

**Narrative Statement to Support Promotion to Associate Professor  
For James Longhurst, Assistant Professor of History, UW-L  
Fall, 2012**

*Executive Summary:*

After completing 3 years as an Assistant Professor at a previous institution (credited as 1 year) and 4 at UW-L, I have amassed the service, skills, and accomplishments necessary for promotion. I have received positive student and peer evaluations, and possess a complex and evolving approach to teaching. I have published significant original research and enjoy an international profile in environmental history. I have also involved myself in considerable service across the campus. I believe that my accomplishments meet the requirements for promotion to Associate Professor at UW-L, and hope to continue to serve the university community at that rank.

**Teaching**

*Summary of Most Significant Accomplishments:*

I have successfully taught many large sections of a pedagogically difficult survey-level world history course, (HIS-101 and 102), that satisfies both the needs of general education students and my own convictions about the field. At the same time, I have developed 3 completely new upper-division courses, offered 2 more that are substantially revised, and taught 3 existing courses in service to the history major. Through these courses, I serve programmatic needs in the history department as well as offer my expertise in environmental politics to the Political Science/Public Administration and Environmental Studies programs on campus.

*Teaching Philosophy:*

My approach to teaching has 3 components: first, choosing an appropriate role for different classrooms, second, planning student interaction with the knowledge that attention is precious, and third, attempting to de-mystify history to encourage engagement by all. In line with the findings of a number of educational researchers, I have found that it can be useful for instructors to choose a "role" for themselves in different classroom environments. This role can be determined by the needs of the students, the skills of the instructor, or the characteristics of the course. For example, an instructor might choose to describe herself as a disciplinarian, peer or impartial judge, depending upon the course. In the case of HIS-101 – quite often the only history class UW-L students might take – I have chosen a role as an "enthusiastic cheerleader." I understand my time in this class as an opportunity to demonstrate to the students, through my enthusiasm, interest and dedication, the intellectual attractions of history. But in upper-division classes, I think of myself as a "trout fishing guide" – for example, I know how to complete the research project a student begins myself, but I must guide the students to their desired ends while still allowing them to find their own paths and pitfalls, only stepping in when their overall success is threatened. Choosing a role allows me to tailor my behavior and approach to different classes, and to remind myself of this first principle when otherwise lost in the day-to-day process of teaching. What should I do today in class, I might ask myself, then remember – oh yes, I want to be an enthusiastic cheerleader for the explanatory power of history. In practice, this role of cheerleader allows me to maintain high academic standards and push students toward the critical, analytical goals of the course with encouragement and good cheer.

I also believe that attention is precious while content is inexhaustible. I have found it crucial to convince students to invest their time and mental energy in active learning. This usually means immersion in the primary sources of social and cultural history, or in case studies of public policy. The use of projected images and text – letters, maps, photos, documents, etc – opens up the classroom to a wealth of viewpoints, interpretations, and voices. With these sources, I stimulate student interest with a variety of structured activities including games, simulations, debates, moot courts, mock elections and quiz-show contests: almost anything to get precious attention.

Finally, one belief motivates all of my instruction: I believe that it is an important task to de-mystify academic knowledge in order to convince students that these pursuits are open and inviting to them. I put this belief into action in a variety of ways. For example, I employ advanced

vocabulary in course lecture, but always offer brief definitions with the term. I also attempt to humanize authors and summarize complex readings as clearly as possible, and encourage engagement with dynamic small group work and activities. Particularly in the discipline of history, within its never-ending labyrinths of information, making the subject appear relevant and accessible encourages students to attempt more demanding explorations of the topic. De-mystifying does not mean lowering academic standards, however, and I always want to be rigorous in my grading. My own family is split between the working class and those who have benefitted from educational opportunities; my maternal grandfather was a coal miner without a high school education, while my paternal grandfather was a coal-mining engineer. As I consider myself an outsider to academia in many ways, I want to make academic knowledge and pursuits appear accessible to students regardless of their class or parentage – and tearing down stuffy conventions that exclude new learners serves this goal. My work with the McNair program allows me to increase accessibility to higher education while developing professional and career mentoring skills that I find also benefit my advisees as well as students enrolled in the capstone course.

#### *Contextualizing Data from TAI and SEIs:*

As a result of my application of these approaches to teaching, quantitative student evaluations of my instruction are reliably high. Over four years of teaching, my semester composite SEI has been above the department's in seven out of eight semesters, and has never dropped below 4.1. My comp SEI regularly ranks in the middle or the top of all scores in the department, and I've ranked third in the department in the last two semesters (out of 15 and 12). In fact, I've ranked third in the department for five out of eight semesters. This has been accomplished despite very low motivation of first-year general education students in the world history survey, averaging a motive item score of 3.1 for the eleven sections I have taught. These are unmotivated students, in other words, but I am successful in overcoming their often-pessimistic view of the required general education course, averaging a composite 4.3 in those courses. Upper division course SEIs are regularly higher, with some standout 4.8, 4.9 and 5.0 SEIs in particularly good semesters. Furthermore, I have earned these reliably high SEIs while averaging 338.5 student contact hours per semester. This is *one-third* more than the university average SCH/IFTE ratio of 285.2 for the same time period, but reflective of the history department's traditionally higher SCH/IFTE, averaged at 333 SCH/IFTE for the same eight semesters.

While I have received notably high-to-moderate SEI scores, I have done so while grading more strictly than the department and the University as a whole. I have distributed fewer As than the department and the University at large for every single semester, and fewer ABs than the department and University for 6 out of 8 semesters. Combined with the qualitative SEIs, which regularly indicate that I am able to inspire students who do not otherwise appreciate history courses, I believe that this evidence indicates success in one of my major teaching philosophies of maintaining high academic standards while encouraging students by de-mystifying academia. Overall, the things that I would most want students to say about my classes is that I am "tough but fair" and "inspiring." I think that the TAI data indicates my success in pursuing that goal.

My qualitative SEIs often contain comments about my ability to motivate and challenge students in the classroom, like these comments, from a HIS-102 section: "I love how passionate he is about the topic. It makes the class enjoyable," "Dr. Longhurst taught with much enthusiasm for history. He teaches about the parts of history most people don't know, as well as a different perspective of historical events that kept me interested . . . A very excellent teacher." The following comments come from HIS-200 S10: "Your personality helped take a boring subject and made it fun and interesting." "This class had all the potential of being incredibly boring but he engaged us in debates and made it interesting." "This was a challenging course. It not only challenged how I thought about history, but how to learn as well. This course challenged my critical thinking skills & made me a better student." Similar comments came from the F10 section of HIS-392: "Longhurst is an amazing teacher that got the class involved and excited over the course material."

#### *Peer Reviews:*

I am especially pleased to have received exceptionally positive peer reviews of my teaching. I have received formal in-class teaching observations from all of the seven tenured faculty members of the history department over 4 years of teaching at UW-L, and all of these reviews have been uniformly positive. One reviewer noted, in capital letters, that "THIS IS THE BEST CLASS I HAVE EVER OBSERVED" and that "This class was a demonstration of teaching excellence at its best, a real pedagogical tour de force." Many peer reviewers have highlighted my use of teaching technology, my gregarious and engaging classroom presence, and the utility of interactive small-group activities. While observers in my classroom have not made any specific recommendations for improving instruction, simply having them visit has reminded me of the need to connect individual classes back to my overall teaching goals.

These peer-teaching observations share a number of related points concerning my instruction of the general-education World History course, whether denominated as HIS-101 or 102. In particular, peer observers have positively reviewed my attempts to create an active and dynamic classroom that suits the needs of (relatively) disinterested non-majors, while working towards the departmental goals of introducing the skills and content of history as well as meeting the objectives outlined by UW-L general education assessment.

#### *Other Demonstrations of Teaching Effectiveness:*

Since my first semester, all of my HIS-101/102 syllabi have included general education student learning objectives and the means of assessing them, though those details have changed over time. The department assessed what was then SLO I.4 and III.9 in spring 2009, before switching permanently to SLO II-6, "Explain how content is shaped by the context in which it was created" after that point. In department discussion, I determined that my application of the shared rubric was more strict than my colleagues, resulting in assessment scores lower (S09: 1, 9, 21, 18, 2; F09: 3, 11, 18, 18, 4) than the department's, but reflecting comparable student skills. By S11, this had come in line with department readings of the rubric (15, 26, 19, 33, 12), but was again at variance in S12 (4, 5, 14, 11, 10). Departmental discussion of these scores again indicated that I was construing the rubric more strictly than my colleagues, not that the student mastery of the skill was meaningfully different; I will keep this in mind in the future.

These scores for HIS 101/102 come from assessment of mid-semester student writing on primary source essays. Since coming to UW-L, I have devised an ungraded but required worksheet to prepare students for that writing task, specifically coaching students on SLO II-6 (see appendices for annotated student work on this worksheet). I have also assessed my own teaching effectiveness within elective courses by considering how assignments are structured to reach both personal instructional goals and departmental learning objectives (see appendices for annotated D2L forum discussion and reading journal).

Of the many classes I have taught, the senior capstone seminar (HIS-490), is possibly the most scrutinized. Student work, and my own teaching effectiveness, is judged in that class by the entire department, with all faculty reading and discussing two anonymized drafts of student work as part of departmental assessment. Feedback from those reviews was positive. One of these drafts, with my annotations and comments, is attached. Finally, the student presentations themselves allow the department and the public to see this work, and my S11 and S12 iterations were judged to be successful implementations and demonstrations of my teaching effectiveness.

#### *Teaching Development*

I believe that one of my strengths is my conscious attempt to appear prepared and organized. In the attached syllabi you will find a short list of clear statements of teaching objectives on the first page. This helps me more than the students, I think, to define for myself what the class is and is not, and how to do that in the semester. Particularly in HIS-101/102, where quite literally anything in the last 5,500 years of human civilization might be considered course material, it is useful to set boundaries and goals that keep the focus under control. On the second and third page of every syllabus you will find clear statements of class policies. On the final pages of every syllabus are tightly organized calendars, designed such that we always do the thing in class that is marked in the syllabus. These syllabi are always available online. While this level of organization does not

mean that students always do the work, it does mean that they always know what the work is. This has resulted in SEI in which responses to the “The instructor was well prepared” item are regularly my highest, and students often note organization approvingly in comments.

Another strength of my teaching is my use of technology both in and out of classrooms. This includes extensive and regular use of D2L, including forums, journal writing, and other interactive options where appropriate. I always use PowerPoint to bring interesting images in class, uploaded mp3s for the music of the 1960s, and use low-risk reading quizzes in HIS-101/102. I have written two articles on teaching with technology, and am working on another article on teaching environmental history with Google Earth. I have used multiple generations of “clicker” technology in McNair seminars. I have particularly used technology to encourage students who would not personally approach me to connect in lower-pressure settings. This has included mass emails, Skype office hours, very fast email turnaround and *limited* texting (recently enabled by my iPhone).

At the same time, I am aware of areas for future improvement in my own teaching. First, I know that I have a tendency to overload courses with content, and I feel the need to more carefully gauge how much material to present to students. Surveying all of world or U.S. history in a single semester is difficult, and my first tendency is to overload students, something that is occasionally reflected in course comments. I discuss steps to respond to this issue in the next section. I also need to walk a difficult line between holding high academic standards while appearing prepared and organized, and turning off students by appearing too brusque and demanding. One occasional theme in student evaluations seems to reflect a perception by students that I am “intimidating,” (Spring 2010) a “know it all” or too judgmental of student contributions. I certainly do not mean to appear this way, as I cultivate a friendly and humorous classroom persona. I often have to remind myself to redirect humor to foster a fun environment without making students feel singled out. Since coming to UW-L, I have added more options for communication out of class in order to appear more accessible and human, including expanded office hours and virtual office hours through Skype. With UW-L’s world history courses varying between 50 and 70 students in each section during the last 4 years, I have attempted to get to know individual students through small group activities, beginning with a “getting to know you” or ice-breaker activity in every class where students get to interact on a topic other than world history – usually a discussion of their favorite movies, hometowns, or other unique data which assist me in remembering student names.

For the future, I have plans to offer “texting” office hours to reach students in their currently-preferred mode of communication, and a plan, beta-tested in Spring 2012’s HIS-317, to use classroom technology to play student-chosen music before class begins, creating a fun and approachable persona with a built-in conversation starter. Many of these teaching tactics are particularly useful for the students of UW-L, many of whom are first-generation college students, encouraging their comfort and contribution in a world history course which might otherwise appear overwhelming or far from their comfort zone.

#### *Curricular Development:*

At UW-L, my curricular development is split between 3 responsibilities: all history faculty are responsible for extensive general education instruction, amounting to half of their teaching load every year, and a majority of their SCH. I am also responsible for classes that serve the history major, including the methods course and the capstone research seminar. Finally, I bring my research interests in environmental, American, and policy history to the department, the campus, and the Environmental Studies minor. To meet those responsibilities, I have offered 2 versions of the world history survey (101/102), designed 3 completely new courses (392, 300, 391), offered 2 courses that were substantially revised and renamed (317, 319), and taught 3 other courses serving the history department (210, 200, 490).

Since arriving on campus, I have engaged in constant revision of the world history survey course. A difficult course to teach to an audience of general education students, this teaching assignment has prompted significant changes from me almost every year. I have responded to the success and challenges of each semester by revising the course in ways both large and small. For the first 3 years of my time at UW-L, I taught HIS-102 with a central theme of global environmental

history using Jared Diamond's *Collapse*, a book reflective of my research interests in environmental topics. I have recently chosen a more compact narrative structure focused strongly on the skill of primary document analysis and taught as HIS-101, in response to the needs of the classroom. My plans are to revise this course every 3 years, to take advantage of the textbook rental policy, to keep it fresh for me, and to continually attempt to improve this difficult course. I anticipate that the next revision, scheduled for AY 14-15, will include dropping the textbook entirely and choosing some of the just-published monographs on global environmental history themes to create a course less focused on content information and more focused on skills of reading for argument, primary document analysis, analytical writing, and critical thinking skills.

I received a Teaching Innovation Grant to develop, along with Prof. Marti Lybeck, a new course called "History through Film" (391). This is an "umbrella" course topic that can be taught by others in the department with their chosen focus. The TIG grant focused on critical analysis and writing skills. Student responses indicated success here: "This is the first course of my college career that actually challenged me when writing the critical essays," wrote one. "This class also helped me to develop my analytical writing skills," noted another.

I have spent significant effort to develop 3 courses in my research area of 20<sup>th</sup> century environmental politics (HIS-300, 317, and 391). I created an entirely new special topics course on the sixties (300), created a new version of the environmental history survey (317) to better reflect the field, and developed a new history of environmental policy course (391). Working with Prof. Jo Arney of the Political Science department, I wrote a CLS small grant to develop environmental policy curricular materials and develop linked courses over AY 12-13. This is the first new course of an intended thematic major in public and policy history, and I further serve my department by producing several additional course proposals, serving as search committee chair for a hire intended to support this major, and authoring the LX forms describing all of the topical majors.

I have taught new versions of existing courses to serve department needs, from a new readings course (319) to better prepare students for the senior seminar, to a major revision of the historiography and historical methods course (200) and the senior seminar itself (490). All of these courses are a part of a new and growing departmental mission to emphasize student research and writing based on primary sources contextualized within appropriate historiography.

## Research

### *Summary of Most Significant Accomplishments:*

I have an active and continuing research agenda. Since arriving at UW-L, I have published a book with a university press, 4 book reviews, 2 review essays, 2 peer-reviewed articles, 8 newsletter articles and additional encyclopedia articles and web stories. In addition, I have two book chapters in progress, with more in the works. I have presented at many national and regional conferences, conducted manuscript reviews, and have applied for and received research grants.

The greatest achievement of my scholarly career thus far was the publication of a monograph based on my doctoral dissertation, peer reviewed before publication, and reviewed nationally since its publication. My doctoral dissertation, completed in 2004, provided the foundation for a revised monograph titled *Citizen Environmentalists*, published in 2010 by Tufts University Press. The finished work offers an analytical narrative of air pollution politics in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from the late 1960s, based in primary documents and targeted at urban and environmental historians as well as political scientists. The volume features laudatory blurbs from a renowned urban historian and a former president of the American Political Science Association. Subsequent reviews have said that the book "provides new insights," and that it "makes an important contribution to our understanding of the role of women in environmental activism." The review in the *Journal of American History*, the flagship journal in the field, noted that "Longhurst reveals and illuminates aspects of environmentalism that other historians have neglected or completely missed." *Citizen Environmentalists* is a *Choice* "Recommended" purchase for academic libraries, and journalists have written about the publication and my research. (All reviews are appended to this report). The research in this monograph also has garnered an

international audience; I have been invited to travel to France to present a summary to a conference organized by the French Ministry of Ecology in November of 2012.

Second only in importance to the publication of my doctoral research is my success in beginning a subsequent research project. It is exhausting, mentally and emotionally, to reach the end of a research project that lasted 12 years. I am very proud to have resisted the “sophomore slump” at the end of that project, and to have successfully pivoted to a new project that builds on my interests in urban and environmental history and policy analysis. With the assistance of a Faculty Research Grant and a subsequent CLS Small Grant, I began research in the Fall of 2009 – after the manuscript for *Citizen Environmentalists* was submitted to the publisher – on a new research project on the history of urban bicycle commuting. After research trips to Chicago, Albany, NY, Madison, St. Paul and Minneapolis, and the National Archives in Washington D.C., I have reached major milestones in the project: research presentations at two national academic conferences, invited presentations at two regional conferences or workshops, and one presentation to the History Authors’ Writing Group at UW-L. I have had one article on this subject accepted for publication through formal peer review process at the *Journal of Policy History*, and have been invited to contribute different chapters to two edited volumes. Finally, a senior acquisitions editor at the University of Washington Press has solicited a book proposal from me, which I plan to complete this fall. Cumulatively, these accomplishments represent an extension of my established research interests into a new area, indicating a continuing trajectory of research and publication in environmental history and policy. This new research approach has resulted in journalistic coverage, including a story from UW-L University Relations, an interview with the local FOX TV affiliate in the summer of 2012, and an op/ed in the *Tribune* written with a student.

Overall, these two major projects serve a larger purpose: building an academic career out of researching the history of government action in shaping the urban environment. While I am animated by larger questions of environmental history, I choose to focus on the topics that are manageably close to us – where we live, and how we live on a day-to-day basis in cities. I believe that such a focus can emphasize the practicality and viability of choosing more environmentally sustainable paths, as well as the mechanisms for doing so in a democracy.

#### *Research Philosophy:*

I have some broad beliefs about maintaining an active research agenda even while prioritizing teaching at a regional comprehensive school. It is important to set small goals, create meaningful deadlines, and take small chunks of research time where available. I have attempted to take advantage of conference presentations, small grants, and in particular my department’s History Authors’ Writing Group or HAWG. Founded by Prof. Marti Lybeck, this small group of peers meets at least once a month in the academic year to read and critique one another’s papers. I am an active participant and founding member in this group, and regular reminders of peers’ research accomplishments keep me focused on my work, even on a Friday afternoon. Reading and commenting on my peers’ work is also an important service in support of their research projects, and creates a sense of shared, collegial purpose. This overall tactic of focusing on small pieces of research to fit in a busy teaching schedule has resulted in a number of smaller publications and conference presentations, all of which are listed and appended to this report.

#### **Service**

I have contributed significant service on campus over the last 4 years. My policy interests have provided motivation to be involved in university-wide projects. I hope to eventually find an appropriate position on campus to take advantage of my report-writing skills and policy interests.

The most demanding of these service commitments has been a 3-year term on the Academic Program Review committee, the last year as secretary of that work-intensive Faculty Senate body. In this position, I completed lengthy reviews of campus academic units, often personally presenting the written results to the Faculty Senate. In response to history department needs, I agreed to serve on both APR and the Institutional Review Board in AY 11/12, and will continue on the IRB for two more years. This position allows me to facilitate oral history proposals

to the IRB, which are very different methodologically from other human subjects testing and require some explanation to the non-historians on the committee.

By far the most time-intensive service commitment at UW-L has been my volunteer non-credit instruction for the federally-supported Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program assisting traditionally underserved, minority, and first-generation college students in applying for PhD programs. For the last 3 spring semesters, I have taught 10-15 students in 6 or 7-week seminars the analytical writing and verbal components of the Graduate Record Exam, a challenging and recently-updated standardized test. These seminars have provided important knowledge and confidence for students who might not otherwise have the background to perform well. For my part, I have greatly enjoyed my volunteer service to McNair, particularly as it fits my personal philosophy of making the academic enterprise accessible for non-traditional students. While the McNair program has occasionally found funding to offer nominal stipends for my work, my approach to McNair and first year teaching the seminar was entirely voluntary and *pro bono*.

Within my department, I have engaged in extensive service work as webmaster, served various departmental committees, and produced curricular documents in support of newly proposed thematic majors. The most demanding of these service engagements was as search committee chair for a position in Public and Policy History in AY 11/12, for which I reviewed applications, travelled to a national conference for interviews, and organized and hosted on-campus interviews in the spring of 2012. This process resulted in a successful hire, and positive feedback on the search process from candidates. After not being selected for an on-campus interview, one candidate wrote that "of course it is disappointing news, but I truly enjoyed the interview process and appreciate how well it was managed." Another wrote "I wanted to write to commend you for such an organized and well informed search process. I truly appreciated your updates and prompt decision making and wish that more hiring and fellowship committees operated with a model like yours." I think that this search was successful in multiple ways – obviously in delivering a viable group of candidates to the department for a hiring decision, but also in treating candidates in a humane and professional manner, thus elevating what I can (from personal experience) describe as a difficult and occasionally demeaning process.

Over the first two years of my employment at UW-L, I completed the application process to form a chapter of the national history honorary fraternity – the first ever here – and attracted the first class of initiates. The process of applying to the national office of the honorary was long and complex, requiring supporting documents from the highest levels of UW-L. At the conclusion of the spring semester of 2010, the history department hosted the installation and first initiation ceremony for the Alpha Xi Eta chapter of Phi Alpha Theta. For that first installation, a meeting which I organized and emceed, we hosted a visiting official of PAT. Prof. Jason Hardgrave, of the University of Southern Indiana, formally installed the chapter, and I organized and hosted his visit.

Since that time, I have continued to serve as faculty advisor for PAT, recruiting new initiates every year, processing their applications, organizing end-of-year induction ceremonies with guest speakers, and organizing occasional activities with the group. Notably, during the 10/11 academic year, PAT raised funds to sponsor a visiting author, Professor Eric Morser of Skidmore College in New York. The medium-term goal of the group is to attend a regional PAT conference, and also to continue involvement in National History Day and the upcoming NCUR conference.

Beyond the campus, I have completed professional service for the discipline of history, chairing and commenting on panels at national conferences, organizing panels myself, and completing anonymous peer review of manuscripts for prominent journals. Additionally, I have continued to serve on the advisory board of an environmental group in Pittsburgh, and have recently become more active in environmental politics and urban planning in La Crosse, collaborating with the city planning department on the new Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan, and joining the La Crosse Area Planning Committee in Fall 2012. In these roles, I hope to apply my professional knowledge of urban and environmental politics to local issues.