The Lavender Library: 
Institutionalizing Access to Queer Theory, Courses and Speakers at a Regional Comprehensive University in the South

**Abstract**

According to the Public Religion Research Institute, Arkansans are the least supportive of measures to protect LGBTQ+ people from discrimination compared to all states (3/26/19). Following the central tenet that queer theory include praxis to challenge the logic of domination, the University of Central Arkansas will support the community by creating The Lavender Library: Institutionalizing Access to Queer Theory, Courses and Speakers at a Regional Comprehensive University in the South. This initiative meets needs of LGBTQ+ students in a safe, life-affirming space. Focus areas include identity development; queer theory; transgender representation; gender expression; gender identity; sexuality; intersex experiences; and, intersectionality. Scholarly, autobiographical, and reference/resource materials focus on aspects of LGBTQ+ life including art; drama; health and medicine; history; legal issues; literature; music; politics; psychology; philosophy; religion; theory; work/career issues.

**Basic Information**

**Project Coordinator(s)**
Dr. Taine Duncan

**Steering Committee**
- Ms. Kerianne Gamache, Middlesex Community College, MA
- Dr. Paige Rose, University of Central Arkansas, AR
- Dr. Jayme Millsap Stone, University of Central Arkansas, AR

**Funding Amount Requested**
$20,000

**Expected Project Completion Date**
September 2023

**Project Description**

The University of Central Arkansas will support its regional community by creating The Lavender Library: Institutionalizing Access to Queer Theory, Courses and Speakers at a Regional Comprehensive University in the South.
Comprehensive University in the South. This program serves the needs of LGBTQ+ students in a safe, life-affirming space. Focus areas include identity development; queer philosophy and theory; transgender representation; gender expression; gender identity; sexuality; intersex experiences; and, intersectionality. Scholarly, autobiographical, and reference/resource materials focus on aspects of LGBTQ+ life including art; drama; health and medicine; history; legal issues; literature; music; politics; psychology; philosophy; religion; theory; work/career issues.

The UCA Lavendar Library ("LLâ€”) will be a hub of learning and connection for Arkansas’ LGBTQ+ community where we create a synthesis between research and transformability to all of our students. The LL will have a designated space on campus in Muse Residential College located in Arkansas Hall. This space is being renovated to house the LL materials, provide a research and study area, make available video/digital resources and create a fully accessible environment. All materials will be made available to students at no cost and allow individuals to borrow or keep materials without any record of accessing these materials on one’s UCA record. This feature permits any student to explore and examine LGBTQ+ topics sans any form of discrimination.

The format of resources to be collected shall include: printed books (monographs), comics/graphic novels and ephemera. The LL collecting priorities are: activism, art/photography, comics/graphic novels/zines, popular fiction and serials/periodicals. These resources will be supplemented with a speaker series on a range of LGBTQ+ topics from queer philosophers, activists, authors and educators.

**Project Impact**

Philosophy is a discipline which depends on the ability to discuss ideas, and to best refine and test these ideas intellectually requires the broadest range of voices. UCA believes that philosophy engages in the thoughtful, sustained, and critical examination of ideas that shape our lives and society. The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect with an understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. Research, connecting and engaging with the LGBTQ+ community will improve the balance of opinions and views of diversity and inclusion which have historically been overshadowed or excluded. The UCA LL project will help create a regional environment with different opinions and experiences of and from the LGBTQ+ community helping to reduce fears and differences and improving the average cultural competency in the academic and social population.

Within philosophy specifically, scientific practices can at times marginalize certain social groups, especially when they do not take into account the socio-economic impact and consequence(s) of these theories on individuals’ lives who belong in these overlooked categories. The UCA LL project will serve as a model and training ground for how to productively research, include and have hard conversations with those who may disagree regarding LGBTQ+ issues, thereby broadening the thoughtful, sustained, and critical examination of ideas that shape our lives and society.
Project Goals

- Develop a collection of free resources including academic books, reference/resource materials, queer philosophy and queer-affirming media in collaboration with UCA’s Residential Colleges and College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS).

- Modify the PHIL 2360 Gender, Race and Class: Philosophical Issues to be taught in the LL space, while centering intersectional queer theory as the primary course lens.

- Work in concert with the LL advisory team to create programming for the space, including virtual guest lectures on critical queer theory, activist interaction, community partners and book clubs.

- Partner with UCA student organizations such as PRISM (Pride, Raising Awareness, Involvement, Support and Mentoring Alliance), Feminist Union, the diversity subcommittee of the Student Government Association and PhiRe Club (the philosophy and religion organization to ensure student needs are being heard and addressed in an intersectional way.

- Through demonstrated need and use of the LL space, encourage institutionalization of support for queer speakers and events, student support services and campus partnerships to make UCA known as a safe and affirming place for LGBTQ+ youth in Arkansas.

Project Timeline

In the fall of 2022, the LL advisory Team will finalize each of the LL focus area needs, including a list of potential speakers for the first year of operation. During the fall of 2022 and beginning in January, 2023, renovation plans will be completed for the LL space in Arkansas Hall. In May 2023, a finalized list of research and reading materials will be confirmed and submitted for approval. Renovation will begin in late spring 2023 with a completion date of September 2023. Offers will be made to LL approved speakers for the 2023-2-24 academic year. The LL space will be opened on or about September 1, 2023.

Project Outreach

The primary audience for the LL project is the UCA student population, faculty and staff. Other audiences include: potential future UCA students, UCA graduates, community members of Conway/Arkansas and Arkansas based businesses. The LL project will be publicized through direct communications with community service providers to the LGBTQ+ community, like Lucie’s Place (a direct service and advocacy non-profit targeted to helping TLGBK+ young adults), with specific communication about speakers and academic events through UCA official communication channels. News releases about the LL project will be available to regional and state-wide news outlets; social media posts on the CAHSS social media platforms will inform about the LL project and programming; and participating community/corporate partners will receive direct email and mail notifications.

Accessibility Plan

At UCA, we strive to ensure that students and staff with disabilities receive full access to UCA classrooms, programs, and events. We define a disability as a temporary or permanent condition
that substantially limits one or more daily living activities. Daily living activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.

Our mission is to create an accessible and inclusive environment where a student’s educational potential and a member of staff’s ability to add value is maximized through the fostering of independence, self-advocacy, and individual holistic development.

For the LL project, an ADA accessible ramp will be constructed as part of the renovation to guarantee ease of access for all patrons, and furniture and fixtures in the LL spaces will include accessible features.

For the LL and all UCA areas, the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (“OARS) serves as the central office for accessibility through the use of in-person meetings, phone, email and video conferencing. This is a 9-person team specializing in accessible services and needs.

Accessing OARS support and guidance is done through a university portal where a student may request assistance or a meeting with an OARS advisor (https://uca.edu/oars/requestingaccommodations/). This online application takes a user through the application process step-by-step. Included in this system are multiple support services such as, but not limited to: notetakers (and the ability to sign up to be a notetaker), service shuttles, emotional support, assistance animals, disability grievances, access barrier reporting, and other services.

Two expert resources available to LL and all UCA students are the OARS department and its 9-person trained staff, especially its Accommodation Coordinator, Ms. Latosha Mitchell, and the City of Conway’s Human Resources Director, Ms. Lisa Mabrey-Williams (ADA/504/Title VI Coordinator).

**Evaluation Plan**

The LL project has the following evaluation benchmarks for our defined goals:

1. Collect at least 300 pieces of books/media through donations, working with experts in UCA’s Torreyson Library on a collections acquisition and maintenance plan with the recognition that the materials acquired may be taken from the collection freely at any time.

2. Teach two sections of PHIL 2360 Gender, Race and Class in 2022-2023, with assignments and service projects assessed by our office of Service Learning and the Muse Residential College to evaluate impact beyond course content.

3. Host not less than one joint virtual speaker with our community college partner in Boston, to include an assessment feedback form and reflection paper. This will be processed through UCA’s co-curricular program, BearX, which has specific goals and a built-in assessment tool. Host an in-person name change clinic and coordinate with the registrar to ensure that students who go through the name change clinic can have immediate name changes internal to UCA.
(4) Utilizing hosted student events during LGBTQ+ history month and surveys distributed to members of PRISM, Feminist Union, PhiRe Club, record and assess the LL influence and impact on the UCA LGBTQ+ and heterosexual communities.

(5) Utilizing the LL space record of entry through the UCA key card system, assess the use and growth of interest of the LL resources based on total monthly users. In coordination with the UCA Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion, annually assess the LL’s impact on creating a more safe environment through that office’s training and research materials.

Online Presence
The LL project will have its own online presence as a part of the UCA Residential Colleges - a campus living and learning environment which is designed for making precious memories, pride-worthy grades, long-lasting friendships, and engaged citizens. Additionally, the LL project will have a Facebook page and eventually its own Instagram site.

https://uca.edu/residential/lavender-library/

Budget Narrative
The overall LL project budget is $79,000, which includes space renovation, ADA accessibility, material resources, technology materials and initial speaker expense. Expenses are broken down as follows:

- The Arkansas Hall renovation of $50,000 includes the creation of a fully accessible space incorporating a new ADA ramp, meeting room and furniture. This expense is necessary to create an accessible, safe and secure environment specifically for the LGBTQ+ student and individual.

- For viewing of film materials and zoom lectures, there will be two 75” flat screens purchased for the LL. Additionally, four desktop computers will be installed for private individual research purposes. All video/digital elements are estimated to cost $8,000. The wiring and maintenance of these elements will be provided by UCA overhead.

- Library and reference materials including scholarly, autobiographical, and reference/resource materials on aspects of LGBTQ+ life including art; drama; health and medicine; history; legal issues; literature; music; politics; psychology; philosophy; religion; theory; work/career issues are estimated to cost $15,000. These materials are the backbone of the project, providing a resource to the LBGTQ+ student not available elsewhere in Arkansas. Once established, this will be a renewable annual expense.

- Guest speakers, at an estimated cost of $6,000, provide real-life mentoring, experiences and pedagogy to the LL user. Through direct interaction with activists, authors and outside educators the LL user will gain a more broad and insightful knowledge of queer theory, sexuality and other intersectionality topics. We respectfully request a gift of $20,000 from the American Philosophical Association in support of the LL project. In this time of dire need in our industry, we certainly understand the desire to support as many valuable
programs as possible and acknowledge that a gift in the amount of $10,000 will make a substantial impact to the LL project.

**Other Funding Sources**

Other funding resources include the University of Central Arkansas, the University of Central Arkansas Foundation, Inc., individual donors and corporate donors.