A. DESCRIPTION OF FIL ACTIVITIES

I propose using the 2019-2010 FIL to complete my book manuscript, already well in progress. Progress began with my 2011-2012 FIL, which had a general focus on “Representations of Lawlessness in Contemporary Mexico.” I fulfilled my stated goal of having a book project articulated in a grant application by the end of that year’s leave. The NEH grant was not funded, but my work continued with the following milestones:

- Fall 2013: Submission of manuscript proposal to four presses; U. New Mexico press expressed interest with request for improved “overarching narrative.” The proposal included three completed chapters, three proposed/unwritten chapters.
- Spring 2014-Spring 2018: Progress on proposed chapters included a publication (Hispanic Journal 2017) and presentations:
  - Spring 2015: UC-Irvine Mexican Studies Conference (UCIMSC)
  - Spring 2016: Latin American Studies Association Conference
  - Fall 2016: Mid-America Conference on Hispanic Literatures
  - Fall 2017: BGSU’s ICS Fellows talk
  - Spring 2018: UCIMSC
- Summer 2018: I contacted Vanderbilt University Press about their new series, “Performing Latin American and Caribbean Identities,” because I see my project as a good fit. They responded that they are “actively seeking” contributors. I expect to send a formal proposal this Fall 2018 semester with sample chapters.

The book manuscript is near completion and, given time to pull the pieces together, I believe I can find an editorial home. If I cannot secure a book publisher, I will submit the project’s previously-unpublished portions as at least three stand-alone journal articles. In either case, I believe that bringing this long-term project to fruition will enhance my standing as a researcher, which in turn will benefit my students, department, and university.

The project covers 100+ years of representations of a fixture in Mexican popular culture. Jesús Arriaga, a.k.a. Chucho el Roto, was a renowned thief in the late nineteenth century, specifically during the dictatorship prior to the 1910 Mexican Revolution. He was often portrayed as a “generous bandit,” akin to Robin Hood, and he was a uniquely compelling character for using disguises to steal from unsuspecting victims. Robbing from the rich could be considered an ominous threat to law and order or, by contrast, as a form of rebellion against the corrupt elite. After his last arrest in 1884 he was sent to an infamously harsh prison and died within a year. At that point his image took on a life of its own. A remarkable number of literary works—plays, novels, films—have fictionalized his criminal career. Other representations include a long-running radio show, soap opera, comics, restaurants, tourist attractions, a recent political movement named after him, and even a “Chucho el Roto” brand of tequila.

In my manuscript, *Chucho el Roto: Crime and Social Justice in the Mexican Imaginary*, I examine how this iconic character has been repeatedly portrayed in Mexico as a reflection of broad cultural support for criminality, an ironic vehicle for social justice. In each chapter I analyze how specific portrayals of a standard Chucho el Roto storyline convey unique interpretations of a context in which the authoritarian government pits itself against hardworking and honorable working-class citizens. In literary works that I generally group by historical period, we consistently see an innocent victim of classism and discrimination creatively fighting back, thereby unmasking the corruption that sustains an unjust polarization of wealth, status, and power. Other unique messages are directed to the works’ particular audiences, and these include critiques of socioeconomic inequality, the policing of gender normativity, the repression of political dissent, and the marginalization of the indigenous.
The book is organized in six chapters with an introduction and conclusion.

Introduction: From Criminal to Cultural Icon
Chapter 1: Mexican Banditry and Discourses of Class, 1880s-1920s
  2: Chucho el Roto as Post-revolutionary Icon in the Age of Cárdenas, 1934-1940
  3: Muted Resistance under the Perfect Dictatorship, 1950s-60s
  4: Gender Bending Banditry, 1916-1960
  5: Chucho el Roto in Post-1968 Cinema
  6: The Time and Space of Chucho el Roto’s Banditry, 1980s
Conclusion: The Future of Banditry in the Mexican Imaginary

I propose using Fall 2019 to complete the Introduction and the chapters thus far drafted as conference papers (3, 6). In January 2020 I will travel to Mexico, if necessary, to seek permissions for reproducing images from previously-done archival research. February-March will be dedicated to polishing completed chapters (1, 2, 4, 5) with the target audiences in mind (Mexican studies scholars, graduate/undergraduate students). That leaves April-May to finish the Conclusion and other copyediting to complete the entire manuscript by the end of the FIL.

B. ENHANCEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL CAPABILITIES

Having my book published or, alternatively, three journal articles, will contribute original research to various topic areas within Mexican Studies: historical fiction, popular culture, history of crime/banditry, and film studies. My enhanced standing as a scholar of Mexico will complement BGSU’s laudable efforts to serve the increasingly diverse public in northwest Ohio and throughout the state. Those efforts include the future creation of a Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latinx Studies, and I have been integrally involved with BGSU colleagues in proposing such a center through the College of Arts and Sciences. At a time when associations are commonly drawn between immigrants from Mexico and criminals, I also aspire for my analysis of Chucho el Roto to provide a vehicle for thinking critically about how struggles for social justice may conflict with preconceived ideas about law and order, especially in times of political and economic crisis. Finally, I believe that the work advanced during the FIL will allow me to seek promotion. Becoming a full professor would enhance my ability to mentor graduate students, especially those who continue to doctoral programs, and to support other departmental faculty in various career stages.

C. POST-FIL REPORT

By June 30, 2020, following the FIL, I will write a memo for the President detailing the work done toward completion of my book manuscript and its status in the publication process. I will additionally propose a timeline for seeking promotion and comment about the next steps in my research trajectory.