Rationale Document for Repeatability for CS/Eng 5189S Comparative Studies Fieldwork

Submitted by Katherine Borland

To whom it may concern: The underlying rationale for making CS/Eng 5189S repeatable is that several faculty with several distinctive field projects in the Department of Comparative Studies have expressed interest in offering the course. Each of these faculty will have their own distinctive field projects which will require a distinctive set of orientation and reflection materials. The community partner(s) will be different with each iteration of the course. Finally, the post-field accessioning and planning phase will be different, because the field project will be different. I will illustrate each of these points below with reference to the sample syllabus we provided:

1. Required Reading and lectures for the 2017 iteration of the course prior to fieldwork include background on the problematics of Appalachian Ohio. If, as an example, my colleague Miranda Martinez were to be conducting a fieldschool based on her research, this would be background on populations affected by financialization regimes. Pre-field experience readings and lectures also include readings on ethnographic method, in the current case, how to conduct field notes and interviews. Although the selected texts might change depending on the disciplinary background of the professor (Folklore, Sociology, Anthropology), the focus on qualitative methods would remain the same. However, I submit that other courses in our curriculum rely on a common set of methods that students practice in many courses. Our two-course graduate introduction repeats and reinforces the methods of close reading of theoretical texts as a means to building knowledge and expertise.

2. The focus of the week-long field experience itself will change annually, depending on the research agenda of the instructor. Even when CFS faculty teach the course, although they will maintain a focus on Appalachian Ohio, they will work with new community partners discovered through the process of ongoing research. Individual students may choose to work closely with partners they have been introduced to in the course of a field school on an independent basis, but we would not design successive field schools to make such work possible. Each iteration of the CFS field school will be designed to accomplish a specific body of research that feeds into an overall, multiyear collaboration with multiple community partners.

3. The post-field accessioning and planning work. The manner in which this portion of the course is designed will change depending again on the focus of the research project. For CFS field schools, the accessioning work will remain constant, because the research will always be deposited in the archive and made available for future research. This may not be the case for iterations of the course designed by non-CFS CS professors. However, this is only one part of the post- field experience work. The major goal of this portion of the course is to engage in reflexive critique of our own practice and to evaluate the materials we have collected in order to plan a public exhibition or performance that returns the knowledge to our partnering communities. This portion of the course will change dramatically depending on the content of materials collected, the nature of the community partners involved in the collaboration, and the specific objectives of the community partners with regard to the public programming they wish to see. Once again, if my colleague, Miranda Martinez, were teaching this course around the theme of financialization, the whole question of how the research would be returned to partners in a way that is meaningful to them and the people they serve would be different from the way that a project based on understanding how millennials make a place for themselves in rural Appalachia and what that means for those places would proceed. In short, it would be a different course experience with different readings and different problems to consider, and different kinds of public programming. What remains the same is the field school structure, which teaches qualitative research methods, depends upon discovery and capitalizes on the emergent quality of distinctive researcher-community collaborations.