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Creating a Reacting to the Past Website and Promoting Interdisciplinary Humanities Teaching

Martha Driver
Dyson College of Arts and Sciences, Pace University

Nancy Raegin
Dyson College of Arts and Sciences, Pace University

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Dr. Martha Driver and Dr. Nancy Reagin

Report for the Thinkfinity Grant Proposal, August 2010

Creating a Reacting to the Past Website and Promoting Interdisciplinary Humanities Teaching

With funding from our Thinkfinity grant and support from our technical team (Daniel Molina and Roberto Rodriguez), we have created a website that provides a substantial amount of background and information about the Reacting to the Past pedagogy and showcases the talents and skills that such teaching develops. The website includes film clips of Pace students in their Reacting roles, syllabi from Pace Reacting courses taught by us or by other Pace faculty, examples of student writing, still photos of students in their roles (for example, one student hosted a party for the Tudor court, with "Anne Boleyn" in attendance), illustrations and documents from the historical period, excerpts from Blackboard discussions (one BB forum in the game *Henry VIII and the Reformation Parliament* drew over 1500 posts, written by students writing in character about issues and texts in the course), bibliographies of supplemental readings, and links to readings or sources available on the Internet. The finished website will be posted on the Pace server and linked to the website hosted by the Barnard College Reacting Symposium.

Our original proposal required some modification around Dr. Driver's illness and medical leave in fall 2009. Nancy Reagin attended the annual training workshop held at Barnard College each summer in June 2009 to learn how to teach additional Reacting simulations. She then taught the Trial of Anne Hutchinson game and the Henry VIII game with Professor Gwen Limbach during the fall semester of 2009. In January 2010, she travelled to the American Historical Association's annual conference to moderate a panel on Reacting pedagogy.

In spring 2010, Martha Driver and Nancy Reagin team-taught two Reacting games *The Second Crusade: The War Council of Acre, 1148*, and *Rousseau, Burke, and Revolution in France, 1791*. For the Crusades game, Dr Driver further purchased medieval costumes for students, which they wore during class discussion. In addition, Driver spoke about her development with Nancy Reagin of Reacting pedagogy at Pace University at the meeting of the Medieval Academy of America at Yale University in March 2010. Driver has submitted that paper, which discussed teaching with film, as well as Reacting and Second Life pedagogies (titled "What's Right with this Picture?" Meaning and Memory in Medieval Movies"), to the scholarly journal *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching*. Driver also discussed teaching *The Second Crusade: The War Council of Acre, 1148*, as a respondent to a panel at the 45th International Congress of Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, May 2010. She further attended the Tenth Annual Summer Institute at Barnard College (June 10-13) to learn the pedagogical game *The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C.*, which she expects to teach, along with the Rome game that debates the assassination of Julius Caesar, with Nancy Reagin in spring 2011.

With her new laptop supplied by the Thinkfinity grant, Driver has also been able to explore Second Life pedagogy and attend online educational conferences in the virtual environment. She incorporated Second Life into her Chaucer class for English majors in spring 2010, and she has designed a new learning community with Will Pappenheimer, combining literature and art, to be offered in spring 2011. Driver and Reagin met on July 5 to go over some film clips and find materials for the website that were then sent to Daniel Molina who has incorporated them into webpages; Driver is working with Rob Rodriguez to finalize clips available only on video. The website which demonstrates the powerful learning experience of Reacting pedagogy as well as its fun and positive motivational influence (students never miss class because they do not wish to let down their faction or the group with which they have identified, or their character has, and their papers are turned in on time!) should be up sometime this fall.