

**EL CAMINO COLLEGE****FACULTY SABBATICAL LEAVE APPLICATION**

NAME Kassia Wosick DIVISION BSS PHONE EXT. 5562 DATE 10/29/22  
SEMESTER/YEAR FIRST EMPLOYED FULL-TIME AT ECC Spring 2016  
(Semester) (Year)

PREVIOUS FACULTY SABBATICAL AT EL CAMINO COLLEGE? Yes \_\_\_ No X If yes, date of leave \_\_\_\_\_

PREVIOUS LEAVES OTHER THAN SABBATICAL AT EL CAMINO COLLEGE? Yes \_\_\_ No X

If yes, what type of leave? \_\_\_\_\_

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ON A REDUCED LOAD? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ If yes, dates and what percentage NO

**PERIOD OF TIME REQUESTED:**

Full Year 2023-24\* \_\_\_ Half Year\*\*—Semester: Fall 2023 X Spring 2024 \_\_\_  
(\*full year, half-pay) (\*\*half year, full-pay)

**If you do not have enough seniority to qualify for the traditional sabbatical leave, would you be interested in a one-semester, half-pay sabbatical? Yes \_\_\_ No x**

**TYPE OF SABBATICAL REQUESTED:**

- \_\_\_ A. Formal class work in pursuance of an advanced degree or to increase the applicant's proficiency in the applicant's teaching field to be six (6) graduate semester units or twelve (12) undergraduate semester units or an equivalent measured in quarter units. A summer sabbatical for the purpose of study will be four (4) graduate units or eight (8) undergraduate units or the equivalent in quarter units per summer. (Note: Type of classes to be taken and institution of study **MUST BE ATTACHED** to this application.)
- \_\_\_ B. A foreign language instructor's extended visit to the country in which the language the instructor normally teaches, or will soon teach, is universally used; or an ESL Instructor's extended visit to a country in which the dominant language is also the native language of a substantial number of students in the College's ESL program.
- \_\_\_ C. The writing of a textbook for which there is a commitment to publish extended by a recognized publisher. (Note: The commitment to publish **MUST BE ATTACHED** to this application.)
- \_\_\_ D. The writing of computer software for instructional use. A description of the proposed software and its intended use shall be submitted in writing. (Note: See note on page 5 of Information Re Application for Sabbatical Leave.)
- \_\_\_ E. Formal class work in pursuance of proficiency in a discipline other than the Faculty Member's instructional discipline provided that the Vice President-Academic Affairs determines in advance that there is need for such supplemental study and approves the study program submitted by the Faculty Member. (Note: Approval must first be granted from the Vice President-Academic Affairs, and such approval **MUST BE ATTACHED** to the application.)
- X F. A program of independent study in the applicant's teaching field other than formal class work as described in subsection (a). Such program shall be arranged through an educational or research foundation, government agency, or an accredited institution of higher education, or a technical or business entity. It shall be submitted in writing and shall be evaluated on the basis that it is designed to increase the applicant's proficiencies in the applicant's field. (Note: El Camino College can serve as the accredited institution of higher education with an appropriate ECC employee serving as advisor.)
- \_\_\_ G. A program of independent study for Instructors in fine arts, which program shall be submitted in writing and shall be evaluated on the basis that it is designed to increase the applicant's proficiencies in the applicant's field.

**SUMMARY OF SABBATICAL PLAN: (attach separate sheet)**

Will you receive any kind of grant or additional compensation aside from your District salary during this sabbatical leave?

Yes \_\_\_ No x

If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

(See Agreement, Article 13, Section 4(h).)

If sabbatical leave is approved, I understand that any variance or change in this application and plan must be approved by the Sabbatical Leave Committee at least 90 days prior to the effective date of the leave.

I also understand that I must submit a written sabbatical leave report upon completion of my sabbatical leave.

Faculty Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Division Dean's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Christina Gold

Digitally signed by Christina Gold  
Date: 2022.11.03 09:59:41 -07'00'

NAME: KASSIA WOSICK

**TYPE OF SABBATICAL REQUESTED:**

F. A program of independent study in the applicant's teaching field other than formal class work as described in subsection (a). Such program shall be arranged through an educational or research foundation, government agency, or an accredited institution of higher education, or a technical or business entity. It shall be submitted in writing and shall be evaluated on the basis that it is designed to increase the applicant's proficiencies in the applicant's field. (Note: El Camino College can serve as the accredited institution of higher education with an appropriate ECC employee serving as advisor.)

**SUMMARY OF PROJECT/STUDY:**

**Background**

I am requesting a one-semester sabbatical leave for Fall 2023 in order to pursue original research on the topic of dark tourism. Dark tourism, sometimes referred to as thanatourism, involves traveling to sites involving death, tragedy, natural and accidental disasters, mass death, and memorials. (Lennon and Foley 2000). While dark tourism has existed for centuries (e.g. the Roman Coliseum, executions, battlefields, cemeteries), there has been a marked increase in this type of tourism over the past two decades. Technology has contributed heavily to fostering curiosity, making travel possible and encouraging virtual and physical visits to popular (and rare) dark tourist destinations. Further, documentary series like Netflix's *Dark Tourist* pique viewers' interest and expose the darkest of sites (Zerva 2021).

There is a growing academic literature on dark tourism, namely in tourism/hospitality studies and more recently, the social sciences. Most researchers focus on those who engage in dark tourism (how it is managed and performed) and tourists' interpretations (perceptions, processes, and motivations) (Hooper and Lennon 2017). In a recent study focusing on dark tourists, researchers find four key motivations for those who participate in some form of dark tourism: to have a "dark" or thrilling experience, to engage in entertainment or foster a connection to a dead celebrity, to have a unique learning experience, or to sightsee with casual interest (Lewis et al. 2022). Sometimes, the reason that tourists travel to a dark site infers a specific type of experience, as with trauma tourism (Tumarkin 2005), disaster tourism, heritage tourism, revenge tourism, roots tourism, edutourism, current affairs tourism, war tourism, atrocity tourism, killing-fields tourism, victim tourism, and danger tourism.

While tourists themselves are often the focus, other scholars examine dark tourism sites, namely in terms of destination management and place interpretation (White and Frew 2016). Some discuss commodification and the need for sites to prevent exploitation (Strange and Kempa 2003) while others emphasize the responsibility to educate and prevent future atrocities (Miles 2002). Social scientists, tourism scholars, historians, economists and the like have weighed in on dark tourism both theoretically

and empirically. However, there are limited sociological studies on dark tourism, and few take an intersectional approach in examining how race/ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality affect the dark tourist experience.

From a sociological perspective, dark tourism can foster shared grief and collective mourning among visitors, provide heritage connection, and create a communal space to acknowledge atrocities with individual and societal implications. It can also reflect generational and transnational trauma. Further, how a society reveres its dead and memorializes those who died in disaster or atrocity speaks heavily to its value system and overall perceptions of mortality (Roberts and Stone 2014). Since sociology studies what happens between people, dark tourism is an especially interesting lens through which we can witness personal and public relationships to death and dying.

The purpose of this sabbatical project is to research dark tourism specifically at Nazi death camps. There is a wide range of tourism (and published scholarship) associated with Holocaust attractions involving different motivations and experiences. However, death is not an exclusive element of this kind of tourism; many visit for heritage, political, educational and historic reasons. Further, of the 44,000 different Nazi camps that existed throughout Europe during Nazi rule, only six were specifically devoted to killing Jews and other prisoners. Auschwitz-Birkenau, located in the Polish town of Oświęcim, was the largest and most lethal of the death camps. The Polish government acted swiftly after its liberation in 1945 to make it an historic site. It opened to the public just two years later in order to memorialize the dead, historicize its atrocities and prevent them from happening again. It has since become one of the most visited dark tourist sites in the world to date.

The idea for this particular project has been in development for some time now. I traveled to Poland in July 2022 and spent a day touring Auschwitz-Birkenau. I quickly slipped into “sociologist mode” and focused mainly on the curated portrayal of the camp’s history, site management, my own and fellow tourist experiences (both perceived and practiced). I also spent considerable time conversing with the tour guides and the tour company owner who transported us to and from Krakow. My main goal was to capture images and observational notes to include in a lecture on dark tourism for the Sociology of Death and Dying course I teach at El Camino College. While I was able to gather a few images/anecdotes for class, I left the site with more questions than answers and a keen desire to further examine the death camp as a site of contemporary dark tourism. I have since been in touch with the tour guides and tour company owner in order to design a viable research project on death camp dark tourism.

### **Research Design**

I plan to conduct a qualitative research project on dark tourism motivations, experiences and site management at Auschwitz-Birkenau. I will also assess the perceptions of area Polish residents who work as tour guides/transport as they pertain to the camp as a continued historic site, place of national identity and source of revenue. I have already secured residence in Krakow for August-September 2023 in order to collect data for the project. I have also been in touch with Jagiellonian University in Krakow to use their library and academic resources while I am abroad.



I will conduct in-depth interviews with roughly 30 tourists of varying genders, ages, and racial/ethnic identities who visit Auschwitz-Birkenau during the months of August and September 2023. I have made arrangements with the tour company owner to provide information advertising my study to those they transport for tour purposes to and from the museum. I will also post the study information outside of the main gates and in the “book store/gift shop” of the two camp locations, with permission from the site management. The in-depth interview questions for tourists will focus primarily on the themes of motivation, experience, perception, processing, and relation to other dark tourism experiences for those who visit the site. Since this is an exploratory project on thanatourism with a specific emphasis on death camp sites, data collection will ultimately inform the research questions as is customary with a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

I have made arrangements with a tour guide employed by the museum to conduct interviews with roughly 5-7 tour guides. The in-depth interview questions for guides will focus primarily on the themes of crafting a tour experience, emotional labor, managing individual and group dynamics, personal and trained elements of the tour, and overall perceptions of dark tourism.

I will also interview the private tour company owner and his 2-5 employees who transport visitors to Auschwitz-Birkenau. In-depth interview questions for the company owner/employees will focus on themes of personal relationship to the history/site, experiences with visitor transport, and overall participation in dark tourism endeavors.

In addition to in-depth interviews, I will conduct participant observation in the form of touring the camp with several different tour guides at various times of day in order to observe tourists and experience a range of guide styles. I will take observational notes in order to fortify the interview data and assess the site’s place within larger dialogues concerning dark tourism.

I will record and transcribe all interviews and detail my observation notes in order to analyze them using open and focused coding techniques. All identifying information will be destroyed upon transcription completion and all files will be maintained in accordance with El Camino College’s IRB application and approval process.

Finally, I plan to travel to the five other Nazi death camp sites at Belzec, Treblinka, Chelmno, Sobibor, and Majdanek to visit their state-sanctioned museums/memorials. While I will not conduct interviews or specific observations at these sites, they are all interrelated and serve as a valuable comparison to the Auschwitz-Birkenau experience. They may also present opportunities to conduct more research at a later date.

I wish to note my positionality in terms of the proposed research. I am a white, non-Jewish woman with strong heritage ties to my Polish and Norwegian ancestry. I was born in the United States and I speak fluent English and French. I have some conversational linguistic skills in Spanish, German, and Polish. I have slightly more than average dark tourism experience.

**DESCRIBE HOW IT WILL INCREASE PROFICIENCY IN APPLICANT'S FIELD:**

I designed this project to enhance the Sociology of Death and Dying course I teach at El Camino College. The bulk of my professional research and teaching experience has focused on sexualities, sexual identities, gender, the sex industry, and intimate relationships. I am considered an expert in the field and have researched and published extensively on these topics for over twenty years. I also routinely include my various projects, research designs and main findings in lectures. Students definitely benefit from hearing about research first-hand and engaging with data to understand the social world and make sense of their everyday lives.

I am not, however, an expert on matters of death and dying. About five years ago, I revived the Sociology of Death and Dying course at El Camino College. Since this is not my area of expertise, I have worked hard to craft a unique course for students to learn the sociological approach to death and dying. I am still exploring literatures and different publications to enhance various lecture topics. This has proven especially daunting with the Coronavirus pandemic since 2020. While the course involves a range of scholarship and topical directions, I have not been able to formulate expertise in a certain area or incorporate any original research related to death and dying. This is an important aspect of my pedagogical philosophy; being able to confidently translate research for students to educate and inspire. My goal is to strengthen this course with my empirical efforts so that students can learn more through first-hand research results. It may also encourage them to conduct research projects of their own on topics related to death and dying that they can submit for course requirements, present at conferences, or build upon for transfer purposes and graduate school applications.

I plan on presenting the research findings at the Pacific Sociological Association (PSA) and the American Sociological Association (ASA) annual conferences in 2024. I also intend to publish the research findings in a peer-reviewed journal (such as *OMEGA*, *Social Forces*, *Death Studies*) in order to contribute to the growing sociological literature on thanatourism. This project will also create the foundation for future research projects so that I may begin to develop an expertise in this field. I look forward to collaborating with and/or mentoring El Camino College students on thanatology topics in the future.

### **PROJECT TIMELINE**

<b>Project Component</b>	<b>Main Responsibilities</b>	<b>Date Range</b>
Literature Review and Research Tool Design	Complete extensive literature review and design all research tools for interviews and observation.	February-June 2023
IRB Approval	Apply for and obtain IRB approval for the research from El Camino College's IRB committee.	February-June 2023
Travel Arrangements	Finalize all travel arrangements (air travel, residence, connections at Jagiellonian University in Krakow).	April-May 2023
Initial Travel/Preparation	Arrive in Poland and prepare for research to begin.	August 2023
In-Depth Interviews	Conduct interviews with tourists, tour guides, and tour company owner/employees.	August-September 2023
Participant Observation	Conduct participant observation during tours.	August-September 2023
Data Analysis I	Analyze data, revise (if necessary) and do follow-up interview questions, hone observation points, begin to transcribe interviews and field observation notes.	August-September 2023
Data Analysis II	Transcribe interviews and field observation notes. Conduct open/focused coding data analysis.	October 2023
Prepare/Report Findings	Develop lecture(s) based on the findings. Begin writing a manuscript to submit for publication.	November 2023
Disseminate Research	Finish manuscript, apply to ASA and submit for publication.	December 2023
Sabbatical Report	Write/Present the requisite sabbatical report.	February 2024

## WORKS CITED

- Hooper, Glenn and John J. Lennon (eds.). 2017. *Dark Tourism: Practice and Interpretation*. New York: Routledge.
- Kerr, Mary Margaret, Philip Stone and Rebecca H. Price. 2020. "Young Tourists' Experiences at Dark Tourism Sites: Toward a Conceptual Framework." *Tourist Studies* 21: 198-218.
- Lennon, John and Malcolm Foley. 2000. *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster*. Cengage: Hanover.
- Lewis, Heather, Thomas Schrier and Shuangyu Xu. 2022. "Dark Tourism: Motivations and Visit Intentions of Tourists." *International Hospitality Review* 36 (1): 107-123.
- Miles, William F.S. 2002. "Auschwitz: Museum Interpretation and Darker Tourism." *Annals of Tourism Research* 29 (4): 1175-1178.
- Roberts, Catherine and Philip R. Stone. 2014. *Dark Tourism and Dark Heritage: Emergent Themes, Issues and Consequences*.
- Strange, Carolyn and Michael Kempa. 2003. "Shades of Dark Tourism: Alcatraz and Robben Island." *Annals of Tourism Research* 30 (2): 386-405.
- Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin. 1990. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Tumarkin, Maria. 2005. *Traumascapes: The Power and Fate of Places Transformed by Tragedy*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press.
- White, Leanne and Elspeth Frew (eds). 2016. *Dark Tourism and Place Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Zerva, Konstantina. 2021. "Dark Tourism on Netflix: From Place to Person-Dependent." *Tourism Management Perspectives* 38.