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Learning Communities at Rhodes brochure and application

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Two Opportunities to Live and Learn Together

1 The British Empire

Is the imperial idea making a comeback? Is the USA embracing what was rejected by Jefferson and Washington and what others vehemently labelled “un-American” only a few years ago??

The idea of empire has been routinely condemned since the Second World War, yet influential voices in our society now say that empires have their virtues and that it might not be such a bad thing to have a “Pax Americana” in an unruly world.

This learning community focuses on the last great English-speaking empire, that of Britain from 1500 onwards. Though the Empire has largely disappeared, its history still shapes our world in a wide variety of ways: the global language, the global trading system, and not least the problems left behind in India and Pakistan, Israel and Palestine, Ireland, Cyprus, migrants in conflict with indigenous communities, invented nation-states coming apart because of ethnic and religious diversity, as in Iraq, Nigeria, and Malasia.

This learning community draws together History and English, disciplines increasingly energized and excited though their collaboration. Members of this learning community take both courses offered and will participate in a set of events, experiences, and discussions

outside the classroom that link the courses – common readings (for example, Rudyard Kipling’s poem, “Gunga Din,” or E.M. Forster’s novel, *A Passage to*

India), student presentations, movies on imperial themes (*Zulu* or *Breaker Morant*), lectures, and informal meetings with distinguished visitors to the College. What happens in each course is constantly

influenced by discussions in the other, and the whole intellectual experience is greater than the sum of its parts. The interdisciplinary experience produces results that are active, exploratory, adventurous, and

exciting. Members of the Learning Community in 2004 traveled to an intercollegiate student research conference to present their work, the only first-year students to do so.

The Courses:

English 215: The Imperial Idea in British Literature: Promoters, Doubters, and Enemies
(MWF 3:00-3:50 p.m.)

This course will focus on literary texts composed during the formation of both Britain and what came to be the British empire(s). Topics will include the representation of empire; different attitudes to English dominance in the British Isles; different responses to the growth of English and British commercial dominance and territorial expansion; and both positive and negative evaluations of the imperial project. We’ll consider some of the extraordinary stories that were used and reused by the British over centuries to explain to themselves and understand the empire. The course will end by considering some of the literature of the dissolution of Britain’s empire and a series of

“Being part of a learning community was a great experience. I had the opportunity to meet students with similar academic interests, live with them, and learn from them. We formed a very tight-knit community, and I know we will continue to be friends.”

Hayley Hill, Class of 2008



recent movies based on the post-imperial experience (such as *Bend It Like Beckham*, *East is East*, and *My Beautiful Laundrette*).

History 105: The British Empire and Its Enemies (MWF 8:00-8:50 a.m.)

This course will introduce students to some of the main historical developments in the British Empire and Commonwealth during the period 1713-1980. During this time Britain gained, and lost, an empire unrivaled in human history. It is the objective of this course to understand some of the main reasons for British imperial expansion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the retreat from empire in the twentieth century. The impact of empire on British political, social, and economic life will be considered, as will be the influence of British culture and institutions on the colonies. Imperial ideas, the growth of racial attitudes, and other intellectual issues and social problems associated with the empire will also be addressed.

The Faculty:

Lynn Zastoupil, Professor of History, teaches courses on modern Britain and Europe, as well as South Asia. He has written one book, *John Stuart Mill and India*, and co-edited two others, *J. S. Mill's Encounter with India* and *The Great Indian Education Debate: Documents Relating to the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy, 1781-1843*. In 2001 he was named a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and in 2002 he received the Clarence Day Award for Outstanding Research and Creative Activity.

Michael Leslie is a professor of English and Dean of the College's summer school in England, British Studies At Oxford. He's a product of the empire,

being born in London to Scots-Irish parents, and he's followed one of the most characteristic of imperial impulses, westward emigration. A scholar of early modern English literature, he also works on the history of designed landscapes, interart relations, and the history of science.

2 The American Studies/Women's Studies Focus Program: Womanhood in Nineteenth-Century America

The nineteenth century was an era of dramatic change that reverberated through the lives of American women. Westward expansion, slavery, civil war, industrialization, and urbanization transformed women's roles in the United States. All the while, Americans addressed concerns about liberty and order, democracy and pluralism, individualism and community, through ongoing discourse about gender. And women themselves contested and reshaped this discourse.

One of the most significant ways they shaped this discourse was through the literature they wrote. The most popular, published authors in the first half of the nineteenth-century were, as Nathaniel Hawthorne described them, a "d—mned mob of scribbling women." In fact, women were writing in a variety of genres—such as newspaper columns, sentimental and sensational novels, or poetry—and commenting on their rapidly changing world. Catharine Maria Sedgwick tackled the "Indian Question" in her 1827 novel, *Hope Leslie*, and of course, Harriet Beecher Stowe addressed slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, while Harriet Jacobs gave her intimate account of race relations in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.



After the Civil War, women were the most prolific of the “regional” writers who wrote realistic novels and short stories grounded in particular places and focused on “real-world” issues such as industrialism and women’s struggle for emancipation. Studying these imaginative contributions alongside the history of women’s lives in nineteenth-century America opens up new possibilities for interpreting both literary texts and historical documents.

“... [learning communities] provide the opportunity to engage in elevated discussion, challenging coursework, and a diverse curriculum typical in more advanced studies...”
David Tyler, Class of 2006

Members of this learning community will take both courses offered, which allows you to fulfill two general degree requirements in the Humanities. Each course will be enriched by the other, creating a multi-dimensional, in-depth understanding of the issues we explore. Films, field trips, and dinner discussions with faculty will bring our two classes together throughout the semester. Among the co-curricular excursions will be a visit to an antebellum mansion to explore gendered spaces, and a tour of the Spires Bolling house in Holly Springs, Mississippi, where African-American journalist Ida B. Wells Barnett was born. This learning community invites you to venture into the nineteenth-century world of women on an exciting journey of discovery.

The Courses:

History 105: Nineteenth-Century American Women’s History (Tu,Th 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.)

The exploration of western territories, the doctrine of separate spheres, the growth of chattel slavery, the Civil War, industrialization, and urbanization transformed gender relations in the nineteenth century. In a multicultural investigation, we will explore the ways that women both shaped and were influenced by these. Popular magazines, songs sermons, and American painting will reflect changing ideals of womanhood, while letters, diaries, census manuscripts, and oral histories will provide a window on women’s lived experience.

English 215: Nineteenth-Century American Women’s Literature (MWF 12:00-12:50 p.m.)

In this course, we will engage in a chronological survey of fiction written by American women, discussing how the authors created and transformed literary genres, how they used fiction to reveal the drama and complexity of women’s lives, and how through their writing they entered into larger cultural discussions of great national concern.

The Faculty:

Associate Professor of History **Dee Garceau-Hagen** has lived in Maine and Montana and now calls Memphis home. She holds a Ph.D. in American Studies from Brown University, where she learned to investigate art, journalism, and film, as well as historical documents. “Interdisciplinary study,” she says, “is essential to understanding American culture.” Professor Garceau-Hagen has written one book, *The Important Things of Life: Women, Work, and Family in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, 1880-1929*, and co-edited two others, *Across the Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West*, and *Portraits of Women in the American West*.

Leslie Petty, Assistant Professor of English, teaches courses in nineteenth-century American literature and Women’s Studies. She joined the Rhodes faculty in 2003, after earning her Ph.D. from the University of Georgia. Professor Petty has published articles in *The Southern Quarterly* and *MELUS*, and her current research is concerned with representations of feminist activism in American fiction from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth.

Learning Communities at Rhodes

Application Card

Please complete this card and return it along with the appropriate application materials to

Associate Dean Kathleen Laakso
Office of the First Year Experience
Rhodes College
2000 North Parkway
Memphis, TN 38112

Please print in ink:

Name _____
 First Middle Last

Address _____
 Street City State ZIP

Telephone () _____

I am applying for the following learning community at Rhodes. (Check only one.)

_____ **The British Empire**
(To apply, please send a personal statement of approximately 500 words explaining your interest in this program and the qualities you can bring to it.)

_____ **Womanhood in Nineteenth Century America**
(To apply, please send a personal statement of approximately 500 words explaining your interest in this program and the qualities you can bring to it.)

**All materials must be postmarked
no later than June 4, 2005.**

Housing and Course Registration for Learning Communities

Students who apply for a learning community should also complete the housing information form. Regardless of your acceptance into a community, the information submitted will help the College pair you with a roommate. Students in each learning community will be assigned rooms near one another in either Blount or Robinson dormitory. If you are accepted into a learning community, this will be arranged for you.

If you are accepted into a learning community, you will be registered automatically for the courses that comprise that community. The registrar will then use your Course Preferences form to enroll you in additional courses.



Learning Communities at Rhodes

As it moves past the city of Memphis, the Mississippi River runs swift and deep, nearly a mile wide. But the powerful current that washes the bluffs, the levee, and the edges of rice and cotton fields began as a trickle in a thousand brooks and creeks. The energy of those thousand flows is blended together, creating a highway at the heart of the American continent.

At Rhodes College, you can join together with other Rhodes students, and with some of Rhodes' best faculty, blending your energies at the start of college. You can do this by applying to join one of the College's learning communities.

Learning communities are groups of students taking some of the same courses and living nearby to each other on the Rhodes campus. These communities are restricted to first-year students at Rhodes, and they are available only for specific courses designed for entering students. Living close to a core group of students, all sharing one or more of their courses, means that you're immediately surrounded by people encountering the same challenges you are. In your first semester living and studying at college, you will be part of a team, combining your energy with theirs. Students in learning communities do their own academic work, in accordance with the Rhodes Honor Code. But these communities discover the pleasures of mixing academic work with social life. These programs are designed to foster a social learning experience, one that makes the most of the liberal arts, all in the first semester of college.

Students in learning communities also work more closely with Rhodes faculty. In most cases, a program faculty member will serve as your academic advisor, so the person helping you plan your education will be someone who knows you, your interests, and your talents. Faculty in the learning communities work with students outside the classroom in informal discussions, campus lectures, and field trips. The close relationship between students and faculty provides an ideal bridge between high school and college, as well as a pathway toward future work at Rhodes. The program

allows students to connect with one another, with faculty, and with Memphis. Participants in previous programs have gone on to many different majors. They have also branched out to become campus leaders in several areas: Honor Council, Rhodes Student Government, publications, Greek life, study

abroad programs, Model U.N. and Model NATO, and a host of service and research activities in the greater Memphis area. In short, the experience of a learning community can be the perfect introduction to an enriched college life, one that fosters a fully integrated experience between study, social life, and the broader community.

When your first semester is over, you will have learned what many other students may not realize until much later in their careers—that education is not about the gathering of facts alone, or that it only takes place in classrooms, but that serious thought and debate extend beyond single departments and designated spaces.



“The Learning Community program provides participants with a unique opportunity to experience a liberal arts education at its best, with excellent classroom discussion, positive interaction with professors and peers both inside and outside the classroom, and challenging academics.”

Whitney Carter, Class of 2008



Rhodes College

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Memphis, TN 38112-1690

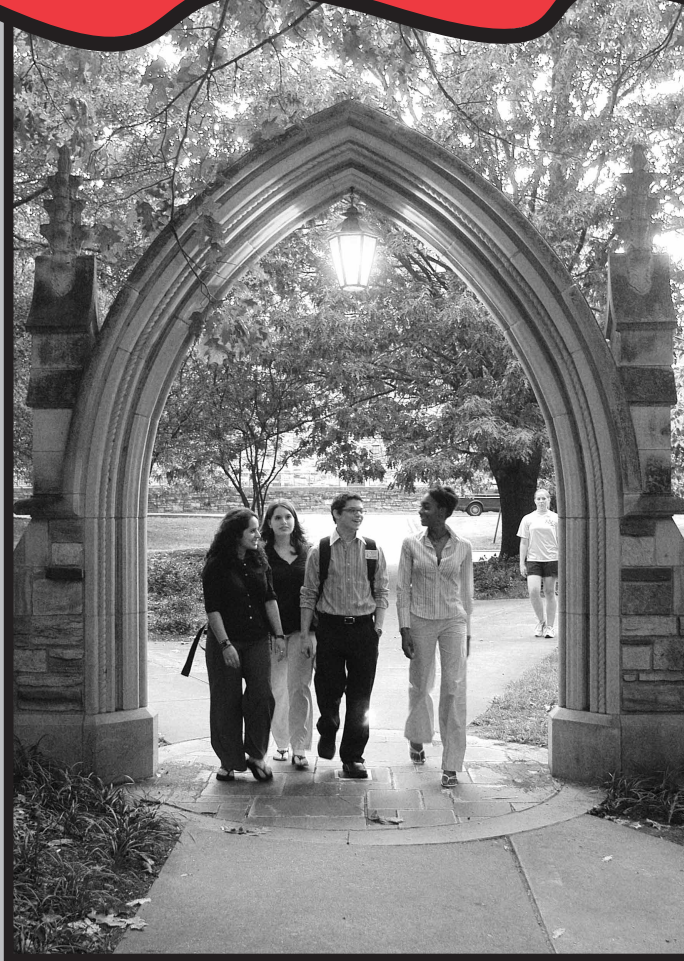
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Rhodes College

The Learning Community is a quick way to plunge directly into serious academic work. The courses in different disciplines overlap and reinforce each other, making the overall subject more real. The professors



are passionate and bring their unique senses of humor to class each day. I always felt I could talk to both of them because they were open and understanding.

Paul Burmenko,
Class of 2008

LEARNING COMMUNITIES AT RHODES COLLEGE