“Creation of Learning Object for Government Honors Thesis Capstone Seminar”
Proposal for Category 5 Pedagogical and Curricular Innovation Funding to Enhance
Government 358, “Capstone Honors Thesis Seminar”
Assistant Professor Mike Nelson

Project Description & Design of New Course:
I am applying for $1,500 to hire technological assistance to support the development of a
learning object associated with a new course that I will be teaching in the fall, GOVT358 Honors
Thesis Seminar.

The Honors Thesis Seminar is being developed as a core component of the government
department’s new honors system. This seminar is required of all government honors students
who are writing a thesis. The course is limited to fifteen students and introduces students to
foundational skills related to question formulation, research design, literature review, and the
development of clear, persuasive writing. Additionally, the course provides an opportunity for
students will receive regular, constructive feedback on their own work as well as provide similar
feedback to their peers. The course itself will create a community of people going through the
writing process together who will be a source of mutual support, help and feedback.

Need for Innovation:
Because of the nature of this course and its dual pedagogical purpose of developing independent
skills as well as fostering a cohesive and supportive cohort of government thesis writers, it is
necessary that the course have small enrollment. However, the main concepts covered in the
course are widely applicable to thesis writers across campus as well as government majors
engaged in substantial, but shorter, research projects for specific courses. Additionally, external
to campus undergraduate students in political science regularly embark on lengthy thesis projects
with little to no faculty guidance.

The creation of a learning object (http://learningobjects.wesleyan.edu/index.php) associated with
this course would greatly expand the number of people who could benefit from the information
that we will be covering in our small seminar format. The learning object would cover the main
concepts discussed in the course and link to important work in the field, frequently used data
sites, and other methodological resources for research design. Due to the wide range of topics
and concentrations in the field of political science, we hope this website will
serve as a central
resource for students looking for additional resources beyond those we have time to cover in
class.

While I would be able to do a smaller version of this for course participants using Moodle or
Blackboard, I do not have the technological skills to create a learning object that could be
accessed by students outside of the course or those outside of Wesleyan. I am seeking $1,500 in
funding to hire a research assistant to assist me in the creation of a learning object associated
with this course as well as gathering the resources to make available through the learning object.

Finally, the benefits of funding for this project extend beyond Govt358 as they will be helpful to
all of the Government research methods and quantitative analysis courses in particular and
social science inquiry courses more broadly.
**Schedule for Completion of the Project:**
The learning object would be created over this summer, made available to course members for the semester, and then modified in January to improve it based on student and faculty feedback. It would then be added to Wesleyan’s collection of learning objects in late January 2011, once all revisions had been made.

**Additional Information on the Course:**
I have appended the current draft of my syllabus, and I hope that you will fund the creation of a learning object on how to write an undergraduate thesis in political science.

**Detailed Budget**
The $1,500 will pay for roughly four weeks of student hourly work to gather resources for and create a learning object website for the course.