

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION RESEARCH PROGRAM COVER PAGE

Student Researcher: Brenna Womer Department: English

NMU Student ID: 339106 Telephone Number: 417-559-6799

Course Name and Number student plans to enroll in during one of the summer sessions:
Thesis: EN 699

Project Title: To the Lighthouse: The Great Duck Island Experience

Project Abstract (250 Words):

This summer a group of College of the Atlantic (COA) students in Bar Harbor, Maine will accompany Dr. John Anderson to one of COA's offshore island research stations, Great Duck Island, to observe various types of seabirds and work on the development of the offshore campus. They have graciously invited me to join them to work on my own research as they observe the habits of various seabirds on the island.

This project will provide me with invaluable firsthand experience living a life of self-sustainability and will surround me with authorities on human ecology, which is what every COA student majors in. Both self-sustainability and human ecology are foundational elements in my thesis, which is a novel about a woman who finds herself to be the last person on earth. I have little experience with isolation, with being at the mercy of the sky and sea and adapting to the natural environment. But this is exactly what my main character will be dealing with as, inevitably, the abandoned world reaches the end of its programming and nature takes back control.

As a participant in this research trip, I will be contributing manual labor on the island in the form of maintenance while learning the mechanics of rainwater collection, desalinization of ocean water, lighthouse upkeep and maintenance, construction, and various other techniques for self-sustainment. Not only is this trip ideal for informing my thesis, Dr. Anderson has also offered me the opportunity to provide creative writing instruction to the COA students in an effort to help them marry science, research, and creativity. As an aspiring creative writing instructor, this would be an incredible opportunity to gain teaching experience.

SIGNATURES:

Brenna Womer 2-6-17
Student Researcher Date

Chris 2-6-17 John Anderson 2-6-17
Faculty Advisor Date Department Head Date

Departmental Rating of Proposal: (Additional comments can be attached)

Excellent Very Good Good Fair

Ranking of Proposal within the Department: ___ of ___ proposals.

**Excellence in Education Award
Budget Information**

Name: Brenna Womer

Department: English

*Please indicate how you will use the \$1,500 Excellence in Education Award if you are selected to receive an award this summer.
Complete this form, save, and insert in your proposal.

Expenses:

<u>Item Description</u>	<u>Cost</u>
<u>Equipment/Supplies:</u>	
Marmot Women's PreCip Jacket	\$ 100.00
Leatherman Multitool, "Rebar"	\$ 59.85
Marmot Mavericks 40 Semi Rec Sleeping Bag	\$ 89.00
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
Total Equipment/Supplies:	\$ 248.85
<u>Travel:</u>	
MQT to BHB roundtrip flight	\$ 850.00
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
Total Travel:	\$ 850.00
<u>Living Expenses:</u>	
Two-night hotel stay in Bar Harbor (upon arrival and departure)	\$ 280.00
Food	\$ 150.00
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
Total Living Expenses:	\$ 430.00
<u>Miscellaneous Expenses:</u>	
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
Total Miscellaneous Expenses:	\$ 0.00

GRAND TOTAL EXPENSES: **\$ 1,528.85**

COMMENTS: Anything above the allotted \$1,500 I will pay for out-of-pocket.

Statement of Problem

I am applying for the Excellence in Education grant in order to fund a research trip with Dr. John Anderson and students from College of the Atlantic (COA) to spend one to two weeks, weather depending, on Great Duck Island off the coast of Maine. The most pivotal aspects of this trip in regards to my own creative work are experiencing, firsthand, techniques of self-sustainability and also learning from Dr. John Anderson and the COA students, all of whom are studying human ecology, about the effects of humans on their environments.

My thesis is a novel for which, as of yet, I have only written the prologue. It is about a woman who wakes up to find she is the last creature on earth, and it ultimately explores why a person might choose to live if only for themselves and not for any other human or animal. She decides to travel to each state, living in the shells of other people's lives until she finds a place where she wants to make a home that's hers. The book will address isolation, loneliness, mental illness, sexuality, personal ideology, philosophy, iterations of love, environmental distress and healing, and, of course, many other themes. The problem is, I need to deepen my well of experience in regards to isolation and innovation; I need to research methods of self-sustainability, to speak with people who are experienced survivalists, but I also need firsthand experience with these methods so that when it is time to write about them I can do so authentically and with confidence.

On Great Duck Island there is also a lighthouse, which is the structure that sparked the idea for this project in the first place, as I would like the lighthouse to be a prominent symbol in my novel. However, in regards to themes of hope and isolation, the lighthouse symbol has been used over and over again, and I don't wish to fall back on what is predictable and established. However, I believe that in the history of the lighthouse, in its transition to automation, in its bare

bones—something I've only recently begun to research with Eric Jay Dolin's book *Brilliant Beacons: A History of the American Lighthouse*—there lies a yet untapped symbolism and significance that I wish to explore. Time in a lighthouse, learning about its particular mechanics and idiosyncrasies, would be an invaluable source for inspiration and education on my part, and it would, again, allow me to incorporate into my novel the intimate details that keep readers turning the page for more.

Project Rationale & Significance

I spend my days in an English department, surrounded by fellow writers and literature scholars, and it is a community I value greatly. However, to join the College of the Atlantic community on this research trip allows me an opportunity I am rarely afforded, which is to immerse myself in a different field of expertise, to let what has been largely literary and creative novel-writing preparation be informed by science and experience and travel. There is no other scenario I can conjure up in which I am able to tackle, head-on, so many of the tasks and challenges my main character will encounter—building construction, dry-goods meal preparation, and water supply desalinization; tinkering with machines and mechanisms, learning to tie a hearty knot, and building trust with your own body.

As I will be doing some creative writing instruction with the COA students as well, I will have the opportunity to practice my skills as a creative writing instructor prior to my application to teach Intro to Creative Writing at Northern during my third MFA year. I also believe that establishing a positive rapport with a college as prestigious and unique as College of the Atlantic could potentially provide excellent opportunities for Northern and its future students.

Expected Outcomes

My hope is to write, at the very least, the first 30 pages of my thesis while I'm on the island, in addition to reading two of the texts from my Literature Review. When I return to Marquette, I will spend the remainder of my summer adding to the novel, with significantly more experience tucked under my belt, so that I am confident and prepared to write a refined thesis prospectus come fall. I also expect to come away with a comprehensive knowledge of the history, mechanics, and cultural significance of the lighthouse and to have fresh insight and inspiration into its symbolic utility.

Literature Review

The literature I have chosen includes a book offering a comprehensive history of the lighthouse, *Brilliant Beacons*, which will help me in my search for untapped symbolism. I have also included a guide to traditional skills and a book about survival in various circumstances, both of which will not only help me prepare for the trip but also will inform my main character as she figures out how to live of her own devices. *The World Without Us* is a book I believe will be central to research for my thesis, because, in it, I will be challenged to show how the world changes over decades without human interference. The remaining books address mental illness, plant and birdlife, isolation, philosophy, and the craft of novel-writing.

Dolin, Eric Jay. *Brilliant Beacons: The History of the American Lighthouse*. New York:

Liveright Corporation, 2016. Print.

Gonzales, Laurence. *Deep Survival*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017. Print.

Gehring, Abigail R., ed. *Back to Basics: A Complete Guide to Traditional Skills*. 3rd ed.
New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2008. Print.

Heinrich, Bernd. *One Wild Bird at a Time: Portraits of Individual Lives*. Boston: Houghton
Mifflin Harcourt, 2016. Print

Jahren, Hope. *Lab Girl*. New York: Knopf, 2016. Print.

Kundera, Milan. *The Art of the Novel*. New York: Harper Collins, 2003. Print.

Weisman, Alan. *The World Without Us*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2007. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927. Print.

Timetable

(As dates are subject to change based on weather, as we will have to take a boat out to the island,
I will not have exact dates for the trip until much closer to departure.)

May: Begin reading Literature Review list and ordering supplies.

June/July: Fly from Marquette to Bar Harbor, stay one night in a hotel before departure via boat
with Dr. Anderson and COA students to Great Duck Island. Stay one to two weeks, weather
depending, on Great Duck Island before returning to Bar Harbor, staying one night in a hotel,
and flying from Bar Harbor to Marquette the following day.

July/early August: Continue writing my thesis with relevant experience on the books and finish
reading any books from the Literature Review. Begin thesis prospectus.

Budget Justification

A majority of the budget will be dedicated to travel, but supplies are also an important aspect of this trip. I do not want to be a burden on Dr. Anderson or the COA students, and intend to contribute to the island community as much as any other person there, and in order for me to do so I'll need to have the same supplies they do. This includes a wind- and waterproof jacket I can layer, a reliable multitool, and a quality sleeping bag. Everyone pitches in for food to stock the community kitchen, so I have allotted money for that, as well as two nights in a hotel upon arrival and departure in Bar Harbor. Any additional costs I will gladly cover out of pocket in order that I might take advantage of this incredible opportunity.

Brenna Womer
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EDUCATION

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

Northern Michigan University

Expected 2019

- Concentration: Fiction & Nonfiction

Master of Arts in English

Missouri State University

2016

- Concentration: Creative Writing
- Final GPA: 3.91

Bachelor of Arts in English

Missouri State University

2014

- Major: Literature
- Minor: Creative Writing
- Final GPA 2.97
 - Last 60 hours: 3.38
 - Major GPA: 3.44

Related course work: Modern English Grammar, Critical Approaches to Lit, Writing I, Survey of American Lit I & II, Survey of English Lit I & II, African American Lit, Intro to Shakespeare, Modern American Lit, The American Novel, Lit for Young Adults, Creative Writing: Short Story, Creative Writing: Fiction II, Advanced Writing: Fiction (2X), Intro to Journalism, Intro to Lit, American Realism, Creative Writing: Nonfiction, Life Stages in Lit, Renaissance Lit, Intro to Research Methods, Contemporary American Fiction, Practicum in Teaching Composition, Seminar: Critical Theories, Seminar: Linguistics, Seminar: Composition Theory, Graduate Fiction Workshop (2X), and Teaching Colloquium.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Graduate Teaching Assistant

English Department, Northern Michigan University, Marquette, Michigan

2016-Present

- Developed and taught:
 - EN 211-26: College Composition II (Winter 2017)
 - EN 111-08: College Composition I (Fall 2016)

Graduate Teaching Assistant

English Department, Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

2015-2016

- Developed and taught:
 - ENG 110-015: Writing I (Spring 2016)
 - ENG 110-005: Writing I (Fall 2015)
 - ENG 110-012: Writing I (Fall 2015)
 - ENG 110-006: Writing I (Spring 2015)
- Observed and taught:
 - ENG 310-999: Writing II: Writing for Graduate and Professional Schools—Honors (Spring 2015)
 - I served as a TA for the late Dr. Jane Hoogestraat. During that time, she asked that I design a lesson and teach a session for her to observe for recommendation purposes and gave me excellent feedback afterward. In addition, I had multiple opportunities to teach her class while she was at various conferences. I sat in on each class and also assisted with grading.

 READINGS AND PRESENTATIONS

Graduate Writers & Academics Monthly Reading Series

Marquette, Michigan

2016

- I read original flash fiction, an essay excerpt, and a found poem as one of three featured readers for GWA's October reading.

Bayou Magazine's Issue 65 Launch Party

New Orleans, Louisiana

2016

- I was invited to read my flash fiction piece "What's Mine is Yours," which was published in *Bayou Magazine* Issue 65.

Missouri State University Student Invitational

Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

2015

- I was chosen as the sole nonfiction reader to represent the English Department at its biannual student reading series, where I read my dervish essay "Wüsthof Silverpoint II 10-Piece Set" (*Grist*, 2016).

 PUBLICATIONS AND CREATIVE PROJECTS

- "Anatomy of a Father, of a Moose." *Fugue* (Spring 2017): Print. (Fiction)
- "Empire Blue." *New South* (Spring 2017): Print. (Nonfiction)
- "Pet Euthanasia Consent Form." *The Pinch* (Spring 2017): Print. (Nonfiction)
- "Mother Converts to Catholicism" & "Sad Magic." *Perversion Magazine*. (TBD): Online & Print. (Poems)
- "Getting Lost in Marquette." Travel Marquette Blog. (Sept. 2016): Online. (Blog)
- "Very Serious Questions with Brenna Womer." *New Delta Review*. (Aug. 2016): Online. (Interview)
- "Thrifting Marquette County." Travel Marquette Blog. (Aug. 2016): Online. (Blog)
- "Back to My Place." *New Delta Review* (Summer 2016): Online. (Poem)
- "An Interview with Brenna Womer." *Sierra Nevada Review*. (May 2016): Online. (Interview)
- "Motherlode." *Booth: A Journal*. (Spring 2016): Online & Print. (Nonfiction)
- "The Boys." *Prick of the Spindle*. (Spring 2016): Print. (Poem)
- "Close, But No Cigar." *Maudlin House* (Spring 2016): Online. (Poem)
- "Grandad." *The Dr. T. J. Eckleburg Review* Spring 2016: Online. (Poem)
- "What's Mine is Yours." *Bayou Magazine* Spring 2016: Print. (Fiction)
- "Just Like Mama Never Made." *Dewpoint* (Spring 2016): Print. (Fiction)
- "Wüsthof Silverpoint II 10-Piece Set." *Grist* (Spring 2016): Online. (Nonfiction)
- "Fraîche." *Sierra Nevada Review* (Spring 2016): Print. (Fiction)
- "Contributor Spotlight: Brenna Womer." *Midwestern Gothic*. (Fall 2015): Online. (Interview)
- "Patsy Sings For Me." *Midwestern Gothic* (Summer 2015): Print. (Fiction)
- "Chimera." *NEAT*. (Winter 2014/15): Online. (Fiction)

 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Associate Editor, *Passages North*

Northern Michigan University, Marquette, Michigan

2016-Present

- I screen and evaluate fiction submissions, edit accepted pieces, and line-edit the upcoming issues. I also run the *Passages North* Instagram account and periodically write introductions for pieces published online.

Intern, Moon City Press

Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

2016

- I helped organize readings and accommodate visiting writers, line-edited *A Record of Our Debts* by Laura Hendrix Ezell (Moon City Press, 2016), line-edited all nonfiction and wrote the Table of Contents for *Moon City Review 2016*, served as quality control for *Sad Math* by Sarah Freligh (Moon City Press, 2015),

organized and shipped contributor copies of *MCR 2016*, and organized and shipped the Moon City Press boxes for the table at the 2016 AWP Conference.

Assistant Fiction Editor, *Moon City Review*

Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

2014-2016

- I evaluated fiction submissions, served as the journal's representative at various campus events, and line-edited accepted pieces.

Graduate Assistant, Modern and Classical Languages Department

Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

Summer 2014/15

- I was a research assistant for Dr. Jason Jolley and assisted with office clerical work and data input.

Assistant Coordinator, First Annual Undergraduate Literature Conference

Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

2015

- As Dr. Lanya Lamouria's Assistant Coordinator, I helped organize room reservations, equipment rental, and refreshments for the conference. I also listened to the presenters' papers and gave them notes the week before the conference.

Teaching Assistant to Dr. Jane Hoogestraat

Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

2015

- Not only did I attend every session of Dr. Hoogestraat's ENG 310: Writing II Honors class, periodically teaching the class myself and assisting with grading, I also line-edited the manuscript of Dr. Hoogestraat's second book of poetry, *A Common Land*.

Contributing Editor, *Mind, Body, Spirit*

Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

2015

- I worked with Dr. Kenneth Gillam and a cohort of Graduate Teaching Assistants to curate the ENG 110 common reader, *Mind, Body, Spirit* (Fountainhead Press, 2015), for the 2016 academic year.

Graduate Assistant, Theatre and Dance Department

Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

2014

- I served as the Department's Assistant Marketing Director and House Manager. As such, I managed a staff of five undergraduate workers, contacted potential advertisers and wrote actor bios for show programs, and was in complete charge of the house, or the audience side of the curtain, for all department productions.

Attendee, River Pretty Writers Retreat

Tecumseh, Missouri

2014

- Over the course of a three-day weekend, I attended multiple craft talks and readings, worked on my own writing, and read at one of the nightly attendee readings.

PEDAGOGY COURSEWORK

EN 509: Teaching Colloquium

Northern Michigan University, Marquette, Michigan

2016

- I received feedback on lesson plans and classroom management, engaged in discussions of pedagogy with professors and peers, and presented, as requested by the professor, my own pedagogical methods in the classroom.

ENG 720: Composition Theory

Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

2015

- We read and discussed pedagogy-related articles and pedagogical ideologies, and I wrote a seminar paper advocating for first-person writing in the composition classroom.

ENG 703: Practicum in Teaching Composition

Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

2015

-
- I received instruction regarding lesson plans, grading strategies, and effective classroom personas. I also worked with Dr. Kenneth Gillam and a cohort of Graduate Teaching Assistants to put together the ENG 110 common reader, *Mind, Body, Spirit* (Fountainhead Press, 2015), for the 2016 academic year.

HONORS, AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

- Best of the Net nomination for "Wüsthof Silverpoint II 10-Piece Set," *Grist* (Spring 2016)
- Pushcart Prize nomination for "Patsy Sings for Me," *Midwestern Gothic* (Fall 2015)
- Dean's List, Missouri State University, Spring 2014
- Dean's List, Missouri State University, Fall 2013
- Employee of the Quarter, The Cup, Fall 2013

REFERENCES

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Academic Transcript

Feb 06, 2017 10:51 am



This is not an official transcript. Courses which are in progress may also be included on this transcript. An "MG" grade indicates a "missing grade" from faculty. Please contact your instructor for more information.

[Institution Credit](#) [Transcript Totals](#) [Courses in Progress](#)

Transcript Data**STUDENT INFORMATION****Name :** Brenna E. Womer**Birth Date:** 04-JUN**Curriculum Information****Current Program**

Master of Fine Arts

Program: MFA in Creative Writing**College:** College of Arts & Sciences**Major and Department:** Creative Writing, English

***Transcript type:WEB Web Transcript is NOT Official ***

DEGREES AWARDED**Sought:** Master of Fine Arts **Degree Date:****Curriculum Information****Program:** MFA in Creative Writing**College:** College of Arts & Sciences**Major:** Creative Writing**INSTITUTION CREDIT -Top-**

Term: Fall 2016

College: College of Arts & Sciences**Major:** Creative Writing**Student Type:** New First-time Graduate**Academic Standing:** Good Standing**Last Academic Standing:** Good Standing

Subject	Course	Level	Title	Grade	Credit Hours	Quality Points	Start and End Dates
EN	509	GR	Teaching Colloquium	A	4.000	16.00	
EN	600	GR	Fiction Workshop	A	4.000	16.00	
				Attempt	Passed	Earned	GPA
				Hours	Hours	Hours	Points
Current Term:				8.000	8.000	8.000	32.00
Cumulative:				8.000	8.000	8.000	32.00
							4.00
							4.00

Unofficial Transcript

TRANSCRIPT TOTALS (GRADUATE) -Top-

	Attempt Hours	Passed Hours	Earned Hours	GPA Hours	Quality Points	GPA
Total Institution:	8.000	8.000	8.000	8.000	32.00	4.00
Total Transfer:	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.00	0.00
Overall:	8.000	8.000	8.000	8.000	32.00	4.00

Unofficial Transcript

COURSES IN PROGRESS -Top-

Term: Winter 2017

College: College of Arts & Sciences**Major:** Creative Writing**Student Type:** Continuing

Subject	Course	Level	Title	Credit Hours	Start and End Dates
EN	512	GR	Teaching Literature	4.000	
EN	602	GR	Creative Nonfiction Workshop	4.000	

Unofficial Transcript

RELEASE: 8.7.1

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February 1, 2017

Dear Excellence in Education Award Committee:

It's my privilege to write a letter of support for Brenna Womer's Excellence in Education Award application. Brenna is an outstanding writer and educator, as well as an ambassador for our MFA program, which, I believe, is especially important regarding her vision for this specific research project.

Brenna has been given approval by College of the Atlantic administration and faculty to travel to Bar Harbor, Maine, then to COA's Greater Duck Island Light Station research facility for a two-week residency at the remote island's former Coast Guard beacon and quarters. Greater Duck Island—13 nautical miles from Bar Harbor—is important not only for the scientific research taking place there, but also for its rich biological and cultural history. Brenna is a student of the significance of lighthouses in American history; her affinity for light stations and the cultures surrounding them suffuses her writing. COA does not have graduate students involved in their summer program, so they are especially excited about hosting Brenna. While in residence, Brenna will not only be assisting with seagull biological studies, but will also be leading COA's undergraduate students in creative writing workshops. Living conditions on the island are rustic and travel to and from the island, by COA's 42-foot research vessel *Osprey*, is weather and seas-dependent. Residents must be resilient and able to troubleshoot and solve problems while living in communal quarters. I believe Brenna is well suited for the challenge. She will also likely have an opportunity to visit Mount Desert Rock, COA's whale-studies island facility.

I've been able to help support several successful Excellence in Education projects while at NMU, but frankly, this is the most challenging and exciting opportunity I've been involved with. Not only will the experience specifically inform Brenna's art, a thesis of collected fiction, but it will share Brenna's talent and spirit—and NMU—with a dozen exceptional undergraduates off Maine's rugged, singular Atlantic coast.

Brenna is a hard worker with talent and vision; I'm thrilled to give Brenna Womer and her adventurous research my most enthusiastic recommendation. Thank you—please call me on my cell if you have further questions regarding Brenna's project: 405-334-7372.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Billman".

Jon Billman
Assistant Professor
jbillman@nmu.edu 906-227-1770