

## 2021-2022 CTL Fellows Program APPLICATION

Rosario Hubert, Language and Culture Studies

### **“Inhospitable Modernity.” Teaching Ecocriticism through Foreign Cultures**

Teaching at a liberal arts college has marked me profoundly as a professor and a scholar. The flexibility to choose topics, methodologies, and to experiment pedagogically has broadened my disciplinary frameworks and has made me fully aware that humanities can have a decisive impact in the way we see everything around us. In the last stages of my years as assistant professor, I have been thinking about this a lot, and I am very curious to expand this conversation on pedagogy to a group of colleagues from other divisions of the college with similar concerns. As I transition to a new stage of my liberal arts career, I want to focus on gateway course development, and explore strategies to communicate the value of the humanities to the earliest cohort of students. A clear aim is to attract more candidates to the major, but at a more personal level, it is a challenge for me to engage in a profound conversation about the value of the humanities with a younger generation that is probably interested in these topics as much as I am, but that needs different communicative strategies to transform that interest into a critical intervention.

In Fall 2021 I expect to teach a First Year Seminar on ecocriticism, visual culture, and intellectual history. Preliminary entitled "Inhospitable Modernity," this gateway course hopes to engage students with the study of Latin American literary traditions through an analysis of desert landscapes. I want to invite students to explore foreign cultures by making critical points of contact with urgent themes such as global warming, waste, migration, and the effects of feverish developmentalism. By connecting foreign cultural traditions with contemporary issues very relevant to students, I hope to encourage them to develop interpretative tools, critical thinking, and, mostly, reveal the power of the humanities to attain social change. At the CTL fellows program, I would like to address the three following points:

1. **CLIMATE EMERGENCY.** A first goal of this class is contribute to the college’s effort of “increasing the delivery of environmental and sustainability education across curriculum, campus, and community outreach programs,” as outlined in the Climate Emergency Resolution. By displaying the interdisciplinary approaches of environmental humanities, and drawing from the immense array of sources from the Latin American tradition that have concepts such as “territory,” “lavish nature,” or “Garden of Eden” as a foundational symbols of nation building, this course will seek to understand the role of literary representation in

shaping, sustaining, and negotiating environmental imaginaries of Latin American modernity. I would like to explore the climate emergency emphasis further in conversation with colleagues from other disciplines, and hear of other forms of curricular and pedagogical environmental awareness strategies.

- 2. PROJECT-BASED LEARNING.** Over the last years, and particularly in the last semesters of remote teaching and asynchronous learning, I have increased the demand for collaborative work and project-based initiatives in the classroom. I have been designing longer assignments for students to work on in groups before the class, and realize that this way they deliver an astoundingly deeper insight of the material and the prompts. Apart from injecting dynamism to the conversation, students demonstrate more self-assurance when they come up with answers of their own rather than when they respond positively to the professor's input. They also get to know each other much faster -even if not on campus- and soon become confident to discuss and debate in the larger group. I have done all this based on my own trial-and-error practices, and it has been both rewarding but very time-consuming. I would like to use the CTL fellows program's space to learn more about group work pedagogies, particularly what relates to team work rationale, optimal grading strategies, and exploring what assignments or dynamics can be adapted from other disciplines.
- 3. ENGAGEMENT.** These two goals share its emphasis on using liberal arts education to become engaged and committed learners. This is something we always hear about liberal arts education, particularly in the current effort to better prepare students for an unstable job market. I have noticed that the feeling of engagement becomes more patent when bridging the classroom with the outside world explicitly, both by discussing urgent content and through activities that have an impact extramurally. I would like to be mindful of this not just in the gateway course on ecocriticism I would focus on at CTL, but on my teaching at large. I hope the CTL fellows program allows me to elaborate on these ideas and innovate my teaching philosophy and practice.