

Ashby Dialogue Grant Report
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Our experience with the Ashby Dialogue Grant for "Immigrate, Migrate, Move: Stories of Movement, Stories of Life" was a mixed one. The positive is that our conversations related to the grant and our chosen readings are ongoing; I'm currently trying to schedule an afternoon get-together at my house in the coming weeks, for the graduate student members who remain in town. Our readings, all related to literature and theory regarding immigration and migration, have proven especially useful for those grads doing dissertation work in 20th and 21st century U.S. literature.

That said, some unforeseen events, some good and some not-so-good, impeded my ability to follow through with our hopes to bring speakers to campus. Not only did another internal grant for which I applied come through (a grant for the Kecker FYR initiative), but the English department was granted three job searches, and I served on one of the search committees. In the second week of the spring semester, I was diagnosed first with flu and then with pneumonia, and was ill almost until spring break. (It sounds too horrible to be true, but unfortunately, I can now attest that it is possible to have both ailments at the same time.) The other grant and the searches are obviously positives, but meant unexpected work in the fall semester; the spring semester, frankly, was a disaster for me personally. (When I spoke with one of the scholars we'd hoped to bring to campus, late in the fall semester, she, too, was suffering from flu, and pulling back on commitments!) So making the grant a *de facto* reading group is about all I could muster time and energy for.

Two insights, perhaps for future Ashby applications: Having two, equally responsible faculty as dialogue point people could help with unforeseen events. For the Kecker FYR, I had a fellow applicant/faculty member helping to run it, so even when I became ill, it continued. But for most of the spring that wasn't the case with the Ashby, and the other faculty members who'd signed on either also had other massive commitments (three of the departments represented in our group ran job searches this year, another was involved in the 1960s programming at the Weatherspoon, etc). Groups that have at least two people in charge might be able to maintain a more constant schedule. Second insight, which may be neither here nor there: As I stated above, those grad students with a vested interest in the dialogue's subject matter were the most engaged. We had two students outside of that area who signed on, and I do think that in an ideal world, they'd love to have been involved =) BUT, with one taking doctoral exams and the other finishing the dissertation and on the job market, that didn't happen: both are hoping to join us for the first time next week. That's nice! I wouldn't want to say to any interested student that they couldn't join such a group, but this was probably wishful thinking on all of our parts.

-- María Carla Sánchez