APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Research, Scholarship, and Creativity Grant

Deadline February 11th

Please print and complete this checklist and attach it as the cover page of your grant application.

Faculty information

Name: Helena Karszon  Dept: Scandinavian Studies
Email: hkarson  Rank: Assistant Professor

Checklist

☐ Description of previous projects (and outcomes) funded by RSC grants
☒ Complete project description, including separate statements of:

1. **Purpose.** What are the intellectual, conceptual, or artistic issues? How does your work fit into other endeavors being done in this field?

2. **Feasibility.** What qualifications do you bring to this project? What have you done/will you do to prepare for this project? What is the time period, i.e. summer, summer and academic year, academic year only? Is the work's scope commensurate with the time period of the project?

3. **Project Design.** This should include a specific description of the project design and activities, including location, staff, schedules or itineraries, and desired outcomes.

☒ RSC Budget Proposal Form attached as last page of application

☒ Nine (9) copies of completed application and budget (including this checklist) to be submitted to the John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning (SSC 119)

If successful, my proposal can be used as an example to assist future faculty applications. This decision will not in any way influence the evaluation of my application.  ☐ Yes/ ☐ No  (please circle one)
Purpose

There are both national and transnational aspects of Nordic cinema culture. Its national characteristics have been constructed as a form of difference from Hollywood film. Nordic cinema has been associated with art rather than entertainment, influenced by the French New Wave and European art cinema rather than by Hollywood. Partly funded by the state, Nordic films are said to have aesthetic aspirations. Film actors are connected to theatres, films focus on character and ideas, not on action, and they explore the psychological depth of the human psyche. Films do not shy away from the darkness and vulnerabilities in human nature or from problems in society. Typically Nordic themes are nature, religion, and sexuality. The Nordic hero is not the American action hero. S/he is a down-to-earth ordinary person with faults and problems. The language of Nordic film reflects the Nordic psyche and temperament. Characteristic are long takes, close-ups, slow moving action and open endings. Silence is an important conveyor of feelings and moods.

That said, newer research by film scholars in the US is primarily focusing on the transnational aspects of cinema, not only aesthetic and thematic transnationalism, but also a transnationalism of production, distribution, and institutional networks. In a timely and seminal work from 2005, Transnational Cinema in a Global North, for instance, Andrew Nestingen and Trevor Elkington argue for the emergence of a transnational Nordic cinematic culture. These scholars move away both from national cinema studies and from auteur studies (the study of individual directors and artists). They focus instead on new forms of commercial and popular films.

I see film as a potentially potent social and political agent. I also view film as art. In my understanding, the above focus on commercial and popular film, on production and institutional issues, easily eliminates both political and aesthetic perspectives on films, both with regards to their content and their cinematographic style. I have observed that, in general, political perspectives on literature and film within Scandinavian Studies in the US are rare. For instance, there are very few scholars who do close studies of issues of class and race in contemporary Nordic film. Considering my interests in and research on multiculturalism in Scandinavia, this is where I see myself being able to make an entry into the field of Nordic film studies.

The project I have in mind for this summer builds on a conference paper that I did research for in January 2011 and that will develop into an article. I will present the paper at the SASS conference (Scandinavian Association for Scandinavian Studies) in April. My plan is to submit the article to a new journal in the field called The Journal of Scandinavian Cinema or to a film journal outside the field of Scandinavian studies. The article explores the political dimensions of Tomas Alfredson’s Let the Right One In (2008). The film has been defined as a genre hybrid, something in-between a horror and love story, but I think it makes a political statement about class relations in Swedish society. By reading the film closely and exploring the significance of race, class, gender and nationality in the film, I examine how the film enacts ideological meaning. My plan is to have this work pave the way for further research on Nordic film. I hope to have a first draft of the article in May 2011. In the summer, I want to continue examine Swedish films with an explicit or implicit focus on class. Contemporary filmmakers I have in mind are Roy Anderson, Lukas Moodysson and Pernilla August, whose films thematize class (and questions of ethnicity/race) in Sweden today. I will also need to explore, at the film archive
in Stockholm, older Swedish films with this focus. Spending time at the archive will also deepen my understanding of the Swedish film tradition in general and its thematic/aesthetic trends.

I view this project as the important starting-point for further explorations into Nordic film. It will provide me with the necessary contexts for a rigorous article, which will hopefully position me as an interesting voice in the field. I do see the need of actually being in Sweden and exploring films and literature about it. Not only do I need to get acquainted with older films, there is also important literature on national film written by scholars in Sweden not available in the US. I also want to get an insight into the resources in Sweden and meet individuals who can be of assistance in my research. As studies of transnationalism and the globalization of cinema gain ground in the field and in the US, I think the national and native perspective becomes equally important, especially, perhaps, for new journals like The Journal of Scandinavian Cinema. My goal for the summer is threefold:

1. I want to purchase a few seminal books on politics and aesthetic theory, on film theory and on Nordic film in order to deepen my understanding of film as art and politics as well as of Nordic film.
2. I need to travel to Stockholm to visit the national film archive, find literature about film in the libraries (Stockholm university library, for instance). I also want to visit the Swedish film institute, where I have contacts who can assist me in my research. I will also try to make new contacts at the film studies departments in Stockholm (possibly also in Gothenburg).
3. I want to spend part of the summer writing.

A research grant would help me accomplish the first two of these goals. I think a realistic goal is to do substantial research for a longer article during the first part of the summer (approx. 4 weeks).

Feasibility

From having been trained in literature and cultural studies, the step is not huge to film and film studies. In fact, the cultural studies discipline incorporates film in its study of contemporary cultural and political phenomena. Teaching a film class at Gustavus, using film in my language classes, as well as organizing the yearly Nordic film festival in Minneapolis have made me increasingly interested in and knowledgeable about Nordic film. In my film class, I focus on socio-cultural perspectives on film, but I also use chapters or articles that are more theoretical from James Monaco's How to Read a Film and Leo Braudy & Marshall Cohen’s Film Theory & Criticism. In an age where Hollywood films dominate almost any national market, I have become particularly attracted to the ways in which Nordic filmmaking is unique and can function as an aesthetic and political alternative. I am also experiencing the joy of educating American students in seeing and perceiving differently, appreciating the stylistic differences between what they are used to (Hollywood film) and what they often first find strange, awkward or weird (to use some of the words I initially often hear from them). Teaching film from other parts of the world and doing it well is important not only for majors and minors of Scandinavian Studies. It also offers the "general" students at Gustavus a global and multicultural learning experience.
I am excited about combining my teaching interests at Gustavus with scholarly work. This research will greatly benefit the film class that I have developed and that I keep improving as I teach it every other year.

As preparation for this project, I will view as many films by, for instance, Roy Andersson and Lukas Moodysson as I can and attempt to establish the framework for the article. I will contact the individuals I know at the Swedish Film Institute in Stockholm. I will also contact the National Sound and Image archive in Stockholm. They have digitized more than 5,500 films that are available for the public and for researchers.

**Project Design**

1. **Books**


   ---. *The Emancipated Spectator*. Verso, 2009. ($17)


2. **Itinerary**

   Travel Minneapolis to Stockholm, around June 5 ($1000)

   Approx. June 5-July 3: Exploration of archives, film institute, libraries
   (Part of cost of lodging/transportation-$400)
3. **Outcome**

As mentioned, I will do substantial research in Stockholm and spend the latter part of the summer writing.
STIPEND (Please check one box to indicate your distribution preference)
Note: The RSC grant will fund up to $1,500 towards Project Costs. If your project costs will exceed this amount, you may opt to apply a portion (or all) of your stipend to cover these additional costs. If this option is your preference, please select “Partial Amount”.

- Full Amount ($700- assistant professor; $600-associate professor; $500-full professor)
- Partial Amount (apply a portion of the full amount to project costs)

Partial Amount: Please indicate the amount that you would like to apply towards project costs ($_________) and the remaining stipend after this deduction ($_________)

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<th>PROJECT COSTS: List each item individually with its cost. Attach additional sheets if necessary.</th>
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<td>I. Equipment (e.g. transcription machine, camera, digital recorder— but not computer hardware)</td>
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<td>II. Materials (e.g. books, printing, software, lab supplies)</td>
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<td>III. Personnel (e.g. typist, transcriptionist, student assistant)</td>
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<td>IV. Travel (cannot include conference travel, see <a href="http://gustavus.edu/finance/travel.php">http://gustavus.edu/finance/travel.php</a> for allowable expenses)</td>
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<td>1. Minneapolis - Stockholm</td>
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<td>2. Cost of lodging/transportation - Stockholm (part)</td>
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**TOTAL PROJECT COSTS**

$1,500

**TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED** (Total Project Costs + Stipend)

(Note: The RSC grant will fund up to an amount equal to your Full Stipend – $1,500 for Project Costs)

$2,200

Last Updated: November 2010