

# Sabbatical Report

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# Copy of Project Sabbatical Application Proposal

## Sabbatical Project

Submitted by Dr. David Christopher Lane, Philosophy

Project to be completed during the 2005-2006 school year

## DIGITAL MOVIES ON GREAT THINKERS OF THE 19th AND 20th CENTURIES

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### OBJECTIVE:

With the advent of the world wide web in the early 1990s there has been a rapid evolution in digital media. At first it was the ability to post texts on a website or forum and have it available to anyone with a computer and a hooked up modem. With larger bandwidth, pictures and music became widely distributed throughout the internet. Today with cable/dsl/lan lines, one can broadcast movies with fairly high quality.

While there is no dearth of textually based information available on the web about various philosophers, there are very few films on philosophy and great thinkers. My project is to create ten digital films (roughly five minutes in length) on great thinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries. Since I have already taught film making in each of my classes for the past four years and have created a series of trial films myself, I feel well qualified to tackle this project.

These original movies will be made available on DVD and on the WEB for free to all students.

1. Richard Feynman, Nobel Prize Winner in Physics.
2. Francis Crick, Nobel Prize Winner in Chemistry.
3. Jorge Borges, famous Spanish writer.
4. Michael Foucault, French philosopher.
5. Patricia Churchland, founder of neurophilosophy

6. Frederick Nietzsche, philosopher.
7. Charles Darwin, biologist/naturalist.
8. Soren Kierkegaard, writer/philosopher.
9. Ludwig Feurebach, theologian/philosopher.
10. Gregor Mendel, genetics.

My overall goal is to create a series of photonic narratives which give a glimpse into the life and work of each of these great thinkers. Hopefully, this will be the start of a whole series of short films in philosophy that will encourage my students to also create their own films on great thinkers.

While the project may seem a tad ambitious, it should be remembered that I have trained myself in creating and editing films for the past four years. On my website, the Neural Surfer, there are a whole series of movies on other subjects (from critical thinking to surfing). What I haven't been able to do is create original movies on philosophers and scientists. The sabbatical would allow me the time to accomplish this goal.

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### **WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THIS PROJECT? [Students, Faculty, and the College]**

The Students: I have always wanted my students to have access to short films on great thinkers that were free. It is also important for my students to have examples of how to make films on great thinkers. Since we live in a multi-media age, education must encompass new technologies and teach students how to view and understand information that is conveyed through the intertwining of image/text/sound/music/transitions. It is also quite inspiring to see information conveyed in new ways. It is one thing to read Nietzsche, quite another to see his life and work illuminated on screen. I think there is a huge benefit to students being able to access difficult thinkers through film.

The Sociology and Philosophy Department: Back in the mid-1990s when I first created the Neural Surfer website I made sure that all my colleagues (even across disciplines) were notified of the wide array of books, essays, and forums that were available on my site. This proved to be a valuable resource to my colleagues, since many texts were out of

print but only available on my site. Posting films on my Neural Surfer website that cover a range of great thinkers in the 19th and 20th century will, likewise, be of a great value to my department. Not only can they view the films to get a glimpse into a philosopher's life and work, but they can also encourage their own students to view them and discuss them (both in class and online).

The College: Presently, there are hundreds, if not thousands, each week who view the Neural Surfer website who are not formally enrolled at Mt. San Antonio College. Indeed, past students of mine who have long since graduated still keep in touch with the website to see new information, new books, and new posts. I would imagine that the availability of ten or more films on philosophy, science, and religion would be a great draw for even more people in and out of the college to view the website. It would also enhance the discussions currently taking place on a number of worldwide forums that have been created on philosophy under the auspices of the Neural Surfer website. I also think that it would be highly educational for those who are affiliated with the college to be able to secure a glimpse into cutting edge philosophy via film.

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## HOW THE PROJECT WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED AND RATIONALE

I have chosen these ten great thinkers from the 19th and 20th century because I have a good and grounded understanding of their life and work. Moreover, I have chosen a nice cross selection of writers, theologians, philosophers, and scientists. Because I have a relatively deep grasp of their biographies and books, it will be easier for me to render their ideas on film.

1. I already have a proficiency in several film editing programs, particularly Pinnacle Studio 9.0, Adobe Premiere, Apple's Imovie, and Ulead 5.0. This allows me to do the following fairly easily:

Scan and import images.

Import and digitize video and other film sources.

Import and convert music into wave and mp3 files.

Perform non-linear editing on such images and sounds.

Create overlay text and other effects.

Create imaginative and useful transitions between images and video.

And, finally, to render all of this into a movie as an mpeg file which can be burned as a DVD and broadcasted as a video file on the web.

2. However, before I can create the movie, it will be necessary for me to write a script which distills the philosopher's life and work in the short span of five minutes. Naturally, this forces one to condense lots of material into a discernible and lively narrative, with the caveat that one is only touching the outline of the thinker's contributions.

3. After finishing the scripts, it is then necessary to story-board the movie by properly sequencing how the images and the text and the music and the narration will be placed. As Alfred Hitchcock has shown in his own movies, the chances for a better film are increased by how well one storyboards the film beforehand.

4. I have noticed in the past four years in teaching film to my students that music selection is key to producing a worthwhile film. Understanding the tone of the philosopher helps one in selecting the right piece of background music. The music selection can often serve as a narrative in itself.

5. After the script, the storyboard, and the music selection, one must then secure the appropriate pictures and moving images to illustrate the story. There are a variety of ways of doing this now, ranging from securing images from a google.com search to scanning pictures from books or magazines to original filming. I plan on doing all three.

6. If the script necessitates a voice over narration, this can be accomplished by recording one's own voice (or a computer's voice) on the video recorder in my multimedia HP computer.

7. After rendering the film as an MPEG file, I will then post it on a unique website designed for this sabbatical project, which will naturally list all ten films. I will also create DVD copies of each film that will be placed in the library and made available for free.

8. Presently I have all the equipment necessary to make these films for my project.

9. My plan is to do a film every three or four weeks.

10. My overall goal is to have each of these films available worldwide on both the web and DVD for free. I will also incorporate each of these films into my syllabus for Introduction to Philosophy and Critical Thinking.

11. Besides creating a website which catalogs these films, I will also create an intellectual forum (which I have done in the past for a number of my books and essays) which will allow students to openly discuss the content of these films. This is a fairly easy thing to do now with Front Page.

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## **WEEK BY WEEK SCHEDULE (tentative)**

August 1 to August 30: RICHARD FEYNMAN

week one: script

week two: storyboard

week three: composing film

week four: editing and rendering film

September 1 to September 31: FRANCIS CRICK

week one: script

week two: storyboard

week three: composing film

week four: editing and rendering film

October 1 to October 31: JORGE BORGES

week one: script

week two: storyboard

week three: composing film

week four: editing and rendering film

November 1 to November 30: MICHAEL FOUCALT

week one: script

week two: storyboard

week three: composing film

week four: editing and rendering film

December 1 to December 31: PATRICIA CHURCHLAND

week one: script

week two: storyboard

week three: composing film

week four: editing and rendering film

January 1 to January 30: GREGOR MENDEL

week one: script

week two: storyboard

week three: composing film

week four: editing and rendering film

February 1 to February 28: FREDERICK NIETZSCHE

week one: script

week two: storyboard

week three: composing film

week four: editing and rendering film

March 1 to March 31: CHARLES DARWIN

week one: script

week two: storyboard

week three: composing film

week four: editing and rendering film

April 1 to April 30: SOREN KIERKEGAARD

week one: script

week two: storyboard

week three: composing film

week four: editing and rendering film

May 1 to May 20: LUDWIG FEUREBACH

week one: script

week two: storyboard

week three: composing film

week four: editing and rendering film

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**ADDENDUM 1:** How will you deal with copyright issues?

First, on each of the ten films I will do during the sabbatical, I will assign over the copyright to MSAC. I will post the films on my website and make each of them available (in limited numbers) on DVD. No money will be charged for either the online version or

the hard disk version.

Second, in compiling these ten films I will only use copyright free images and music or secure original footage myself. If there is any copyrighted material that I wish to use I will make sure before finishing the film that I have properly secured the necessary copyright permissions. However, since I intend on doing my own filming, etc., this should not present a problem.

**ADDENDUM 2:** Demonstrate the need for these materials. Aren't they available from other sources or databases?

I currently teach five to eight online courses per year (including summer session) and providing original films on great thinkers of the 19th and 20th century which directly relate to key philosophical issues will dramatically help students in understanding rather difficult issues. This will also help my regular in-class students because it will allow them a visual way to comprehend the information, especially since the films are designed to make connections between science and philosophy which are often overlooked or neglected.

Each of these short films supplement course readings and also provide a basis for both in-class and web based postings and discussions.

The films I plan on doing have never been done before, since they are designed to relate and connect directly to my courses on the Introduction to Philosophy and Critical Thinking.

These films will become an integral part of my syllabus and since the films are free and will be readily available on my website, the students will be able to have repeated viewings of the movies. These films will also serve as models for how to make philosophical narratives using visual aids.

**ADDENDUM 3:** Have you developed or completed any of the materials you propose in your application?

No. I haven't done any work on the ten films I propose and that is why I need the sabbatical to accomplish this rather ambitious project.

## Statement of Purpose

During my sabbatical year I had set a fairly ambitious goal of creating ten digital movies on various philosophers and their ideas. I am happy to report that I ended up exceeding my expectations. The following is a numbered list of what was achieved:

### TEN DIGITAL FILMS

1. Ten films on varying philosophers were created, ranging from Nietzsche's "myth of eternal recurrence" to Feynman's famous quip on quantum mechanics, "little things that jiggle."
2. Each film has been issued in a DVD format.
3. Each film has also been rendered into a high quality windows movie video format, as well as into a flash video format.
4. Each film has been published on the internet with its own unique web page and URL address.
5. There is also a master index where all the films are listed and available for viewing for free.
6. Additionally, each film has been placed on google video and is currently available worldwide for watching and downloading.
7. Each film has already been viewed by hundreds of students around the world. Indeed, some films have been seen by over 13,000 people (according to the latest google.com statistics on video viewing).
8. Interestingly, a number of websites and blog sites in the United States, Europe, and Asia have commented on several of the films and have even featured them on their respective sites.

## FILM INDEX AND WEB SITE ADDRESSES

The following is an exhaustive list and annotation of each film that was created during my sabbatical, along with the appropriate website addresses for featured viewing.

### **1. Nietzsche and the Myth of Eternal Recurrence.**

Official website: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/nietzschewebsite.htm>

Windows Media Version: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/nietzschemyth5.wmv>

Google Version: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-354530544685263726&q=myth+of+recurrence&pl=true>

### **2. Jorge Borges and the Zahir**

Official Website: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/zahirwebsite.htm>

Windows Media Version: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/thezahir102.wmv>

Google Version: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-2399454214056602147&q=the+zahir&pl=true>

### **3. Richard Feynman and Little Things that Jiggle**

Official Website: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/littlethingsthatjiggle.htm>

Windows Media Version: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/thejigglemovie.wmv>

Google Version: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7242731842501839980&q=feynman&pl=true>

#### **4. Patricia Churchland and Francis Crick and A Glorious Piece of Meat**

Official Website: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/gloriousmeat.htm>

Windows Media Version: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/churchlandmovie5.wmv>

Google Version:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5477683963602021118&q=glorious+piece+of+meat&pl=true>

#### **5. Charles Darwin and The Survival of the Sufficient**

Official Website: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/evolutionfilm.htm>

Windows Media Version: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/evolutionfilm5.wmv>

Google Version:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8996276590586647279&q=darwin+redone&pl=true>

#### **6. Gregor Mendel and Charles Darwin and Truth Lies**

Official Website: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/darwintruth.htm>

Windows Media Version: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/darwintruth.wmv>

Google Version: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7690125668623549654&q=fundamentalism+is+a+mental&pl=true>

## **7. Francis Crick and Creationism vs. Evolution**

Official Website: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/mentaldisease.htm>

Windows Media Version: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/mentaldisease.wmv>

Google Version: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-2762997832693663864&q=fundamentalism+is+a+mental&pl=true>

## **8. Soren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre and Java Philosophy**

Official Website: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/eitheror.htm>

Windows Media Version: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/eitheror5.wmv>

Google Version:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8157658040054571837&q=a+rough+water+product&pl=true>

## **9. Ludwig Feurebach and Faqir Chand and Inner Visions and Running Trains**

Official Website: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/runningtrainsmovie.htm>

Windows Media Version:

<http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/innervisionsandrunningtrains.wmv>

Google Version:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=2542290213691270338&q=a+rough+water+product&pl=true>

## **10. Michael Foucault and Marcel Proust and Flame On!**

Official Website: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/proust.htm>

Windows Media Version: <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/proust.wmv>

Google Version: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-906702282505960312&q=a+rough+water+product&pl=true>

## VIEWINGS AND WEBSITE TALLIES

The following is a comprehensive tally of how many times each film has been viewed both on the neuralsurfer.com website and on google video. These numbers are roughly accurate as of September 2006.

### **Nietzsche and the Myth of Eternal Recurrence**

Number of viewings on neuralsurfer website: 146

Number of viewings on google video: 439

Ratings on google video: 5 stars

### **Borges and the Zahir**

Number of viewings on neuralsurfer website: 89

Number of viewings on google video: 581

Ratings on google video: 3 and ½ stars

### **Feynman and Little Things that Jiggle**

Number of viewings on neuralsurfer website: 1414

Number of viewings on google video: 13,771

Ratings on google video: 4 stars

### **Francis Crick and Patricia Churchland and a Glorious Piece of Meat**

Number of viewings on neuralsurfer website: 564

Number of viewings on google video: 1,014

Ratings on google video: 5 stars

### **Charles Darwin and the Survival of the Sufficient**

Number of viewings on neuralsurfer website: 1377

Number of viewings on google video: 183

Ratings on google video: n/a

**Gregor Mendel and Charles Darwin and Truth Lies**

Number of viewings on neuralsurfer website: 474

Number of viewings on google video: 1,533

Ratings on google video: 4 and ½ stars

**Francis Crick and Creationism vs. Evolution**

Number of viewings on neuralsurfer website: 454

Number of viewings on google video: 2,116

Ratings on google video: 3 and ½ stars

**Kierkagaard and Sartre and Java Philosophy**

Number of viewings on neuralsurfer website: 704

Number of viewings on google video: 1,310

Ratings on google video: 5 stars

**Feuerbach and Faqir Chand and Inner Visions**

Number of viewings on neuralsurfer website: 1063

Number of viewings on google video: 598

Ratings on google video: 5 stars

**Foucault and Proust and Flame On!**

Number of viewings on neuralsurfer website: 311

Number of viewings on google video: 719

Ratings on google video: 3 stars

## FINAL COMMENTS

This sabbatical project was much more successful than I ever imagined it would be. I have already started to show each of the movies to my various classes at Mt. San Antonio College and they have been viewed by individuals in India, Canada, France, England, Switzerland, and other countries. Over ten different website around the world have featured some of the movies on their respective websites and they have been widely discussed on varying blog sites.

The most watched film so far has been "Richard Feynman and Little Things that Jiggle" which has been viewed over 13,000 times. This is a fairly extraordinary number given the subject matter.

I want to thank the college for allowing me this wonderful opportunity. It ranks as perhaps the greatest educational experience of my life.