



University of Colorado
Colorado Springs

February 2014

To: LAS and Campus-Wide Outstanding Teacher Selection Committees
From: Paul Harvey, Chair, Department of History

Re: Roger Martinez

I am delighted to nominate Roger Martinez for the LAS, and for the UCCS, Outstanding Teaching Award.

Roger is a fairly young assistant professor, and it's kind of unusual for people at that stage of a career to go up for a these awards. But his record amply supports winning such an award, for reasons I will detail here.

First, Roger's record in teaching very difficult subjects that are relatively arcane to our students (medieval Europe, and medieval Spain and North Africa in particular) is one of unparalleled success. The record of FCQ evaluations and student comments is extraordinary, and since that part of the record pretty much speaks for itself, I will let it do so. I would add only that Roger has voluntarily taken on overloads, including teaching in our Freshman Seminar program and taking on a large number of Independent Study students within the History department. He has done so, in part, because he already has developed a "following," a cadre of students who follow him from course to course. That, of course, is characteristic of outstanding teachers of the kind who win this award annually. Roger teaches a large number of students, and does so at every level – freshman surveys (typically enrolling 35), upper-division courses, Humanities courses, Freshman Seminar courses, online courses, and through our graduate program. He is successful at every single level, which is something that is very difficult to do.

What sets Roger apart from other excellent teachers is the astonishing variety of work he does with students in unconventional ways in the classroom, and in wonderfully innovative ways outside the classroom. In other words, he deserves the award not just because of his outstanding record doing the "usual stuff" that we all do, but for everything he does above and beyond that.

First, I want to stress his pioneering at UCCS of the nationally known "Reacting to the Past" Pedagogy, and co-authoring a grant that resulted in almost \$100,000 from the Game-Based Learning Faculty Challenge Grant. He co-authored this grant with Glenn Rolfhing, a B.A. and M.A. graduate of UCCS who has since taken a full-time faculty position at PPCC. With those funds, Roger was instrumental in planning a conference to help teach the "Reacting" pedagogy to a broad range of faculty in Colorado and elsewhere. This conference came off last April and was a huge success, drawing people from around the country. I personally have witnessed Roger run a faculty seminar here (last fall) introducing the "Reacting" Pedagogy, and have watched him in class put it into effect with a game concerning the political intrigues of the Inquisition era. This is a brilliant innovation in terms of history pedagogy, but one that requires an enormous amount of energy and effort on the part of the professor involved (basically, about two or three times the work that a regular class would involve).

Roger has a remarkably well-integrated agenda involving both scholarly publication as well as the public presentation of history through his guest curatorship with the New Mexico History Museum, and through his creation of the Sephardic and Crypto Jewish Studies program as well as the Genealogy Database. In other words, *beyond* traditional scholarly publication Roger has an innovative research agenda that is employing UCCS students in decoding, databasing, and interpreting medieval-era documents. He has a team of something like 5 or 6 students who work with him on this project, which will culminate in a major exhibition in Santa Fe in the near future. This is the kind of integration of teaching with research that many of us aspire to, but relatively few end up doing all that successfully, or on such a large scale.

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But wait, there's more! Beyond doing a stellar job of teaching our regular courses in the History Department and in Freshman Seminar, and beyond working closely and extensively with students in the Reacting to the Past Pedagogy and in the Sephardic-Judaic Studies Center that is officially incorporated now and housed in his tiny office in Columbine, Roger also has worked with so many students in Independent Studies that we ended up giving him a class credit for that. Some months ago, I walked in on Roger working closely with a student; they were doing some medieval-era paleography together, of the kind that really takes one-on-one instruction to learn. Roger also has introduced a large number of completely new courses to our curriculum, and his connection of medieval Europe with medieval North Africa has contributed immeasurably to our department's desire to globalize our curriculum.

And yet more: Roger is currently involved in a collaborative "Digital Humanity Online" project, taught through the Humanities program. This is an experimental endeavor at taking a "HUM" course online. But not *just* taking it online – it also is a course that queries the very processes of knowledge and learning, and what it means to when the Humanities goes digital. I enrolled myself as a "student" in the course so I can follow along on Blackboard. Just last night I watched Roger's recorded hour-long lecture introducing students to Medieval History; it was a lecture akin to "Great Courses" lectures that I watch at home (and pay a lot of money for) on topics that interest me that I don't know anything about. In other words, Roger's lecture/teaching style is akin to that of the best professors in the country, and he communicates material with an ease, grace, and humor that should be the envy of any teacher.

But don't make that call yet, there's even more! Roger created the "Historical Engineering Society" on campus, and with a group of students, literally built from hand a trebuchet, which is a medieval-era weapon that propels projectiles towards the enemy. They just held a campus-wide event involving the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor, and produced a beautiful set of medieval-era typography displays explaining the origins, history, and use of this weapon, which currently sits in the foyer of Columbine on display.

Roger Martinez is the most successful teacher at his level that I have ever personally encountered or witnessed. His energy and enthusiasm bursts out of the classroom into multifarious other projects, all involving students who are getting some of the best hands-on training imaginable at any university, anywhere, at any time. He richly deserves this award.

Paul Harvey
Chair, Department of History
Presidential Teaching Scholar

Paul Harvey