

2022

Sample WLURA Application (Humanities)

WLURA Adjudication Committee
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Western Libraries Undergraduate Research Awards

Sample Application Form

PART 1: Applicant Information

**If a group project, please include the names, email addresses, majors, and years of study for all team members.*

Name: Pedro Guerrero

Western email: pguerrero1234@uwo.ca

Major (if declared): History

Year of study: 3

Title of research project: Shamans, Smallpox, and Salvation: Jesuits and Indigenous Communities in Sinaloa, 1590–1650

Grade received on research project (if graded): 87%

Department and course code (if applicable note if your project was for the USRI program): History; History 2501E (History of Latin America)

Date research project was submitted for grading: March 30, 2019

Style manual used for citations (e.g. Chicago Manual of Style, MLA, APA, etc.): Chicago Manual of Style

Name of supporting faculty member (who will only be contacted if you are a finalist): Professor María Landa Piñeda

PART 2: Applicant Permissions

- I grant permission for my instructor (and teaching assistant) or project advisor to discuss my research project, including the final grade, with members of the WLURA Adjudication Committee. I recognize that these individuals will only be contacted if my project is chosen as a finalist.

PART 3: Research Reflections

****Please review the Application Tips available on the WLURA site in Scholarship@Western before filling out this part of the form.***

Abstract: What is your research project about and why is it important? (150 words): In the late sixteenth century, the Society of Jesus began their missionary work among Indigenous peoples in northwestern Mexico. Many studies suggest that the military support missionaries received from Spanish soldiers largely explains why Indigenous leaders and their communities converted to Christianity. Less attention, however, has been given to the role disease played in shaping these spiritual encounters in frontier regions of the Spanish empire. As a result, this paper focuses on outbreaks of smallpox in Indigenous communities in Sinaloa in the first half of the seventeenth century. It argues that more than missionary strategies, the spread of smallpox was the primary reason why the Cahita, Taha, Acaxee, and the Xixime joined Jesuit missions. Jesuits were able to dismantle the power of local shamans by offering protection and seemingly more effective ways of dealing with the rising level of deaths incurred because of epidemic disease.

How did you design your research question? (200 words): My mother was born in Culiacán, the capital of the Mexican state of Sinaloa. We go back to visit family every year, and on one occasion we toured the ruins of the Jesuit mission at Baymena. I was curious as to why Indigenous peoples joined these missions given that they always outnumbered the Jesuits. Based on these experiences, I decided to do my research paper on Jesuit-Indigenous interactions in Sinaloa during the colonial period. After meeting with my professor, I realized that I was covering too much ground. To help me focus, I read a few articles from encyclopedias and handbooks outlined in the History Research Guide. I also used Oxford Bibliographies, which has an article on “Jesuits in Colonial Latin America” by Guillermo Wilde. One of the sections deals with demography, which piqued my interest as the annotations forced me to think about the role of disease in ways I had not originally contemplated. After scanning reviews of books and abstracts of articles referenced in Wilde’s bibliography, I designed the following research question: How did outbreaks of smallpox among Indigenous communities in Sinaloa shape the formation of Jesuit missions in the first half of the seventeenth century?

How did you find library/archives services and resources for your research topic? (200 words): Since I was writing a history paper, I needed to find primary and secondary sources. I started by using the Advanced Search feature of Western’s Library Catalogue. My first search was: Jesuit* AND mission* AND (Sinaloa OR Mexico OR “New Spain”). After checking the records, I found the Library of Congress Subject Headings “Jesuits -- Missions -- Mexico -- History” and “Indians of Mexico -- Missions” to particularly helpful. After marking down a few call numbers, I went to the stacks of Weldon Library and found several other books related to my research that did not come up in my catalogue searches. Looking over the bibliographies of these books, I identified a few more sources that I wanted for my project. Since they are not available through Western Libraries, I requested them via Interlibrary Loan. In terms of scholarly articles, I used JSTOR and Historical Abstracts. One of the articles that came up in my searches referenced the Newberry Library, so I searched their website and gained access to their digitized collection of rare books. I also found some important manuscripts in the American Indian Histories and Cultures collection of Adam Matthew Digital, which was available via Western Libraries Databases.

What library/archives services and resources did you use to perform your research? (200 words): In one of my classes, a librarian provided a session on search strategies and research materials related to colonial Latin America. They referenced that there were church documents for Mexico in the Microforms Collection and some rare books on Jesuits in Special Collections. I used the microfilm readers in the Weldon Library, the only way I could access these documents since the originals are in archives in Spain. I also read a few books published in the eighteenth century that I needed to consult in the Reading Room of the Archives and Research Collections Centre. To find other materials related to my topic, I booked a consultation with a librarian who taught me how to search for primary sources on library and archives websites. I was able to use materials from the John Carter Brown Library, which has an extensive digitized collection of engravings and woodcuts available as downloadable files. While I found many secondary sources on my project at the Weldon and Taylor Libraries, a few monographs I needed were not available in the stacks. For these materials, I opened an account with RACER and was able to gain access to them via Interlibrary Loan.