Claire Petras

Professor Rodney Herring

ENGL 4740 Honors in Writing

January 19, 2013

Prospectus for Honors Thesis

During the Spring 2012 semester, I made a 9-minute documentary titled *English Tea Culture in Denver* for Multimedia Composition. While researching for the documentary, I learned that one plant, the *Camellia sinensis* took over the world and changed history.

To learn about how a single plant that could make such in impact on the world, I researched the subject in the Fall 2012 semester for Senior Seminar in Writing. I concentrated my research on the British history of tea, with the British being one of the biggest tea consumers in the world. “How Tea Came to Britain: The East Indiamen, the Smugglers, the Drug Dealers, and the Thieves” is an 8,400-word paper covering the 17th through 19th centuries of British tea.

For my honors project this semester, I would like to take that research and create a multimedia website on the British history of tea. I will show that the everyday, mild, dignified drink is steeped in a rich history of violence, addiction, romance, lawlessness, corporate intimidation, local support, and national pride.

The website will be visually rich with period art, illustrations, photographs, maps with rollover components, timelines, and backgrounds. I will include music, sounds, and embed short videos to supplement the content. There will also be quite a bit of text, of course, but what it will not be is my paper thrown onto a white background and calling it a website.

The content of my research will be segmented into the four main groups/tabs mirroring the way tea entered England: trade, smuggling, drugs, stealing. I will pull out the “meat” of my paper and build an interactive area of the website around parts of the text, using the elements listed above.

The fifth major section of the website will cover tea’s role on the domestic front in England. Royalty and aristocracy were the sole consumers for years before smuggling brought tea to lower class groups, and this combined domestic front in England changed and drove the demand for tea. This section will include recipes for items served in an “afternoon tea,” images of formal tea tables, ladies’ and gentlemen’s tea dress, tidbits of tea etiquette, and some history of tea gardens. It will also include how tea was consumed in the home of the lower classes.

Structurally, the content will be interconnected throughout the website as much of this history itself was interconnected (e.g., smuggling *while* stealing seeds to grow tea in British India; monopolistic trade *and* dealing in opium to pay for tea). This will prevent the user from being forced maneuver through the website in a static way (and getting bored), and allow them to jump around the website as they like.

The website will also include all the traditional components, such as a home page, some kind of project “branding,” navigation bar/tabs, links to outside information related to tea, a site map, About and Contact information, a feedback form, and maybe a fun little quiz on the content. I may also include a Downloads section for .pdf of my original paper, bibliographic resources, and a link to my documentary.

I believe this website will be a useful “writing sample” for me to use after graduation when I apply for technical writing jobs in Seattle.

One of my first tasks will be to create a project management plan, which will address design and development issues to help me manage my time, consider all issues, and leave time for usability testing throughout the project. I will storyboard the website by hand, which will help me conceptualize, and I will create a website wireframe. All of these can be included in a “development” section of the website for my honors Chair, the honors Committee, and interested users. (I enjoy watching how some movies are made after I watch them; this would be the same type of thing.)

Although I believe I have more than enough content to work with, some areas that can be researched further include telling the story of infamous individuals and gangs involved in smuggling; how various aspects of the British Empire can be represented in a cup of tea; how tea helped England become leaders in the industrial revolution; correlations of the East India Company to modern day corporate corruption; adulterated tea and mass-produced and/or genetic modification of food; British methods of satisfying the demand for tea and legal/illegal drugs in modern times.

Perhaps I will just include these ideas as questions asked, but left unanswered, for curious users to ponder.

I have never created a website before, so all of this will be new for me. I spent winter break watching an Adobe video/book courseware on Dreamweaver, an HTML editor used to create websites. I will use Adobe Photoshop, Adobe FrameMaker, Microsoft Visio and try out Adobe Illustrator to create the visual aspects of the project. I have access to the necessary tools, can host the website independently from the University, and I have confidence in my ability to see this project come to life this semester.