

Professional Leave Report Cover Sheet

Name: J. Thomas Higgins

Department: Philosophy

College: Arts & Humanities

Leave taken: ☒ Sabbatical ☐ Difference in Pay ☐ Professional Leave without Pay

Time Period: ☒ Fall 2023

☐ Spring

☐ Academic Year

☐ Other

Your report will be sent to your Dean for your PAF and to the Library Archives.

Sabbatical Leave Report

Dear Provost Fu, Dean Chapman, and Dr. Howard,

I am writing to you following the completion of the semester-long sabbatical awarded to me in the late Spring of '23. In the months I was on leave, I was able to take several significant steps towards the completion of a manuscript on the epidemic of 'mass violence' in the US and how to stop it.

As you may know, the circumstances surrounding the granting of my sabbatical leave were unusual. I submitted my application before the due date in Fall of '22, but was denied that request sometime in December of that same year. Then in March of '23, during the course of a casual conversation with the chair of my department, Robert Maldonado, I mentioned that my sabbatical proposal was denied on the basis of 'rank-order.' Maldonado indicated that he found this outcome confusing and offered to check into it for me. This led to an exchange of emails with Faculty Affairs. My understanding was that at some stage after your approval of my sabbatical proposal the wrong criteria were used to determine whether my request for sabbatical leave would be granted or denied. In April, I received an email from Jim Schmidtke in which he indicated there may have been a mistake made during the final stages of assessment, and that he was looking into it. Later that same month, I was told that there in fact had been some irregularity in the evaluation process and that the year-long sabbatical leave I requested was now approved.

This was welcome news, but it was news that arrived four months after the initial denial in December '22. As might be expected, I stopped all planning for sabbatical leave the moment I received that notification. In late Spring of '23, it was too late to start making or re-making the arrangements my year-long sabbatical required I make to ensure that the work that I proposed in the application could be completed. I wrote to Jim Schmidtke. I explained that (1) I was no longer in a position to do the foundational research for the first block of work I proposed to do during sabbatical; that (2) there was a substantial amount of work I could still do; but that (3) it would not require a year of leave. I requested that Faculty Affairs consider my situation and grant me a one-semester leave in place of the year-long one that had just been extended to me. In May of '23, the request for a single semester of sabbatical leave was approved.

The practical consequences of this unusual situation were significant. The first part of my proposed sabbatical work had to be modified. In my application, I discuss the importance of profiling each of the most recent perpetrators of mass violence in the US and comparing these profiles to those of previous killers. If we are to have deeper insight into why these killers kill and a better understanding of how to prevent such crime in the future, comparative criminal profiling is a necessary first step. Unfortunately, it is a step that requires a substantial amount of pre-planning. Given the lateness of my sabbatical offer, my proposed research timeline was impossible to follow. It was not that it was too late to request case files, gain permission to access criminal databases, arrange contacts with law enforcement agencies, and set up meetings with the profiling experts it had taken me months to contact successfully. The issue was that it all needed to be done at the outset of the work I planned and proposed to do during sabbatical. Under these circumstances, it was no longer possible.

At first, this appeared to be a significant setback to the forward progress of much of the research and writing I proposed to do. It turned out not to be the case. The sections that aimed to examine the deeper causes of mass violence by establishing links between (1) patterns of self-directed violence and the patriarchal socialization of boys, (2) between patterns of other directed violence and 'edgelord' masculinities of ostentation, disconnection, and social isolation, and (3) between patterns of 'everyday' acts of aggression and the deeply patriarchal idea that violence both solves problems and creates meaning in the lives of boys and men could go forward on the basis of the comparative profiling I had already completed. It would not initially include the profiles of the most recent perpetrators, but they could be included later, and any work finished by then could be updated accordingly. It turned out that I would not have to do any additional profiling at all and that what I believed would be an obstacle would not amount to one at all.

When I sat down to begin my sabbatical work in June '23, I discovered that two researchers, Jillian Peterson and James Densley, had built a database that they believed would assist them as they attempted to identify the underlying causes of our 'epidemic of mass violence.' This database includes the profiles of all perpetrators of mass violence, including the most recent. It was built to do the kind of comparative analysis I have been doing for years, except that in its case not only does it compare all profiles all simultaneously, but it also compiles results. At that time, Peterson and Densley had also just published their findings in a manuscript entitled *The Violence Project: How To Stop A Mass Shooting Epidemic*. Their research represents an invaluable contribution to the study of mass violence: its history, its causes, and most importantly its solutions. It was immediately apparent to me that Peterson and Densley's analyses and findings needed to be included in my work. This represents the second modification of my sabbatical proposal.

The overwhelmingly positive response Peterson and Densley's work received and the popularity of their nonprofit research center, The Violence Project, meant that I needed to include their findings in mine, but not for the obvious reasons: that their work served as further support for my research, and that additionally it finished the comparative profiling that I would not have time to do. The primary reason for the inclusion of Petersen and Densley's research was that it represented the culmination and apotheosis of the flawed approach used by law enforcement for over 20 years to prevent mass killers from killing. 'The Violence Project' is for sure the most data driven version of this approach (at least for the public) but it suffers from the same basic shortcoming: it imagines that effective strategies for the prevention of mass violence are founded on the identification of those elements that repeat most frequently in the profiles of our mass killers.

Can we prevent some mass murder by teaching people how to identify potential killers by their most common 'markers?' And can we reduce the number of mass shootings by building the kind of infrastructure that enables us to intervene in the lives of those likely to kill before they kill? 'Yes,' and 'yes.' We have been trying to prevent mass violence this way since the 2000 publication of 'The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective.' Unfortunately, the number of incidents of mass violence continues to grow. The problem with this approach is that it is unwilling or unable to go beneath the commonalities it finds among the killers. It treats the repeating elements that the research establishes as causes rather than as symptoms of deeper causes. Because Peterson, Densley, *et*

al., never get around to pursuing these deeper causes, their approach never really positions us to understand our 'epidemic' fully. That means that the preventative strategies they recommend are of limited practical power.

Rather than doing the straightforward analysis I imagined I would do in the section of my proposal entitled 'Chapter 4—' on the link between the patriarchal socialization of boys and patriarchal masculinity on the one hand and patterns of other-directed violence on the other—I ended up writing the chapter addressed to and in response to Peterson, Densley and the dozens of other researchers and law enforcement personnel who have adopted and continue to rely on the same approach.

This decision to modify my sabbatical work and address myself to the 'Petersons' and 'Densleys' of the field amounts to the most significant accomplishments of the work I completed during my leave. One of the most persistent challenges I have faced in writing on mass violence and its prevention is simple to state: I am an academic who is accustomed to thinking, speaking and writing in highly academic ways. In academic settings, this is not an issue. When the goal, however, is to produce work that is grounded in scholarly research but that can at the same time speak to those researchers and investigators who do not possess a specialized philosophical training, it is critical to have discourse partners whose linguistic framework lends itself to wider audiences. Engaging writers like Peterson and Densley in a manner less like mine own and more like theirs means that my work should more effectively link the study of mass violence that is happening within the Academy to studies taking place in law enforcement agencies, think tanks, and research collectives across the United States.

In addition to this 'larger' accomplishment, the research and writing I completed while on sabbatical reached most of the goals I set forth in my sabbatical proposal. As stated in my application, my primary task was to address the elephant in the room: that 98% of our mass killers are men. That task required that I identify and articulate the links that connect patterns of other-directed violence to conceptions of masculinity shaped by the patriarchal system of which we are all a part. By the end of my leave in December of '23, I had mostly completed my study of the patriarchal ground soil out of which our mass killers arise. I say 'mostly' because in my proposal I outlined four paths I planned to explore in the completion of my task: (a) the patriarchal socialization of boys; (b) masculinity understood as disconnection; (c) men/boys and gaming culture; and finally (d) male violence as panacea. I completed three of the four and would estimate that I accomplished more than 75% of what I proposed to do.

The portion that I did not complete was the one on patriarchy and the socialization of boys. I did not have the time to even start it. Looking at my sabbatical proposal in the light of the sabbatical itself, it seems that the application, with its stated goals, was on the ambitious side. Having never had a sabbatical before, it is difficult to say whether I could have anticipated that as I wrote the proposal. To be honest, I was disappointed when I knew that I would not get the section on boyhood socialization drafted. And it was more than a little difficult for me when January arrived and the sabbatical came to a close. I felt that I had momentum, momentum that I had to set aside as I returned to my 5/5 teaching load. I am grateful for the opportunity the University provided: to be a lecturer and to be granted a single semester sabbatical with its full-time pay and benefits. Without

another ‘irregularity’ in the evaluation process, I am not optimistic that I will see another. Whatever the case, my hope is that I will begin drafting this section on boyhood socialization during break this summer.

As I look to the near future and consider the consequences of the work I completed, I see three outcomes. The first is the most obvious one: this research on men, masculinity and violence will be used to develop existing course content. I teach ethics classes. The one I am assigned most frequently is Phil 120, entitled ‘Contemporary Conflicts of Morality.’ It is up to the instructor to decide which contemporary moral conflicts to examine in any given semester. My approach to the selection of moral topics begins with a question and with my students: which moral conflicts are most relevant to their ordinary lives? This means that the moral conflicts change on a regular basis. The semester after there were three school related shootings at Fresno State during the course of a single semester (2007), the course focused on gun related violence and the issue of gun control. As we returned to the University after Covid, a staggering, and unprecedented, number of our students were struggling with mental health issues. At that point, our mental health crisis became the central moral issue. Looking ahead, I foresee a Phil 120 that is focused on gender equity and the so-called ‘crisis of masculinity.’ I say ‘so-called’ not to diminish the very real experience of so many of my male students. They are struggling, but from what exactly? I think the work I did this semester can shed light on (1) the context within which this ‘crisis’ arises and some of its underlying causes; (2) the contours and dynamics of the ‘crisis;’ and most importantly (3), the ethical ways we can respond to the issues that arise out of this ‘crisis.’

As I mentioned above, my near future plans include finishing the final section of the chapter I proposed to write during sabbatical. Once Spring semester is finished, I intend to return to the topic of boyhood socialization and violence. The completion of this section will mark the near completion not only of the chapter, but also the manuscript itself, tentatively entitled ‘Columbine: It’s Not A Flower, It’s An Elephant.’

Looking toward the end of 2024 and the 2024-2025 school year, the ‘Men, Masculinities and Media’ unit of the American Academy of Religion is seeking panel and paper proposals presented in creative formats. As my work addresses several of the topics the unit was created to examine, and because my analysis of those topics is so often rooted in and illustrated by pop cinema, I plan to submit proposals for their future conference meetings. Beyond this, The Violence Project, founded by the two researchers I discussed above, organizes annual conferences on mass violence and its prevention. The Violence Project tends to focus its attention on data: both the data that reveals the reasons why killers kill and the data that assists us as we try to identify potential killers before they kill. The research I do compliments their data driven approach by providing us with a deeper analysis of the environments that give rise to the toxic forms of masculinity that transform the ‘quiet boy down the street’ who ‘wouldn’t hurt a fly’ into a killer intent on taking the maximum number of lives possible. I intend to submit a paper proposal for their upcoming conference that is founded on the research and writing I did during my sabbatical leave.

If you should have any questions or need anything further from me, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

J. Thomas Higgins

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September 25, 2022

Sabbatical Proposal

J. Thomas Higgins
Department of Philosophy

Section 1. Proposal

Objective: To complete the fourth, and possibly final, chapter of a manuscript on mass violence in the US. The title of the chapter will reflect its content and be called, 'Masculinity, Social Isolation and Patterns of Patriarchal Violence.'

Background to Proposed Sabbatical Project:

I am submitting the following proposal in support of my application for sabbatical leave in Fall 2023. I am requesting this leave in order that I may have the opportunity to continue my research and writing on the topic of mass violence.

As a full-time part-time faculty member, I teach five classes a semester. My teaching load makes it difficult to find the time to do much research in the course of a given semester and even more difficult to do any focused writing. I find this unfortunate for two important reasons: (1) because I believe that our problem with mass violence is an issue that is in need of careful philosophical investigation; and (2) because I believe that the work I have been doing, which includes developing strategies for preventing mass violence, is of immediate and practical value to us and to the communities of which we are a part.

My primary objective during sabbatical leave is to complete the fourth, and what may well be the final, chapter of the manuscript I am currently working on. As many of you know, I have been researching mass violence in the United States for several years. Mass violence is a complex, complicated and difficult topic so the manuscript starts with two chapters focused on a specific event, the Columbine shooting (1999), and a particular form of violence: school related mass violence. The guiding idea here is two-fold: first, that a broad-ranging analysis of the

question ‘Why does mass school violence happen?’ that is not reducible to ‘Why did perpetrator X and/or Y kill?’ is a particularly effective approach to (1) understanding school related mass killing and (2) preventing it from happening in the future. Second, the analysis of mass school violence is a lens through which other forms of mass violence can be understood and prevented.

Other than final revisions, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 are complete. These chapters focus on the large body of research published on the two Columbine shooters: Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. Using Van Sant’s *Elephant* as a touchstone, these chapters examine and deconstruct the most common explanations for the ‘Why’ of Columbine and of mass violence in general. If there is one through-line that ties the first two chapters together, it is the claim that individual psychological disorder, the most widely accepted account of such violence, is at best a partial explanation. Shootings like that of Columbine are not symptoms of individual pathology alone. They are symptomatic of larger and deeper social-psychological ills. Without a careful analysis of the environmental conditions and without a thoroughgoing examination of the social-communal context within which these tragedies happen, any account of mass violence that focuses on the killers to the exclusion of most everything else will always be incomplete no matter how definitive its conclusions are believed to be.

Chapter 3 (in draft form) assumes that the conclusions drawn in Chapter 1 and 2 concerning the inadequacy of current thinking about the Why of mass violence are accurate and that a broader and more complete account is called for. The foundation for this account is built from a series of profiles I have constructed on dozens of mass killers, including Harris and Klebold. The method is straightforward: compare the profiles of our mass killers and identify any repeating, shared or common elements. The principle that guides the comparative analysis is equally straightforward: repeating, shared and/or common elements are the best place to start developing a better account of the Why of mass violence. As it turns out, there are a series of repeating elements. A few appear in all profiles; some appear in most, and a couple, enough

times to suggest that they are significant. The more one considers these elements, the clearer it becomes that they point toward a set of important social, psychological and environmental factors.

When I began comparing profiles, I was not in a position to address what I now believe to be a critically important repeating element: that with just one exception (Tashfeen Malik), all mass killers are male. The result is that Chapter 3, drafted some time ago, focuses on those common elements I could articulate, explain and analyze at the time. It is for this reason that the chapter dwells on discussions of:

1. The attenuation of interpersonal relationships
2. The breakdown of social and familial networks
3. Perceived social isolation
4. 'Experiential Nihilism'
5. The 'motiveless' mass killer

Now, after years of reading the work of psychologists, social workers, feminists and philosophers on the topics of patriarchy, the socialization of boys, and patriarchal manhood, I am prepared to address the links that connect patriarchy and masculinity, on the one hand, to patterns of mass violence on the other.

Description of Sabbatical Project:

Chapter 4:

A careful study of our mass killers reveals a short set of elements that appear again and again. Chapter 4 takes a long look at one of those repeating elements. In all but one case, our mass killers are male; so this chapter examines masculinity and the role that patriarchal ideology plays in the creation of violent boys and deadly males. A good deal of the research for this chapter is complete as I have been working on the topic for many semesters both in and out of the classroom. Two tasks remain, however:

1. Evaluation and Analysis:

(From the 2019 application)

~~Since last semester, there have been several major episodes of mass violence in the US. Between July 28th and August 4th alone, 41 people were killed and 65 injured in Gilroy, CA, Chippewa Falls, WI, El Paso, TX and Dayton, OH combined. These events need analysis and the perpetrators, Crusius (El Paso) and Legan (Gilroy) in particular, require thorough profiling, as does the Virginia Beach shooter, DeWayne Antonio Craddock. But they are not the only ones. It is sad to say it, but there will be more mass violence in the US between the submission of this application and the sabbatical itself (should it be granted). These events will need analysis, and the killers will require profiling. This is because some or many of them will warrant inclusion in chapter 4 and/or in the larger body of the manuscript.~~

(Current edition)

Since last semester, there have been several major episodes of mass violence in the US. Between May 14th and September 9th alone, 61 people were killed and 47 injured in seven different events across the US. These events need analysis and the perpetrators, Gendron (Buffalo, NY) and Crimo (Highland Park, IL) in particular, require thorough profiling, as does the Robb Elementary School shooter, Salvador Ramos. But they are not the only ones. It is sad to say it, but there will be more mass violence in the US between the submission of this application and the sabbatical itself (should it be granted). These events will need analysis, and the killers will require profiling. This is because some or many of them will warrant inclusion in Chapter 4 and/or in the larger body of the manuscript.

2. Organization and Writing:

The body of Chapter 4 needs to be written. Its central aim is to explore the evident connection between certain forms of masculinity and patterns of mass violence. Though I do not know the exact shape the chapter will ultimately take, I know that at least three topics will be addressed:

a. Patriarchal socialization of boys

Here, my treatments of boyhood, patriarchy and violence are guided by (1) bell hooks' analysis of the destructive effects of patriarchal ideology in the lives of boys and men; (2) Terrance Real's investigations of boyhood socialization and 'psychological patriarchy;' (3) Allan Johnson's examination of 'manhood' and male dominance; and (4) Niobe Way's extensive research on the social and emotional development of adolescent boys growing up in a patriarchal culture. This section on the socialization of boys is also presented to serve as a foundation for sections 'c' and 'e' below.

b. Masculinity, disconnection, perceived social isolation and violence

First, this section seeks to forge links between the themes of Chapter 3 and patriarchal masculinity. It then attempts to connect masculinity, perceived social isolation, and 'experiential' nihilism to patterns of other-directed violence. The analysis begins with a claim shared by hooks, Real, Way, and indirectly by Cornel West: that disconnection is masculinity. It then attempts to trace the violent consequences of such disconnection in the lives of both boys and men. Niobe Way's interviews with adolescent males will be discussed, but the bulk of this section will look at Maureen O'Keefe, Kelli Klebe, Laura Rovner, and Elena Blanco-Suarez's work on the psychological, physiological and neurological effects of social isolation and solitary confinement. Like section 'a,' this section also serves as a foundation for section 'c' below and so closes by pointing forward to it.

c. Violent Video Games:

'It's How I Get To Know My_____. (Check all that apply: Dad, Son, Brother, Friends)

Several years ago, Lawrence Kutner and Cheryl Olson, the directors of the Harvard Medical School Center for Mental Health and Media began a \$1.5 million federally funded study on the effects of video gaming. The researchers' findings served as a foundation for a number of publications. One of these publications is a book for parents entitled *Grand Theft Childhood: The Surprising Truth About Violent Video Games and What Parents Can Do*. The volume includes the results of a survey question they put to those who choose to play violent video

games: 'Why do you enjoy playing video games?' The number one answer was quite a surprise to the Center's directors. The majority of respondents explained that they play violent video games because that is how they get to know members of their family and/or their friends. Kutner and Olson offer some insight into this response but in the end do very little with it beyond using it to reassure parents that there is very little reason to worry that their children will be made violent by playing violent video games. In most cases, they insist, playing violent video games with others is just another way of connecting and building relationships. As for what kind of connections or what kind of relationships, they do not say. And if one is interested in the implications of these findings or in the study's statistics that show that the vast majority of those who choose to play violent video games are male, he/she/they would need to look elsewhere. *Grand Theft Childhood* has nothing further to offer.

Section 'c' aims to begin where Kutner and Olson's research leaves off. Its purpose is to explore what *Grand Theft Childhood* leaves unexamined and to study the way troubling patterns of patriarchal masculinity play themselves out in the virtual and real communities created by violent, multiplayer video games. I plan to offer an analysis that supports the claim that violent, multiplayer video gaming creates an environment in which males, both young and old, participate in an oddly paradoxical activity. They are creating emotional, psychological, and cognitive proximity by doing something that is known to create emotional, psychological, and cognitive distance. So while violent video gaming affords males the opportunity to address feelings of disconnection and social isolation by creating connections and developing bonds with other gamers, there is a serious price to be paid. The first cost is that 'RL' or 'IRL'¹ relationships with non-gamers become more attenuated the more one games, and the more attenuated these relationships become the more one feels isolated, cut off and disconnected 'IRL.' Second, the more one games the more likely it is that human beings 'IRL' become

¹ 'RL' and 'IRL:' code for 'real life' and 'in real life' among gamers.

virtualized, objectified and/or depersonalized in the mind of the gamer. As Dave Grossman explains, this is why video games that simulate real world violence are used to train soldiers and why first-person shooter games are such effective KETTs (military anachronym for Killing Enabling Training Techniques).

It is important to note here that violent video games are effective KETTs not because they make video gamers violent, but because playing them increases emotional, cognitive and psychological distance. These games depersonalize the other. And the more they depersonalize the easier it is for trainees, and players alike, to short circuit what Grossman calls 'our natural resistance to killing our fellow human beings.'

e. Violence as a pathway to meaning

This section follows from the previous one, and it attempts to explore the frankly depressing proposition that for males suffering from 'experiential' nihilism, perceived social isolation and interpersonal dislocation, violence is a pathway to 'meaning.' This notion first presented itself to me as I read Palahniuk's *Fight Club* with a class that included three former soldiers with combat experience. I asked the class about why they thought the men in the *Fight Club* felt 'better than they have in their entire [lives]' after enacting violence. One soldier answered that it was because these lonely men were sharing themselves with one another, being open and building friendships. It was, he argued, 'the experience of connection and community that made them feel alive.' This led to a long discussion about bonding on the battlefield; or to put it in my own terms: a discussion about the way violence becomes an environment in which men create interpersonal bonds and experience feelings of meaning and joy. There is ample research to support my student's views, some of which I plan to discuss at length.

The problem here, I think, is obvious. If one does not learn that it is really intimacy and closeness that give rise to meaning and joy in our lives, then it may well appear that violence is the ground and source of both. If that is the case, then one is dangerously close to drawing what

seems to be the proper conclusion: when I am 'unhappy,' I should enact violence. And in the case of dozens of our mass killers, this violence should be directed at those people or those institutions perceived to be responsible for my unhappiness.

f. Concluding remarks and questions

This last section is a summation of the chapter as a whole. But in it, I also plan to return to the distinction drawn between so-called 'motiveless' mass killers and those with stated objectives and/or obvious motives.² The intent here is to argue:

1. That despite the differences between the 'motiveless' and 'motivated' killers, there are important elements shared by both kinds of mass killers.
2. That these shared elements can be seen through the lens presented in Chapter 4.
3. That the profiles of all our killers need to be re-examined in the light of this analysis of patriarchal ideology and masculinity.
4. That this re-examination will add to the list of markers that members of the law enforcement currently use to identify mass killers before they kill.
5. That the addition of these markers to current investigative rubrics will make early detection more effective.

Section 2. Time Requested

It is my belief that the work I am proposing will require a great deal of energy and effort. I imagine that it will take the better part of a full academic year. Though I have already invested substantial time into researching the subject matter of Chapter 4 and have a clear idea of the shape the project will take, there is an enormous amount of new research I intend to do. Since I first submitted this proposal back in 2019, there have been dozens of large scale mass killing events in the US. I want to take the time to investigate them further than I already have. There

² Stephen Paddock is perhaps the single best example of a 'motiveless' mass killer. The term 'motiveless' is used somewhat loosely and mostly as a useful way of distinguishing these killers from those with obvious motives and clearly intended targets. Paddock, Long and Klebold versus Browers, Rodger and Roof for example.

have also been several new publications on mass violence. I am familiar with nearly all of them, but I want to be more than familiar. And the sad truth is during this sabbatical, should it be granted to me, there will be other incidents on mass violence. I will certainly pause my work to investigate them whenever they should occur. The leave I am requesting should provide me with the time that I believe is necessary to finish this chapter and integrate it into the work as a whole.

As I stated at the outset, our nation's problem with mass killing is complex issue. Examining it with the attention the matter demands requires a sustained level of focus and concentration that is, in my experience, extremely difficult to achieve while teaching five classes a semester. Researching and writing during a typical school year, which involves exploring new ways of thinking about a seemingly intractable problem and building arguments, is frequently interrupted by everyday professional responsibilities. This is to be expected. When this happens, however, and I am able to return to my work, I find that in order to go forward I need to go backward to recall the steps that I have taken and to reestablish the links that have led to where I am even when these steps and links are on paper. This shuttling back and forth is time intensive and it means that in practice the work proceeds only very slowly. It also means that the quality of my research and writing is not what it could be.

Travel:

At the time of this writing, I do not have any plans to travel during the proposed sabbatical period.

Section 3. Benefits to the faculty member and to the University

Since my initial hiring, I have completed three years of service to Fresno State as a part-time lecturer and ten years of service as a full-time lecturer. In that time, I have taught Philosophy 120, Contemporary Conflicts of Morality more than fifty times. Each course is structured the same way. I begin with a small set of moral conflicts, or with one complex one,

and then build the course to give the students the theoretical tools they need to think through, process and perhaps even, solve these conflicts. To qualify for classroom consideration, these conflicts must touch the lives of the students enrolled in the class in some real and personal way.

For the last five years, the moral conflict I have selected most frequently is mass violence. Not only is mass violence a serious moral problem, it is one that I believe affects the everyday lives of my students. They may not be survivors; they may not know someone who is; but it is increasingly clear that our students feel the aftershocks of these traumatic events and, like us, carry around with them tangible fear and anxiety about the real possibility of being shot or killed at Fresno State or in some other public place.

Though each section of Philosophy 120 I teach is directed toward a number of teaching goals and learning outcomes, the 120 focused on mass violence has two specific objectives. The first is to enable students to understand the nature of this problem as best as it is possible so that second, we are in a position to do ethics together: which in this context means using what we know about mass violence to try to formulate strategies to prevent it from happening in the future.

In the last few years, I have become increasingly convinced that any attempt to fathom so difficult a moral problem as mass violence requires a careful examination of patriarchal masculinity. Thus for the last four semesters, I have begun selecting a set of interrelated moral issues as the foundation for a new version of the 120s I teach. These classes are designed to examine and explore patriarchal ideology and its influence on the socialization of boys and the construction of normative forms of masculinity that are in fact dissociated, dangerous, domineering and/or violent. So far, the classes have been taught without much reference to mass violence. Nevertheless, I believe that by the end of the semester, it is clear to the students that patriarchal masculinity is a problem and that this problem is inextricably linked to the continued occurrence of mass violence in our country.

I want to emphasize that this movement toward the study of patriarchal ideology and masculinity represents a shifting in areas of academic emphasis. It is a shift that I consider extremely important both to myself and to my future students. The project that I am proposing supports and further informs this shifting, and I believe that the fruits of this labor will directly and positively affect my students' success in and out of the classroom.

The project that I have proposed for sabbatical is critical to the completion of my work on mass violence. It is an endeavor that seeks understanding for the sake of prevention. It is my conviction that this research can play a role in reducing the likelihood of mass violence in our communities, in our public spaces and at our University.

Section 4. Previous Leaves

N/A