TEACHING CENTER
TRAVEL GRANT APPLICATION FORM 2013-14
(Please do not submit a handwritten application. Please answer all questions.)

Deadline for Fall 2013: Monday, September 16 at 4:00 p.m.
Deadline for Spring 2014: Monday, February 10 at 4:00 p.m.

Name: Jim Al-Shamma

Date of Application: September 6, 2013

Department/Academic Unit: Theatre and Dance, CVPA

Name of the Conference: Reacting to the Past Regional Conference

Location of the Conference: Indiana University, South Bend

Conference Date(s): October 10-12, 2013

What are your primary reasons for attending this conference?

Briefly describe the conference and your interest in attending the conference (2-3 paragraphs).

I am attending this conference in order to become more familiar with Reacting to the Past (RTTP), a role-playing pedagogy initiated by historian Mark Carnes of Barnard College in 1995. This approach has been implemented at over 300 colleges and universities. I was introduced to Reacting to the Past through a 90-minute workshop at the Association for Theatre in Higher Education annual conference in early August. At the RTTP regional conference in Indiana, participants will play a full-length version of a game over three days.

A number of scenarios have been published with instructor and student materials. These cover a wide range of topics and include such titles as “The Threshold of Democracy, Athens in 403 BC,” “Trial of Galileo,” and “Defining a Nation: India on the Eve of Independence, 1945.” Titles relating directly to theatre history have been developed as well and are available from their creators, even though they have not yet been published. These include “The Fifth Council of Carthage, 401 CE,” in which bishops must define the church’s attitude towards theatre; “Le Cid Debate,” about the French Academy’s ruling on Pierre Corneille’s play in 1637, which firmly established the neoclassical ideals in France; and a Restoration debate in which investors must decide between which of two plays to produce, with the argument once again falling along neoclassical lines.

Supporters of Reacting to the Past claim that it is extremely effective at engaging students. Students participate either as advocates for arguments on either side of the debate, or as indeterminates who vote on the issue. Participants assume the identities of historical personages and write advocacy papers drawing on sources that would have been available at the time. Instructors report a high level of enthusiasm and motivation. My own brief experience in a short workshop was extremely positive – learning about the historical event was made effortless as I and the other participants delved into the issue at hand.
In what specific ways will this conference enhance your teaching at Belmont? Please indicate specific course(s) that will be impacted and the projected impact of information gained from this conference (2-3 paragraphs).

Please provide a link to a webpage, flyer or brochure with the appropriate information clearly highlighted if that will help to support your response.

During his presentation at the 2013 Belmont University Fall Teaching Workshop, Stephen Chew presented approaches designed to facilitate deep cognitive processing. A subheading on one of his slides asserts that “deep processing focuses on subjective meaning.” Reacting to the Past invites students to invest in the learning process by assuming a historical persona and building and presenting a strong case for their position before their peers. As the indeterminates vote on the issue, students are motivated by the competitive aspect of the exercise. Participants undertake purposeful research in order to build their argument and engage in group problem-solving with those on their team. I have designed my theatre history courses to engage my students through participation in numerous group presentations and various critical and creative assignments. Nevertheless, I feel that Reacting to the Past has the potential to raise student engagement to a whole new level. In videotaped testimonials presented at the brief workshop I attended in August (admittedly designed to promote the pedagogy), students attested that Reacting to the Past games ranked amongst their most meaningful university experiences.

I would employ this approach in Theatre History I and II and perhaps also Dramatic Literature and Criticism. Games can vary in length from one class session to 4-6 weeks of course time. I will be trying out my first game, the “Le Cid Debate,” later this semester in Theatre History I, after the October conference. I will devote approximately three class sessions to the exercise. I look forward to incorporating games into Theatre History II and Dramatic Literature and Criticism in Spring 2014. At the Indiana conference, I will experience playing a longer game and gain deeper insight into leading and devising RTTP simulations.

Reacting to the Past:
http://reacting.barnard.edu/

Indiana Regional Conference:
http://reacting.barnard.edu/events/iusb-2013

Will you request funds from other sources?
Given our limited ability to fund proposals, the Teaching Center expects that an applicant will typically seek funds from other sources as well. Please indicate amounts expected (if known) or requested from other sources, or offer a brief explanation why other funds are not being sought.

In my experience, funding for theatre conferences is difficult to obtain. In some cases, such as for conferences for national organizations, the organization offers grants. That is not the case with this conference. I will explore other potential funding resources.
Conference Expenses
Please provide a breakdown of expenses and a total (e.g., airfare, hotel, and so forth). For lodging, indicate how many nights. If your application is approved for a grant, the Teaching Center is most likely able to fund a portion of the expenses, up to $500.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Costs</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airfare</td>
<td>$306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodging</td>
<td>2 nights at $112 per night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration fee</td>
<td>$250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meals</td>
<td>3 days at $30/day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Taxi in South Bend</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$970</strong></td>
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**Estimated Costs**

**Anticipated Contribution**

**From other Sources**

**Amount requested from TC**

Unknown/self-funded

$500

*Are there other issues that are pertinent in the consideration of this application?*

No.

In addition to the overview you will provide the Teaching Center, *in what manner would you be willing to share what you learn at the conference with the Belmont community?* (e.g., workshop, discussion group, presentation, newsletter article)

I will be eager to share what I will learn in any number of ways, although the ideal forum would be a workshop in which participants play a short version of one of the games. I will be best equipped to lead such a workshop after I have had the opportunity to run several games in my classes, which I anticipate to have done by the middle or end of the Spring 2014 semester.

RTTP has a broad and flexible application. Although it is perhaps best suited for courses in the humanities, instructors in any discipline who wish to highlight a particular historical debate may find this approach helpful. The games are scalable, with some instructors preferring its use in classes which number 12-14 and others claiming that it works best when 50 or more are involved. As noted above, the time taken by a game can be as brief as one class session or as extensive as 4-6 weeks of a course. Indeed, I can envision an entire course built around RTTP; it is well-suited to the junior cornerstone, for example, as it requires students to develop and utilize group-based, creative problem-solving skills.