SAIF Final Report for David Gillota (2010-2011)
Topic: Ethnic Humor in Multiethnic America

Abstract
I applied for and received funding in order to complete the research and writing of my book project entitled *Ethnic Humor in Multiethnic America*. This book uses popular ethnic humor as a lens through which to examine contemporary American race relations. In contrast to other works focusing on ethnic humor, which tend to focus on only a single ethnic group, my project focuses on the interactions between members from different ethnic communities. I analyze a wide range of texts, including film, television, stand-up comedy, and new media.

Rather than viewing American ethnic humor through a culturally pluralist lens that segregates various cultural groups—as is common scholarly practice—this book focuses on the interplay between humorists from different ethnic communities. I show how American ethnic humorists define their identity *in relation* to other ethnic groups. I also focus on collaborative works that present a multiethnic humor that does not belong to any one group but rather reflects the complexity of multiethnic America. This book challenges the ways that most scholars view ethnic humor and will enrich the fields of American Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Cultural Studies.

Budget:
I requested and received $4000 for salary. This allowed me to work full time on my research over the summer.

Results:
The results of my SAIF Grant were very successful. Not only did I write a large portion of the manuscript in draft form, but I also revised or wrote two scholarly articles that are based on portions of the manuscript. Both articles were accepted in quality peer-reviewed journals. I feel that this early enthusiasm for my project bodes well for my ability to publish the entire manuscript with a first-rate academic press. The articles accepted are listed below, with a brief description:


This article argues that *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* and *Weeds* present a multiethnic humor that complicates the traditional modes of American ethnic humor. The article will be the basis of the my book’s conclusion.


This article argues that the HBO series *Curb Your Enthusiasm* uses the figure of the *schlemiel* from Jewish folklore in order to explore the tenuous position of American Jews in contemporary American culture.
I also attended the Film and History Conference in Milwaukee on November 13th, 2010 and presented a related paper entitled “Shiksas Gone Wild: Jewishness as Gateway Ethnicity in Weeds.”

**Benefits to the University**
These publications and the book which they will lead to will give national attention to the University and serve as an outward symbol of the University’s commitment to diversity. Furthermore, this research informs my classroom practices, as I discuss the importance of ethnic representation in all of my courses. In particular, I feel that discussions of race and ethnicity often emphasize racism and persecution. Ethnic humor, while by no means ignoring these issues, is often a site of positive resistance and community building and can therefore provide a useful counterpoint to trauma and oppression. Ethnic humor therefore provides students with a richer understanding of American multiethnic culture.