENEFITS

Fringe benefits are calculated at the Purdue U rate of 23.1 per cent. See above for specific figures.

NO FUNDS FOR CONSULTING SERVICES IS REQUESTED

SUPPLIES AND EXPENSES

Purdue provides support in the form of an up-to-date computer, integral software (Adobe Photoshop, Macromedia Dreamweaver, MS Word) and clerical support. Software support alone is estimated to be approximately \$377. Prof. Felluga requests \$250 to purchase a scanner that will facilitate the creation of the on-line material and graphics.

NO TRAVEL FUNDS ARE REQUESTED

OTHER DIRECT COSTS

Purdue will provide all computers, office space, telephone expenses, and other traditional "overhead" items.

Appendix: Experience of Primary Personnel

KEY DEVELOPMENT PERSONNEL:

PRIMARY PERSONNEL

Dino Felluga, Assistant Professor English, will serve as project director and module designer/developer.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Shawn Carroll, the English Department Computer Expert and Coordinator of User Services at Purdue, and John O'Malley, Purdue's in-house Macintosh specialist and the Coordinator of Technical Communication here, will help me troubleshoot any problems that may manifest themselves during the design and implementation of the modules.

My preparation in critical theory has been extensive, both as a doctoral student at the University of California, Santa Barbara and as a postdoctoral fellow at Stanford University and the Calgary Institute for the Humanities. Prominent scholars with whom I have studied and who have written letters of recommendation for me in the past include Alan Liu (a new historicist and hypertext theorist), Garrett Stewart (a narratologist, post-structuralist, and film theorist); Hayden White (a narratologist and post-structuralist), Regenia Gagnier (a cultural materialist and feminist), Barbara

Gelpi (a Lacanian feminist), Richard Helgerson (a new historicist), and Clive Thomson (a Bakhtinian critic). My own theoretical work has appeared or is forthcoming in SEL: Studies in English Literature, Criticism, Language and Style, ARIEL, Theory and Psychology, and The Blackwell Companion to Victorian Poetry. In addition, my two current book projects, The Perversity of Poetry: The Market, Romantic Ideology, and the Masculine Poet and Back to the Future: Technology, Postmodernism, and the Disappearance of the Book, are significantly informed by critical theory.

My web-authoring skills are on display in the web sites that I maintain for the courses I have taught at Purdue: <http://icdweb.cc.purdue.edu/~felluga>. Past class web sites include a plethora of additional material including time-lines, class synopses, Guides to Terms, guides to grammar and style, examples of student papers and exams, and slide shows, much of which I use in class discussion thanks to the many Purdue classrooms equipped with both computer connections and overhead LCD projectors. I am also the assistant editor of Romanticism on the Net, the preeminent on-line journal dedicated to the study of Romantic literature.

I have also proven myself to be a strong teacher in the Department of English, receiving both the undergraduate and graduate teaching awards in 1999. (I was ineligible for undergraduate teaching awards every other year of competition because of my participation on the Excellence in Teaching Committee in my department.) In addition to the Center for Undergraduate Instructional Excellence Grant, which I discuss in my proposal, I was awarded a Lilly Retention Initiative Grant of \$11,000 to teach an HONR 199 course in Spring 2001, entitled "Telling the Holocaust." The grant allowed me to organize a number of special events tied to my HONR 199 course, including internationally-renowned visiting speakers (Robert Gellately on February 21-22 and James E. Young on April 9-10); a field trip to Chicago to visit the Avenue of the Righteous and the Zell Holocaust Memorial (April 5); a Trial of Eichmann with Gordon Mork (Chair of History) as judge; a class-led performance of Berthold Brecht's The Private Life of the Master Race at Fowler Hall (March 22); and the creation of a public memorial to the Holocaust. I have also promoted teaching in my department by chairing three committees dedicated to improving the education and experience of undergraduate students: the Excellence in Teaching Committee (1998-99), Books & Coffee (1999-2001), and Literary Awards (2001-2003)