

Application to ACM Newberry Library Seminar

Enrollment in a domestic off-campus program should enable you to learn in ways and in environments not available on the Beloit campus in order for you to gain new perspectives on your studies. Please discuss how participation in your selected program will help you accomplish these.

My most important goal as a student of philosophy and interdisciplinary studies of cultural preservation, is to learn and question, ultimately, what knowledge is (a focus for my Philosophy major) as well as how certain materials and words become ‘knowledge.’ (a focus for my IDST major) In other words, what is knowledge? How is it produced, and how is this ‘knowledge’ transmitted (passed on)? The Newberry Seminar allows me to pursue these two major questions in three ways: (1) this year’s theme, as well as how the Newberry Seminar is structured as a program, (2) the Newberry Library’s unique collections, and (3) work experience in the library. Firstly, the theme for Fall 2014’s seminar is, “Knowledge and Technology: from Socrates to the Digital Age,” which will explore intensively and extensively on how knowledge is produced, who produces it, how it is maintained, how transmission of knowledge is adapting and evolving in this rapidly globalizing and modernizing world, etc... These questions will be explored through a variety of disciplines ranging from philosophy, literature, religion, etc... Also, the seminar will cover many time periods, starting from Ancient Greece all the way up to the day and age of Internet and computers. Because the Newberry Seminar is zeroed-in on these themes throughout the semester, I am able to fully focus and intensively concentrate on these questions and themes without having the distraction of ‘other classes,’ which will be the case, if I were to do a special project concerning production of knowledge, here at Beloit.

Secondly, the Newberry Seminar program is structured in a way where the first 6 weeks are largely devoted to seminars (input), which prepares the students for their independent research projects (output) that are the focus of the latter half of the semester. This brings me to how the Newberry Library’s unique collections are a key to my independent research project. One specific research question I have, is, “what consists of knowledge for the Church in the early Renaissance, and how did they select, and pass on the knowledge?” this can be answered through exploring the Library’s core collection of Medieval, Renaissance, and Early Modern Studies collection, as well as their collection on religious manuscripts. This research question in particular gets at my question as a philosopher, “what is knowledge?” as well as my question of how knowledge is produced and passed on (details of my research question will be refined and reevaluated once I am on site). I will have a tough time pursuing this question in Beloit in one semester, simply because there are not enough secondary, and certainly not primary, sources in the Beloit Library (or elsewhere).

Thirdly, the Newberry Library’s collections will provide a solid support for deepening my understanding of the seminar theme, through the collections mentioned above, as well as other collections, such as the History of Books and American History and Culture. Finally, the Newberry Seminar program allows students to gain valuable work experience in the library, such as paging books or cataloging for their collections, setting up exhibits, or doing research projects for Encyclopedia of Chicago History, etc... Therefore, I am able to both directly and indirectly participate in the production and selection of knowledge, as well as preservation and transmission of knowledge, in a down to earth, hands-on manner. Although I may be able to learn in a classroom about knowledge production, be it in Beloit or in the Library, it is a rare and

precious experience to be able to live and contribute to my studies – the questions I pursue.

Finally, because I will be spending most of my time in the Newberry Library, a large research library, and live in the heart of downtown Chicago, I will be able to gain new and intriguing insights, different from living in Beloit, about knowledge, people, and life in general. A large library and a large city is a perfect for widening and expanding the scale of how I view the world, which will enable me to cultivate a city-dweller's (or a large library-dweller's) lens that I can switch and utilize when I am back in Beloit, or anywhere in the world. Furthermore, Chicago, as a town, is a hot bed for preserved/passed on, age-old, material, with the Art Institute of Chicago to top off the list, followed by other museums and libraries (different from the Newberry). These sites can provide me further and deeper understanding of what knowledge is, and how it is transmitted.

There is no other program like ACM's Newberry Seminar Program that suits my goals, as discussed above.

Please discuss how you are prepared to take advantage of the learning opportunities the program provides.

Academically within Beloit, Sacred and Profane Arts of Asia, and Ancient Italian & Greek Art and Architecture will provide me the technical skills and the mentality necessary for handling certain age-old material objects in the library, such as manuscripts that more than 500 years old, when I am researching/working in the library. Also, Religious Traditions in a Global Context has given me a solid background of what it means to preserve and pass down knowledge (within and without a certain group of people), as well as what and how negotiate their legitimacy of knowledge in a rapidly modernizing and globalizing world. Furthermore, the Music and Cosmos: Antiquity-1,600s class has given a good strong background, although musically, but mostly beyond musically, how certain texts and ways of thinking have been passed on over and over till today. Also, my completion of Classical Latin will enable me to read and interpret manuscripts and texts that are written in Latin to a certain extent, which, otherwise will require a translator. These classes mentioned above, not only taught me technical skills, content and context that will aid me with the seminar theme and my independent research project, they have also taught me to be aware of my biases and inclinations, as well as academia's biases and inclinations (or favoritisms) for certain ways of thinking. In addition to these courses at Beloit, I have completed a 4,000 word research paper, known as the Extended Essay (EE, for short), with a fully annotated bibliography, for the International Baccalaureate Program. Completing my Extended Essay has truly given me the experience of what is demanded from an individual who intends to perform research in the humanities. Therefore, academically speaking, I feel solidly prepared.

From a non-academic standpoint, because the program requires one to function in a highly independent living environment, I believe my experience of living in Beloit has strengthened my ability of self-discipline, to organize and schedule (mainly balancing classes, work –TA and Tutoring, homework, cooking, and socializing), and do what is needed to be done (by prioritizing via the use of an agenda), without being hassled. Also, I frequently cook for myself (even during the week days) during school, which is important, because the Newberry Seminar does not have any set board plan (no Commons). In addition to that, I am fairly familiar with the downtown

Chicago area via frequent visits, which has given me good understanding of on what to buy where, as well as where and how I can travel to museums and historical sties. Furthermore, as a disciple of Japanese Tea Ceremony, I am used to handling very precious, irreplaceable, and (many times) old objects, which will provide a good backbone mentality and mannerisms when handling old, irreplaceable collections in the library. Quod erat demonstrandum, I am well prepared for the Newberry Seminar Program both academically and non-academically.

How do you plan to connect what you learn and do in your off-campus program to your studies and other activities when you return to campus?

The technical skills of handling age-old objects, as well as knowing how to navigate a (big) research project will greatly aid my studies when I return to Beloit. Firstly, the knowledge I gain from what it takes to focus and research intensively in just a semester, will prove use to both my philosophy major senior thesis (Colloquium in Philosophy), as well as my IDST major Senior Thesis. The contextual knowledge I gain about libraries, materials of knowledge, and technicalities surrounding preservation of knowledge, as well as the content (what was taught and learned) from the seminars, will serve as a wonderful vantage for my senior theses. Furthermore, I intend to take two museum study courses (MUST 245 and 275) when I return to campus, to enhance as well as compare the knowledge and the skills that I have gained through working and researching in the library, to another form of knowledge transmission: museums.

Furthermore, I intend to present my final out come of my independent research project in one of the Student Symposiums, which will give me time to reflect on what I did in Chicago, and share my research and the holistic experience of participating in the ACM Newberry Seminar Program.

Finally, I plan to apply what I gain from the Newberry Seminar experience to my work-study experience, where I intend to work as either as part of the Beloit library, or in one of the museums, which will allow me to continue what I started to learn by working in the Newberry Library.