

Ferris State University Faculty and Staff Diversity

Mini-Grant Application

Identification

Name of Primary

Applicant:

Barry Mehler

Members of Team:

Piram Prakasam, Director Office of International Education

Tracy Busch, Assistant Professor of History

Todd Stanislav, Director FCTL

Richard Byington, Research Associate

Caryn Mehler, Student Intern for ISAR-FSU

Office of International Education

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II. Event Title:

The Mythology of the Jewish Experience

III. **Specific core value**, strategic initiative, or goal related to diversity that the event will address. (See the University Strategic Plan and the Diversity Plan)

This program is part of the Global Initiatives Project, ***Beyond Mythology***. It will examine myths about Jews as well as Jewish mythology as a way of understanding the 3000 year old Jewish experience. Aviva Cantor will focus her talk on antisemitism in an unusually broad frame of reference, which relates antisemitism to animal abuse, environmental degradation and feminism.

The program will address the following specific core values:

Strategic Plan Goal 1: Our strategic plan calls for Ferris to be a "demonstrable center of excellence in educational quality and student learning." This program is a demonstrable example of our efforts to achieve this goal. Ms. Cantor is an internationally renown author and activist whose work is driven by a profound depth of scholarship. She is a scholar-activist who has combined theory and practice for over four decades leaving behind an impressive record of real world accomplishments in our global society. She is an excellent role model for students preparing to meet the challenges of a global society.

Strategic Plan Goal 2: Our strategic plan calls for Ferris to “enhance the sense of community for everyone.” This program will enhance the sense of community “where all are valued, welcomed, and informed.” This is especially true for our Jewish students who are largely invisible on campus. Beyond that, Ms. Cantor is an inspiring example of a community activist, whose work on behalf of animal rights is especially useful. We hope this program will bring together the animal rights community and those interested in international affairs.

Strategic Plan Goal 6: Our strategic plan calls for the university to develop a plan to support members of the university community “engaged in volunteer service and outreach.” Having the support of our two local animal rights organizations, ARC and the Riley-Mackenze Foundation will help us accomplish this goal.

IV. **Abstract** (150-200 word, use additional paper if necessary). If the application is approved the abstract will be posted on the Diversity and Inclusion Office website.

The Mythology of the Jewish Experience will be an exploration of Jewish mythology as well as mythologies about Jews. The image of the Jew has always been a protean one, changing over the course of millennia, shaped and reshaped to fit diverse cultural, political and theological needs. Thus, Jews are portrayed as communists and capitalists, liberals and fascists, killers of Christ, enemies of humanity, the evil behind all evil, the minions of Satan.

Aviva Cantor has spent a lifetime combining activism with journalism. She has been described as the “great synthesizer, bringing together Jewish feminism, Zionism, socialism, animal rights and concern for the environment. “She is best known for her work as co-founder and editor of *Lilith*, the independent Jewish feminist magazine, her landmark *The Egalitarian Haggadah*, and her passionately analytical and theoretical work*, *Jewish Women/Jewish Men: The Legacy of Patriarchy in Jewish Life*, an exploration of Jewish history, culture and psychology.

In her more than forty years of journalism, Aviva Cantor has reported on Jewish communities in Africa, Latin America and Europe. During her visit to campus she will also meet with our journalism students and discuss the ethics of journalism and how journalism has changed over the past half century.

200 words.

*Amy Stone, *Jewish Women*, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/cantor-aviva>

V. Event Narrative (up to 4 pages single-spaced)

a. The conceptual framework that explains how the event will augment Ferris's long-term commitment to diversity and inclusion.

This event is part of the Office of International Education's Beyond Mythologies theme for the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 school year. Cantor's life work has been about diversity and pluralism. She has struggled to advance the active participation of women and for the revival of debate in Jewish communal life, as well as for the "mainstreaming" of Jewish cultural expression and experience in the public sphere. She has been an ardent advocate in various Zionist and feminist contexts, for the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and for a Middle East where a diversity of living creatures, humans of varying religions and ethnicities, domestic and wild animals, the environment with its landscapes, flora and fauna, will flourish and thrive in an atmosphere of respect and pluralism. She has been deeply involved with CHAI: Concern for Helping Animals in Israel, Inc., founded in 1984.

The FCTL will sponsor a book club reading of Cantor's monumental study of patriarchy and its paradoxes in Jewish life. Copies of the book will be available for free for interested participants.

b. The goals and intended outcome(s) of the event.

We hope to bring startling new ways of looking at the complex interaction between reality and mythology which has the power to divide people but be just as powerful a means of bringing people together. We have had speakers on campus discussing the Middle East, but none bring such a broad range of concerns to the questions of war and peace, pride and prejudice, as Ms. Cantor does. We hope to surprise people and spur a whole new orientation to global awareness.

The Office of International Education has agreed to purchase 50 copies of Ms Cantor's book and we hope to use them all. The team is also confident that her program will fit comfortably in IRC 120 or BUS 111 rooms that can easily hold two hundred participants.

c. A statement on how the event relates to the curriculum or a specific discipline, if appropriate.

As already mentioned, this program is part of the Global Initiatives Mythology series. Besides the campus-wide book discussion sponsored by the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, Ms Cantor will meet with Dr. Bush's students in her Craft of History (Hist 250) and her World History (Hist 212) courses.

Aviva Cantor is a world-class journalist, with over forty years of experience on four continents. We will take full advantage of her presence to inspire our journalism students.

Professors across campus will be encouraged to send their students to her talk and write reaction papers.

d. Timeline.

August 2013: Meet to form the Team.

Early September 2013: Meeting with Todd Stanislav, Fran Rosen and Paul Kammerdiner to discuss the book club reading of *Jewish Women/ Jewish Men*. We agreed to purchase 50 copies of Cantor's book for interested faculty and students.

Fall Semester reading discussion meeting once a month for January, February, March and April. The final meeting of the book club will be with the author.

December 2013: Global Initiative editorial on Aviva Cantor for *The Pioneer*. To be written by Barry Mehler.

March 2014: Global Initiative editorial for *The Pioneer* to be written by Aviva Cantor.

Aviva will speak on campus in IRC 120 on Thursday April 10 at 11 am. She will be on campus on Wednesday and Thursday and will meet with our journalism students on Wednesday. She will also speak at a book signing at Great Lakes Books. There will also be a private reception at my home for interested students, faculty and community members.

e. Description of the target audience, including the estimated number of participants.

This program is broadly targeted to the campus and non-campus community. We are sure it will bring a wide range of diverse participants and are reserving the IRC amphitheater or Business 111 for her main talk. Phi Alpha Theta is a co-sponsor of the event and will bring an audience of undergraduate history students.

Ms Cantor will meet with students in several classes on campus. She will meet specifically with journalism students and informally with community members at an evening social gathering at the home of Caryn and Barry Mehler.

The entire community will also be invited to a book signing at Great Lakes books. So, we expect community folk, students and staff.

f. The expected impact that the event will have on Ferris.

We are certain that this event will have a powerful impact on Ferris. We expect that the event will stimulate a discussion on a wide range of topics, including but not limited to; women's empowerment, antisemitism, human rights, animal protection, the environment and the journalism that covers these topics both globally and locally.

g. A specific plan to assess the impact of the event on the University.

First will be feedback from the book club readers which will begin months before her program. We have fifty copies of Aviva Cantor's book and the FCTL is sponsoring a semester long book club reading which will bring the participants together once a month. At each of those meetings we will gather extensive feedback from the participants.

We are, of course, planning to develop a Likert scale survey card to hand out to attendants at all our events which will address pre and post-survey knowledge and awareness. We will use a similar method with the book club doing a pre and post knowledge and awareness of issues.

Many professors will send their students to one or more of these programs and we are going to encourage professors to require students to turn in reaction papers which we can gather together.

VI. Budget**a. Anticipated Expenses:**

Airfare:	\$500
Baggage	\$50.00
Car to and from Laguardia:	\$100
Car to and from GR:	\$77.00

Honorarium: \$2,000

50 copies of <i>Jewish Women</i>	\$500
Publicity and Printing	\$200
Entertainment and food	\$300

Total: \$3727

b. Funds anticipated from other sources:

Office Of International Education	\$500
Faculty Center for Teaching & Learning	\$127
Humanities Department	\$100

c. Amount requested Faculty and Staff Diversity Mini-Grant \$3,000

We are asking for \$3000 from the Diversity Grant.

VII. Final Report (to be submitted)

A final report is required and it will appear on the Diversity Office's website.

That report

is due no later than three months after the funded activity. The final report should

address:

a: A self-evaluation

b: Results of the event assessment

c: Attendance figures

d: Final budget

Applicants' Signatures:



Submission Date: September 13, 2013