

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

November 18, 2019

Michigan State University  
The Graduate School  
466 W. Circle Dr.  
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Portfolio Review Team:

During the 2018-2019 academic year I had the pleasure of serving as the faculty mentor for Alyssa Lopez, an Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Teaching Fellow in James Madison College at Michigan State University. More specifically, I served as the faculty mentor for the teaching-as-research project undertaken by Alyssa in the spring 2019 semester:

### *Film and History: A Pedagogical Exercise in Interdisciplinary Teaching*

Throughout the course of the fellowship year, Alyssa and I had sustained conversations about interdisciplinary theory, about film studies, and about undergraduate teaching – the later included systematic discussions about constructing syllabi, designing assignments, and, classroom practice in the context of pedagogic reasoning. Additionally, Alyssa facilitated a joint honors option for students in the spring 2019, focusing on black history and film in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The honors option was structured as a seminar; it sought to investigate if students could blend both film studies and history to develop a deeper understanding of African American history and use these skills to grapple with contemporary social and political issues. Additionally, the course was the site of Alyssa's teaching project, which documents student learning of historical subject matter content in a specific interdisciplinary context. While the course was incredibly successful on several fronts, including students expressing a strong desire to see it regularized in the James Madison curriculum, it is Alyssa's project that stands out as an exemplar of teaching-as-research. Working with data drawn from benchmark (pre- and post-course) reflections and formal assignments, Alyssa was able to track students' emerging understandings of social and political 'screenic' histories. And she was able to align these patterns with those found in the broader literature on interdisciplinarity. I fully expect Alyssa will continue to investigate her teaching practice, and to document student learning, and to share this knowledge in a public manner – and I encourage her to publish her findings.



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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dr. C. M. Tremonte".

Dr. C. M. Tremonte  
Professor, Comparative Cultures and Politics  
James Madison College, MSU