

## **Sample AAR Regional Development Grant Awarded**

Application for AAR Regional Development Grant by Marilyn Gottschall August 2007

### **Project Title: Teaching workshop on "Women and Islam"**

Location: Whittier College

Date: late February 2008

**Target audience:** educators (university, community college, high school) who are currently teaching or planning to teach units on women and Islam

**Scholarly resources:** three faculty experts to serve as workshop leaders

**Background:** In the post 9/11 environment, colleges and universities are increasingly called upon to provide courses on Islam. Far too often those colleges do not have faculty who are trained Islamicists; curricular needs, therefore, are often addressed by faculty who are minimally trained or even self-taught. Professional development opportunities are few and far between, and most scholarly conferences are directed at those doing research in the area, not those teaching basic concepts.

The paucity of resources is keenly felt in one of the most controversial and misunderstood areas of Islamic studies: the relationship between gender and Islam. Hot button issues such as veiling, honor killings, purdah, and polygamy are ubiquitous in the popular press, but they are often reported in a sensationalist and biased manner, thus reinforcing negative stereotypes of Islam and promulgating superficial and uninformed opinions of the religion.

**Project Description:** This proposal aims to provide a day-long pedagogical workshop which will be staffed by three experts in the field. The agenda will include discussion of significant issues from multiple perspectives, syllabi and resource sharing, identification of important texts, and evaluation of other teaching resources. The idea for the workshop emerged when Whittier College was notified that our application for a Fulbright scholar was successful and that Dr. Alanoud Alsharekh, Head of Humanities Department at the Arab Open University in Kuwait, would be on campus in the spring of 2008. Among other assignments, Dr. Alsharekh will be co-teaching a course on Women and Islam, and she will serve as one of our three experts. Dr. Zayn Kas! sam, a Western Region AAR member and nationally known expert on Women and Islam has also agreed to serve as one of our experts.

**Benefit to the scholarly community:** I think that the benefit to the region is clear, but let me be specific. This workshop would:

- Provide a needed forum for professional development
- Across a broad spectrum of educators
- With renowned experts in the field
- On a topic of significant social and political concern

For people who may lack in-depth training.

The workshop will also provide an opportunity for networking among educators with an interest in Islam, and with women and religion. As well, invitations will be sent to our Fulbright supporters, the California Consortium for International Studies, the Whittier Union High School District, and the local Soroptimist Club. By opening the workshop to non-members, we will bring increased visibility to the AAR, and hope to improve the discursive environment (with regard to these issues) in the region.

### **How does this project address the underserved?**

As previously stated, there are too few trained Islamicists in the region to meet the educational and public demand. Information about Muslim women comes largely from biased sources. Sound and responsible scholarship is desperately needed at all levels of education, but unfortunately there are too few opportunities for teachers to learn more about this subject. By creating a network of pedagogical resources, we will be serving two needs: the needs of Muslim women for greater understanding, and the needs of teachers for information.

### **How does this project fit the criteria of broad service to the region?**

While the topic of the workshop may appear to be narrow, its significance is great. Students are clamoring for more information about Islam and specifically about gender and Islam. It is precisely because the public discussion regarding women and Islam is so controversial and sensational that this workshop constitutes service to a broad range of constituencies.

### **How can this project be adapted to other regions?**

This project could easily be replicated in any AAR region. Most regions have experts on Women and Islam who can be recruited as workshop resources and I will be happy to make our workshop agenda and handouts available.

### **Budget**

Honoraria 3 x \$500 1500  
Publicity 200  
Lunch, coffee 700  
Information packets, workshop materials 200  
Film purchase 250  
Work study salary 600

**Total \$ 3450**

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