Report on Summer 2024 Pedagogical Inquiry Grant for development of a course on Mexican Philosophy

- What was the outcome of your project and how did it align with your original goals as stated in your application?

The goal of my summer project was to develop, in conversation with colleagues and especially several students, background understanding that will help me design and teach a course in Mexican philosophy. The background understanding was of two main kinds: (1) a sense for student experiences and how I could enhance my pedagogy to better serve students in an inclusive way; (2) some detailed understandings of possible texts that I might use in my Mexican philosophy course, and the historical context(s) for those texts. Through the work of my students on various texts, consultation with students about their experiences, and consultation with colleagues, I was able to make significant progress towards those goals. I do not yet have a finished syllabus, and there are still significant gaps where students were not able to do all the background research that would have been ideal, but I have a couple of well-formed units (including one on mestizaje, one on Mora and Mexican liberalism, and one on positivism) that I can integrate into my syllabus. Conversations with students and colleagues also reinforced my sense of the value of some classroom activities (e.g. small groups) and raised for me the possibility of others (such as explicitly identifying when and how non-English languages might be used in the classroom). Conversations with one colleague in particular helped me see the value of distinguishing different types of courses (those that are more or less personal) and being intentional about what kind of course this is (rather than, say, thinking that every course should incorporate personal narratives, etc.). Colleagues also shared texts with me, both in English and Spanish, that will be essential as I seek to develop the expertise to teach this course well. I've started working through some of those books, but I have a long way to go.

- What sense do you have at this point that your project has enhanced student learning and what will you be looking at in the future to know whether the project was successful?

It has definitely had an impact on my Mexican philosophy syllabus. I would not have attended as much to Mexican liberalism or positivism without these students, and my unit on mestizaje would not have been as strong as with their help. My history colleague's support helped me find the right sources to give a relatively succinct but accurate and nuanced understanding of Mexican history, which will increase the extent to which I can give historically accurate/informed background information to my students. Students' excitement for the texts has made me even more excited to teach them.

- What were the limitations or failings of this project, and how, in retrospect, might they have been better addressed or remedied?

I think there ended up being four main failings, all of which are remediable (I think), though in different ways. (1) Most basically, my own time ended up being more divided than I had expected during the summer. I had intended for this project to be my primary scholarly activity over the summer, but I ended up needing to complete two other significant projects, which prevented me from spending as much time as I would have liked on this project. That meant that I was not reading alongside the students at the pace I would have liked, and also was not as pro-active as I might have been vis-à-vis the fourth failing (see below). (2) Because of the terms of the PIG, I could only allocate up to 80 hours to each student over the course of the summer. That meant that this could be at most a frosting-on-the-cake work opportunity for students, all of whom had to have another full time (or nearly full time) job while also working on this project. In some ways, that was great. Students had a lot of fun reading Mexican philosophy, talking with each other and with me, and writing up briefs on readings. Because students had different schedules for their other jobs, however, they were not meeting as consistently as they might otherwise have. Moreover, they just literally couldn't spend as much time, and hence couldn't work through as much material, as they would have with a full-time commitment to this project. (3) One annoyance with this project, that ended up being remedied, was that one of my students was doing much of her work while living abroad, and Whitman does not seem to have a system for either paying students hourly while they are abroad or paying them a stipend for work completed. In the end, the student and I applied for an external grant that directly funded some of her work on this project, but it would be great for Whitman to explore more ways to make it possible for

students living abroad to work with and for faculty. (4) I had hoped students would develop a project of their own to do together. They made some progress towards this project, creating a concept (a web-based timeline that could be filled in) and starting to do research on platforms, but I ended up being just involved enough to suggest that they try for something more professional than googlepages, but not involved enough to help them see through to completing this project.

- How do you envision sharing the results of your work with other colleagues at Whitman (or elsewhere)?

Foremost, they will be incorporated in to my Mexican Philosophy syllabus, most immediately in the Spring (when I teach it for the first time), but in an even more substantive way in future years (post-sabbatical), when Mexican and Latin American Philosophy will become significant foci for my teaching and scholarship. My syllabi are always published to be publicly accessible (within and outside Whitman), but for this syllabus in particular, especially after I've improved it subsequent to my first iteration next semester, I plan to publicize it through the American Philosophical Association and the Society for Mexican-American Philosophy, so that it can help provide a model for other faculty at other institutions.