Research Team: Women and Charity in Spain 1786-1939

As part of a digital humanities project that I am creating, I am seeking a small team of students to form a research team to assist me in several aspects of my work, including research, planning, and writing. Below is a description of the project:

Women and Charity in Spain 1786-1939:

A Digital Humanities Project

Elizabeth Franklin Lewis, University of Mary Washington

Eighteenth-century notions of charity in Spain were heavily influenced by its deep Catholic tradition, in which charity, or *caritas,* was held up as one of the tenets of religious faith. Nonetheless, the topic of charity and its related subjects began to take on social and political significance in Spain, at the same time that it became more associated with virtue and sentiment and less with spiritual duty. During this shift from a more religious-based notion of charity to the more secular and civic-minded of beneficence, women asserted themselves as important actors in the social and economic reforms that were the object of Enlightenment-style *caridad*. Their very political actions and writings at the end of the Enlightenment period in Spain firmly claimed charity as a means of social action for women, which would continue to be a hallmark of women’s important role in Spanish society for a century, and exalted by both conservatives and liberals.

My study begins in 1786, when the Royal Economic Society of Madrid began debating the possible admission of women into their membership. The polemic was very heated on both sides, and men (and, notably, one woman) argued over women’s supposed sentimental nature and their inherent charitableness, questioning whether their work should remain within traditional feminine spaces in the home or convent, or if Spain should take advantage of women’s potential contributions to public endeavors. The controversy was solved when King Charles III created the first women’s civic organization in Spain, the *Junta de Damas*, an auxiliary group to the all-male Economic Society that immediately undertook several charitable projects fundamental to Spain’s economic and political stability. These women lay the groundwork for a century and a half of women’s charitable work and writings about the social and political importance of female charity in Spanish society evident in their **literature**, from the sentimental poetry of 18th century María Rosa Gálvez, to the sentimental novels of nineteenth century María Pilar Sinués; in their **journalistic and political writings** from annual reports delivered to the Royal Economic Society by the women of the *Junta de Damas* in the eighteenth century, to Concepción Arenal’s journalistic writings in the nineteenth century, as well as to Margarita Nelkin’s feminist call to arms and the reactionary writings of Pilar Primo de Rivera in the early twentieth century; and finally in their **actions** from the work of the Junta de Damas in the foundling hospitals and women’s prisons of the early nineteenth century, to Concepción Arenal’s and Victoria Kent’s reform of women’s prisons in the middle nineteenth and early twentieth, and even to the fascist Sección Femenina de la Falange’s charitable activities with orphans and wounded nationalist soldiers under the Franco dictatorship. Both progressive and conservative women, from 1786 onwards, evoked charity and feminine charitableness as they sought active political and social roles for themselves and their sex in their visions of the betterment of Spanish society.

It seems only natural that I approach this project the way eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth-century women themselves approached it—that is, in a way that is multifaceted, multivalent, and uses multiple media. Women’s production about charity was **creative** (in their poems, novels, and short stories), it was **informative** (in their organizational reports, and in their journalistic writings) and it was **political** (in their requests for support, and in their feminist or even anti-feminist treatises), and perhaps most importantly it was almost always a group effort. I hope to capture all those aspects in my project. In this project I would also like to explore with students the relationship between creativity and scholarship as we use new media tools to gather, interpret, and share information about the way women thought about, wrote about, and practiced charity from the late Enlightenment period to the early twentieth century.

A preliminary outline of the project can be found at <http://mujeresycaridad.umwblogs.org/>

Members of the Spring 2012 research team would be involved in the planning, researching and composition of the sections presenting 20th-century primary sources sections (texts, images and possibly video), which would include writing a brief encyclopedia-style introduction to our sources. Members would need to commit to the following:

1) Sign up for URES 197 for 1 credit hour in **Spring 2012** and again in **Fall 2012**. We would meet approximately 1 hour per/week at a time and day convenient to the group to work on the project and consult with each other. Students would be expected to work on their own for approximately 2 hours/week doing research, reading and writing. Part of our work in the spring would be to plan our research trip to Madrid in May 2011. In the fall we will use our findings from our trip to compose more of the Resources section.

2) Apply for undergraduate research funds, **due January 26, 2012** to help subsidize the trip to Madrid.

3) Present our work as a group at the **Student Research and Creativity Day** in April, 2012.

3) Travel to Madrid for a 10-day research trip to work in the Biblioteca Nacional, gathering information about the journals *Y*, *Medina*, and *Mundo femenino*. Students would be responsible for travel, room and board expenses, as well as any other non-research expenses. However, we anticipate partial funding from the Dean of Arts and Sciences to help subsidize student trips.

Application for Research Team: Women and Charity in Spanish 1786-1939

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ cell phone\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Permanent address:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Status at UMW (Freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) and planned graduation date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Overall GPA:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Spanish courses above 205/202 completed (and grades in each):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Study abroad experience:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Favorite class taken in Spanish: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Career or graduate school plans? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I am available to travel to Spain in May for 10 days (yes/no plus any restrictions):

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I am available to take URES 197 for 1 credit Spring 2012 and Fall 2012 (yes/no and any restrictions): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please return this application to Dr. Elizabeth Lewis via email ([elewis@umw.edu](mailto:elewis@umw.edu)) or directly to her (Combs Hall) by December 9, 2011.