

Brimmer and May MS/US Innovation Award

Kenley Smith
English Department - Upper School

Total Years of Teaching Experience: 18

Years at Current School: 4

Degrees Held: BA in English Literature - Union
College, MA in English Literature - Middlebury
College

Signature of Applicant: _____

Date Submitted: _____

This is a proposal to purchase audio recording technology and software for the Humanities Department with the goal of my AP English Literature class producing a weekly podcast of 10-15 minutes on the literature, film, and art we are studying in the classroom. While the primary use of the technology will be in the AP class this year, a longer-term goal is additional implementation in future classes throughout the Humanities Department. The technology purchases will also make it possible for the students to explore how the principles of backwards design apply when working on a project such as a podcast. Additionally, podcasts are a medium which is growing in popularity and diversity. According to a study done by *The Economist* more than a third of Americans regularly listen to at least one podcast (<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/start-that-podcast-ainissa-ramirez>). Brimmer students would benefit from being well-versed in this medium.

Current Curriculum

The AP English Literature class, and all of my 12th, 11th, and 10th grade English classes are founded on the four pillars of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. What this means on a practical, skill-based level is an attention to active reading with annotations, an emphasis on writing as a process rather than an outcome (with many opportunities to rewrite pieces for better comprehension), and the use of the Harkness method in class discussions. In these discussions students are taught how to moderate and participate in a discussion that is largely structured by them. They come up with the questions and topics for discussion, and they are responsible for using the text for evidence and constructive disagreement. Active listening is an additional skill that we spend time developing. These skills are used to study a variety of novels, poems, plays, short stories, essays, and films throughout the year. Some of the texts most well received by the students for their usefulness in discussion and analysis are Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Proposal

The innovation grant will be used to purchase eight microphones, eight pop filters, a sound mixer, eight sets of headphones, soundproofing material, mixing software, and to pay the fees required for posting the completed podcasts to iTunes. The software will be used in conjunction with the laptop computers already owned by the teacher and students in the class. These materials will allow the students to record, edit, produce, and publish podcasts covering material, concepts, and projects begun in class. Additionally, I would like to purchase a subscription to the platform Shorthand, (which The Gator already uses) so that a written companion can be added to each of the podcasts, along with visual components and animations.

Current Use of Similar Technologies in the Humanities Department

The school online newspaper, *The Gator*, has utilized a microphone and recording software to hold interviews and to edit them. However, the ability to record more than two people in a discussion and to edit the audio for publication is limited by the department's currently available technology. Similarly, my 10th grade English class this year produced a series of three podcasts fictionalizing an investigation into the suicide of the main character in the book *Things Fall Apart*. They modeled their podcasts on the podcast *Serial*, which was part of their summer work.

Benefits of the Proposed Technology Purchases

There are four benefits of the podcast production with the proposed new technology. The first is to give students in Humanities classes better exposure to, and better integration of, technology in the classroom. Students will record, edit, and publish the episodes with teacher oversight. The second benefit is helping the students become more polished and thoughtful public speakers who understand how to construct a recorded conversation and how they can become better at verbally communicating their ideas. The students will set the topics of each podcast, agree upon the structure of the overall conversation, and negotiate how much should be scripted. The third benefit is applying discussion skills learned in the English classroom in a practical and measurable way. The students are learning the challenges and rewards of the Harkness-style discussion which can inform how they model active listening, evidentiary support, and respectful disagreement for a larger audience. The final benefit is increasing the visibility of Brimmer in the larger community by publishing these podcasts online.

Performance Target

This year the technology will be used in the AP English Literature class. In the future, the goal is to include an additional class of students (the various English electives, English II, and English I) each year in the production of one or more podcasts. Additionally, the podcast can and should be integrated with *The Gator* and, potentially, the Theater Department.

Performance Outcome

- A weekly podcast is produced and published by Brimmer and May students.
- Students will produce an evaluation of the process for the year, including an assessment for how the process can be improved for the 2018-2019 school year.

Detailed Budget

<u>Purchases</u>	<u>Price per unit</u>	<u>Total</u>
Blue Yeti USB Microphone	\$124.95	\$999.60
Rode NTWS Pop Filter	\$28.86	\$230.88
Yamaha MG10 10-input Stereo Mixer	\$184.92	\$184.92
Sony MDR7506 Professional Headphone	\$115.98	\$927.84
Subscription to Soundcloud Pro	\$135.00	\$135.00
Hindenburg Editing Software	\$95.00	\$95.00
Porta-Booth Pro Recording Booth	\$369.99	\$369.99
Acoustic Soundproofing Panels	\$49.55	\$396.40
A Pro Subscription to Shorthand	\$1000.00	\$1000.00
	Grand Total:	\$4339.63

Sustainability

These technologies can be used for many years to come, and by more classes and departments than just mine. While the technology may need to be upgraded eventually, the items could be resold to defray some costs, and if other departments find the technology useful then the new technology could be purchased by pooling department monies.