

Talent programme about 'Other Church Histories - religious profiles in 17th-century France'

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Subject, course/other context, study level and number of students: Seven students participated in the specialization course as an elective course (15 ECTS credits) during their master's degree.

The motivation behind the activity: To offering an intensive course to students willing to make an extra effort and work in different ways in order to achieve detailed insight into what it means to be a researcher.

Key learning outcomes, focussing on the way in which the activity is research-based: Academically, the students were to work independently with a chosen text and gain advanced knowledge about its historical context. They were to attain the ability to independently and critically analyse and discuss issues relating to the chosen text, use and discuss relevant literature as well as competently participate in research discussions and communicate in an academic manner. The overall methodological goal was practice of research skills through structuring of processes, in-depth work on time management, research communication, academic knowledge sharing, oral and written responses to the work of others, as well as oral and written presentation in English.

Description of the activity: The course was announced as a "talent programme". There was a round of applications (grade record + application letter) and an interview to match expectations.

The teachers had defined twelve cases (profiles from French 17th-century church history, including source and background texts). The first lessons consisted of lectures on the background and introduction of the cases. Afterwards, the students each chose a case. In the subsequent lessons, the students went through their case and we examined historical and methodological issues. Then followed a writing process in which the students wrote a 6-10-page mini-article in English about their source text. Furthermore, the students had to prepare a 20-minute oral PowerPoint presentation in English for a masterclass with Anne Régent-Susini, Maître de conférences (associate professor), Université Paris III-Sorbonne Nouvelle. She gave all the students feedback on their presentations and asked questions. Then there were questions from the audience. Furthermore, we organised two internal seminars with the students in which Anne Régent-Susini presented her own research and told about her own pathway to a career in research.

The course took place in a conference room with an elliptical table. The intention was to create an informal, laboratory-like atmosphere, but this only worked after the students got to

know each other and the teachers started to mingle with the students. We used different methods of working: buzz-groups in pairs (for the students to find their voice and get to know each other's cases); rounds in which every student had to comment on a question, for example "what is your biggest challenge with the case right now?" (to get all students to speak up); preparation in groups (2-3 students prepared a review of an article and an introduction to a discussion; the groups were defined by us and they varied so everyone got to work with each other); oral feedback on presentations ("X times the presentation, Y asks the unpleasant question, and Z asks the constructive question"); written feedback on drafts (the students commented twice on each other's texts and the teachers commented on both the texts and the comments made by students). We conducted mid-term interviews with all the students and provided continuous individual supervision via e-mail and through meetings with those who asked for them.

Interplay between teaching and exams: The course was graded pass/fail.

Student outcome of the activity: Generally, everyone was very satisfied with the course. In a short amount of time, the students developed extensive knowledge about a new field. They strengthened their academic profile and got a better sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches. They experienced the benefits of hard and intensive work (most students reported more than 12 hours of preparation for two weekly lessons). They became very good at working together, at challenging and supporting one another, and at giving advice and criticism. They were pleased with the lesson with Anne Régent-Susini as well as the internal staff member who attended the lesson. They were excited about the English proofreading as well. Research aspirations were aroused, specified or tried out.

The outcome for research: It is vital for the research outcome that there were two teachers to constantly discuss the academic and methodological challenges and thereby use the lessons as a stepping stone to advance in their own research. The research project was based on collaboration, and there were methodological insights around the student collaboration, which could be transferred to the research project (and vice versa). Academic life surrounding the research project was very fruitful. Finally, the concluding masterclass was an exceptional way to improve our collaboration with Anne Régent-Susini. She is part of the Advisory Board for the research project, but we added some new, valuable facets to academic knowledge-sharing.

Strengths and weaknesses of the activity: It was extremely labour-intensive for both students and teachers. This was both a strength and a weakness. It was a strength because there is a lot of energy in dedication to a project and experiencing how far it is possible to get in a short amount of time through goal-oriented and concentrated hard work. Of course it is also a weakness because students had to neglect other courses. Some might say that teachers could have spent their time better on their own research activities, but the energy surrounding the course as well as the collaboration between students and teachers is likely to

be much more profitable in the long term. The new pedagogical insights can be used in the future.

Further information:

The research project's website: <http://teol.ku.dk/solitudes/english/>

Keywords: Research-based education, reading of source material, academic collaboration