

This is provided as an example proposal.

It is important that you follow the
current guidelines.

The mentor letter has been removed.

PURF COVER PAGE

TITLE OF PROJECT: Politics, Art, and Dissent in contemporary Cuba

NAME OF APPLICANT: Madeleine Hordinski

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DEPARTMENT: Sociology + Anthropology

BUDGET: Total Request \$ 1500
 (May not exceed \$1,500)

CLASS RANK: (circle one) Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

GPA: 3.9

EXPECTED DATE OF GRADUATION: 2020*

* Note: Students must be enrolled and maintain undergraduate student status during the proposed project period.

FACULTY MENTOR INFORMATION:

NAME: Smoki Musaraj

E-MAIL ADDRESS: Musaraj@ohio.edu

CAMPUS ADDRESS: Bentley Annex 155

DEPARTMENT: Sociology + Anthropology

DEPARTMENT ADMIN/EMAIL: bennetta@ohio.edu

We the undersigned have read the PURF Guidelines and understand the responsibilities we undertake should funding be granted.

We certify that the application has been conceived, written and completed by the student.

Student signature: Madeleine Hordinski Date: 10/1/18

Faculty signature: [Signature] Date: 10/1/18

Faculty Advisor's Dept. Chair signature: [Signature] Date: 3 Oct 2018

IRB AND IACUC APPROVAL:

To ensure that the University is in compliance with all federal regulations, complete the checklist below. *Note: your proposal can be approved prior to IRB or IACUC approval (put "pending" or "to be submitted" instead of approval number), but funding will be withheld until notification of approval or exemption.*

Yes	No	Office of Research Compliance	Policy #
X		Human Subjects in Research (including surveys, interviews, educational interventions): Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval #: <u>TO BE SUBMITTED</u> Expiration Date:	19.052
	X	Animal Species: Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC) Approval #: Expiration Date:	19.049

Optional:

If selected for funding, I give permission to the Research Division to use my proposal as an example during training and workshop exercises. (Sign below)

Signature: Madeleine Hordinski Date: 10/1/18

ABSTRACT: (100 words max)

Many Cubans express themselves through painting; they illustrate frustration or satisfaction with the government on canvases or the walls of buildings. Graffiti adorns every corner, and painting galleries are ubiquitous. Through ethnographic research methods—participant observation, oral interviews—and photography, I intend to research Cuban artistic representation in Havana and how art gives a voice to the voiceless. I aim to examine political critique within Cuban contemporary visual art. How does graffiti art and contemporary painting express political critique?

Madeleine Hordinski

4 October 2018

PROJECT NARRATIVE:

POLITICS, ART, AND DISSENT IN CONTEMPORARY CUBA

“Creativity is the power to reject the past, to change the status quo, and to seek new potential. Simply put, aside from using one’s imagination—perhaps more importantly—creativity is the power to act.”

~Ai Weiwei

DESCRIPTION:

I plan to begin research in Havana, Cuba, and stay for four weeks in May and June 2019 to conduct ethnographic research that will provide the basis for my HTC undergraduate cultural anthropology thesis. This research will follow up on preliminary research I conducted there this past summer.

Cuba is a fairly small country with an economy that is dependent on trade (Eckstein, xii). Between 1989 and 1991, Cuba experienced economic, social, and political upheaval following their detachment from the Soviet Union (Eckstein, xii). Fidel Castro began to change Cuba’s developmental path concerning domestic and external affairs (Eckstein, xii). After the revolution’s extreme radicalization and Castro’s subsequent attempt to create a utopian communist country, Eckstein notes, “... he retreated and accommodated to conditions far short of ideal (xii)” This general trend has continued in Cuba with the current president, Miguel Díaz-Canel. Canel appears to be an extension of the Castro regime, a puppet for the last remaining Castro, Fidel’s brother Raul. Last summer, I learned that living conditions in Cuba are still difficult for many: government employees make \$30-40 every month and grocery stores consistently run out of food, sometimes for weeks.

In every country, individuals find ways to express political critiques and dissatisfaction with the government. Scholars of socialism and postsocialism have researched the ways in which artists in countries of the former-socialist bloc have critiqued state socialism. For instance, writing about artists in postsocialist Albania, Sofia Kalo (2017) notes, "...artists are cognizant of the fetishistic demand for state socialist subject matter in the transnational art world, the commodity of potential of their work does not thwart its critical and political potential insofar as it is employed to complicate mainstream discourses on the socialist experience and the politics of the present..." (52). While many artists are aware of the intrigue of socialism, she argues, this awareness and also their need to express themselves are not mutually exclusive.

I plan to examine how Cuba's new law signed by President Díaz-Canel in April 2018 will affect artistic self-expression. This law, called Decree 349, allowed for recent arbitrary detentions of artists, according to Erika Guevara, Americas Director at Amnesty International. "Under the decree, all artists, including collectives, musicians and performers, are prohibited from operating in public or private spaces without prior approval by the Ministry of Culture" (Guevara). Cuba is always changing rapidly, and I am looking forward to discovering how the art scene is affected by this law.

When I was in Havana, I met a brilliant group of artists who used painting as a means to protest the socialist government and dictatorship in Cuba. One of these artists, Juan Carlos Garcia, was employed by the government at the University of Havana as a professor of fine arts. When I visited his studio, he showed me his favorite work—it resembled the Mona Lisa as if it had been painted by Picasso. Garcia's Mona Lisa, however, did not have a mouth. He said that Fidel Castro had taken away his voice and painting is the only way he can speak. I told him I am an anthropology and photojournalism student from the United States and that I am interested in

returning next summer to discover more about his work and life. He told me he would love to help with my research and could connect me with other friends in the future.

To follow up this fascinating encounter and others I had during my visit in summer 2018, I intend to interview several artists over the course of four weeks in Havana, focusing specifically on the prominent artists employed by the government. Garcia is one of the most famous Cuban artists, yet he makes illegal anti-revolutionary paintings. I plan on focusing on this dissenting artist and others to learn more about how they are producing their art, how they are articulating their political critique, and what obstacles they may be encountering on the way.

I aim to draw from the literature of art historians (Cuban and non-Cuban), the literature of anthropologists and sociologists who have studied in Cuba, and the work of past Cuban artists. Cuban artists include but are not limited to: Wilfredo Lam, Amelia Peláez del Casal, Manuel Mendive, and Roberto Fabelo.

METHODS:

My objective is to unravel Cuban artistic self-expression as a form of political critique. I intend to conduct ten semi-structured interviews. I plan to contact artists that I have met this past summer and use snowball sampling to contact other artists. I also plan to visit the artists' studios, participate in gallery openings and other social events where the artists themselves participate. I plan to ask the artists to speak about their works of art and to explain the meaning of these works of art. I plan to also ask them about their lives in socialist Cuba and their view of the political system there. I will also be attuned to how these artists negotiate censorship in their country, how the government surveilles (if at all) their artistic work and who they themselves might circumvent official rule around censorship of artistic expression. I will pay close attention to the

way that these artists use visual images to express political dissent, the ways that they represent power, and the kind of political claims that they express through their art.

Interviews and participant observation will provide the key data for writing my cultural anthropology thesis. I aim to incorporate ethnographic methods and photojournalism skills to conduct this project. I have nearly three years of experience in Spanish (I have taken two and a half years of Spanish at OU) and I am double majoring in cultural anthropology and photojournalism. I plan on recording every interview and having transcribed conversations in both English and Spanish. In addition, I will be continuously making photos of street art, paintings, studios, and galleries and compiling an archive of Cuban artistic expression to gather data.

My ethnographic project is unique in that it has a distinctly visual element; my photographs of Cuban expression will allow the audience to interpret the paintings and street art themselves in addition to reading the intent of the artist and my understanding of the work. I took a visual anthropology course last semester with Dr. Rosen and I am looking forward to implementing my knowledge of the value of imagery in research. Every work that is discussed in my thesis will be pictured and in addition to displaying the work of the artist, I will incorporate images of factors influencing their work: artists they look up to, their home life, and their formative years. I will also take photos of the social events where artists participate and aim to thus provide a glimpse into their daily encounters and social worlds.

TIMELINE:

- Fall semester (September-December 2018): I am currently taking two tutorials this semester in preparation for this trip as well as an advanced Spanish course.

- Spring semester (January-May 2019): Apply for IRB, take a research methods and thesis-writing course to prepare for Cuba.
- May 6th-June 6th 2019: Time I will be spending in Cuba.
- June-July 2019: Transcribing interviews and editing photos from trip.
- 2019-2020 School year: data analysis and thesis-writing.

MY ROLE:

With the exception of the critiques I will receive from my professors and peers, I will be working on this project alone. I conducted preliminary research by myself last summer, and I plan on beginning further research on my own. My research and analysis will be compiled in the form of a thesis which will be published in the fall semester of the 2020 academic school year. I plan to submit my photographs and writing to various magazines and contests internationally, including but not limited to: *Photo District News (PDN)*, College Photographer of the Year (CPOY) contest, The Ohio News Photographers Association (ONPA) annual contest, and *The Society for Visual Anthropology's* John Collier Jr. Award for Still Photography contest.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Most people do not know much about the Cuban revolution or its origins, and even fewer know about its influence on the mind. I aim to reveal the counterculture and resistance to the dictatorship in Cuba and how this resistance is expressed through art. I intend to contribute to our knowledge of art and political critique in Cuba's current socialist state. By understanding self-expression, we understand the mindset of individuals. By examining objects that speak for the voiceless, we learn visually instead of verbally. Examining this counterculture will possibly reveal a movement to resist the authoritarian government, a movement none (that I can find) has ever documented in depth.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Arenas, Reinaldo. *Before Night Falls*. Serpent's Tail, 2017.

This autobiography by Reinaldo Arenas details the repercussions of speaking your mind as an artist during the revolution. Arenas was a prominent writer in Havana and tells of the many artists who were jailed by the government

Dopico, Ana María. "Picturing Havana: History, Vision, and the Scramble for Cuba." *Project Muse*, 2002.

Ana María Dopico discusses the importance of analyzing imagery that exists internationally depicting Cuba. She looks at postcards, posters, and photographs and examines the causes and effects of these creations.

Fabelo, Roberto, and Sariol José Prats. *Roberto Fabelo*. Galeria Torres, 1994.

Roberto Fabelo is a contemporary Cuban surrealist artist who specializes in painting, sculpting, and drawing. Fabelo studied at The National Art School and at the Superior Art Institute of Havana. His art can be found in many markets in Havana and his influence is evident in the work of many Cuban painters.

Gattorno, Antonio. *Antonio Gattorno*.

Antonio Gattorno was a famous modern painter in Cuba in the mid 20th century. His work is greatly influential in the art community.

Hernandez-Reguant, Ariana. *Cuba in the Special Period: Culture and Ideology in the 1900s*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

This book discusses the era following the dissolution of the Soviet Union: The Special Period.

Kalo, Sofia. "'The Red Kiss of the Past That Does Not Pass': State Socialism in Albanian Visual Art Today." *Visual Anthropology Review*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2017, pp. 51–61., doi:10.1111/var.12121.

This article discusses the possible purposes of political critique in art.

Lam, Wilfredo. *Wilfredo Lam*. Abrams, 1973.

Arguably the most famous Cuban painter, Wilfredo Lam was a Cuban artist who was known for reviving the Afro-Cuban spirit and culture. All the Cuban painters I met in Havana admire his work.

Lane, Kimberly. *Latin American Art*. Charlesbridge, 2007.

This book analyzes the importance of several Cuban artists. Most importantly, it examines the work of the Cuban painter Amelia Peláez, known for her Avant-Garde work.

Mendive, Manuel. *Things That Cannot Be Seen Any Other Way: The Art of Manuel Mendive*. Florida International University, 2013.

Manuel Mendive is one of the most famous Cuban painters is also known for his Afro-Cuban work.

Stout, Noelle M. *After Love: Queer Intimacy and Erotic Economies in Post-Soviet Cuba*. Duke University Press, 2014.

Noelle Stout discusses the importance of analyzing artistic, literary, and academic representations of Cuba, produced by Cubans themselves, in her ethnography about sex tourism in Cuba.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

To prepare for this trip, I took over two years of Spanish at OU. Additionally, I am taking two tutorials this semester, so I can learn more about Cuban history, culture, and its intersections with socialism. I am taking one of my tutorials with Dr. Jose-Delgado and studying a panoramic view of the history and culture of the island-nation of Cuba. I am studying the history and influence of communism with Dr. Smoki Musaraj. This past summer, I began preliminary research in Cuba, where I found both artist and translator contacts. Since then, I have been keeping in touch with my contacts via email and Facebook Messenger to ensure that I will be able to work with them when I arrive. To ensure that I have good visuals, I took note of what equipment I need to bring for this trip. It rains a lot in Cuba, so I have prepared for this by purchasing waterproof gear. Additionally, I am saving up for audio equipment and a hard drive, so I can store photos and audio safely. I have taken many photojournalism courses so far for my major, and I feel like I have been prepared well to compose good images.

BUDGET

Item	Amount	Source	Justification
Airfare	Approximately \$400 RT	Google Flights; United Airlines	Necessary transportation
Housing	\$500/Month	Airbnb	(\$15-\$20/night x 31 days = (roughly) \$500)
Food	\$620/month	Local restaurants owned by Cubans	(\$20/day for food x 31 days = \$620)
Translator	\$225	Contact found through Airbnb	(estimated \$15/hour for 15 hours)
Transportation	\$250/month	Bus, Taxis, Colectivos	(\$8/day for transportation x 31 days = \$250)

TOTAL COSTS:

\$1995 (Requested: \$1500): I will be paying for the remaining costs (Equipment, etc. out of pocket and possibly from other outside scholarships such as the HTC Dean's Scholarship and the Student Enhancement Awards.)

MENTOR'S ENDORSEMENT LETTER:

*Sent separately by Dr. Smoki Musaraj

[REVIEWER NOTE: WITH PERMISSION PRIOR TO SUBMISSION]

REVIEWER NOTE: PROPOSAL WOULD HAVE BEEN STRENGTHENED BY ADDITION OF LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM CUBAN ARTISTS TO WORK WITH APPLICANT.

APPENDIX:

The following photos were taken by Garcia's artist-friend Lazaro Noris on my trip to Cuba this past summer:



Me and the painter Juan Carlos Garcia in his studio in Centro Habana, Havana, Cuba, May 2018.
The Mona Lisa painting I referred to earlier is pictured on the left.



Juan Carlos Garcia in front of his painting titled "Havana." This painting demonstrates a Cubist approach to examining the architecture of the city. Garcia says his work is heavily influenced by Picasso.