

Fulfilling Its Mission: Northern Plains Studies at Augustana College Granskou Award Report, by Harry F. Thompson, Ph.D.

Introduction

Over the past several years, Augustana College has successfully internationalized its academic program, offering courses with global emphases and making it possible for students to choose among a variety of travel-abroad opportunities. Principally through UMAIE, Augustana regularly sends its students to such countries as Ireland, Norway, Spain, and Egypt to engage in the study of foreign cultures, but it has done so without making a similar, or at least visible, effort to educate its students about their own region—or to provide international students at Augustana an opportunity to study what for them would be a foreign culture: the Northern Plains region. Surely, a course entitled *Poets and Their Places: Ireland's Literary Landscapes* is a course in Irish regional studies, linking Yeats and Heaney, for example, to the land that nurtured them. Study-abroad pedagogy recognizes the importance of place to any understanding of a subject. However far Augustana graduates travel, most return to the Northern Plains region to live. Attempting to broaden the intellectual and cultural horizons of its students, Augustana may in fact be fostering an inverse parochialism.

Augustana is not unique among liberal arts colleges in offering study-abroad programs. What would be unique is for Augustana to offer both regional and international studies programs. Augustana is justifiably proud to be ranked repeatedly among the top-ten Midwest regional liberal arts colleges by *U.S. News' America's Best Colleges*. This assessment means, of course, that Augustana is viewed as a superior institution *in* the region; it also means that Augustana is perceived as a college *of* the region, an acknowledgment of its propensity to draw students almost exclusively from a defined region.

Visiting Augustana in 2001 as a member of the North Central Association accreditation review team, Dr. David Seligman, of Ripon College, expressed surprise that, given the presence on campus of an agency that sponsors regional programs, Augustana does not also offer regional studies as part of its curriculum. Seligman recognized that the college's public statement of its relationship to a specific cultural and geographic region—as expressed through a new building dedicated specifically to regional studies—should also be reflected in its academic programs. In addition to the Center for Western Studies, Augustana is home to the Archeology Lab and offers a minor in anthropology and a concentration in Native American Studies, but these agencies and programs are not integrated into a meaningful educational experience for students.

Recognizing a similar oversight in its curriculum, Grinnell College invited innovative proposals from its faculty for ways to enhance the college's performance of its educational mission. As Professor Jonathan G. Andelson writes in "An Experimental Multidisciplinary Program in Prairies Studies at the College Level," the idea of a Center for Prairie Studies arose in response to this invitation:

"Grinnell has paid rather little attention to our immediate surroundings. Aspiring to be a national college with an international outlook, Grinnell recruits students from across the country and around the world, supports faculty to attend national and international conferences, encourages students to study abroad (which a high proportion does), and cultivates a faculty with a global perspective. There is nothing wrong with this, except that in the process the college has largely lost sight of where it is. . . . Many students come to Grinnell from out of state and

leave after four years knowing nothing more about Grinnell, or Powshiek County, or Iowa, than when they arrived. It betokens a lack of curiosity about where they are, of course, but more is at issue than that. They graduate believing that this place is only temporary (few of our graduates remain in Iowa), that the really important things happen elsewhere, and that the really important lessons transcend place.”

Since Augustana is even more a college of the region than is Grinnell–Augustana students come from and remain in the Northern Plains region—then how much more should Augustana seek to educate its students about their own region? This study proposes that a program to do just this is not only possible but is already largely in place, though hidden—and that the foundation for Augustana’s fulfilling its mission to students and supporters is within its grasp.

Overview of Previous Efforts at Augustana College

There was a time when Augustana acted upon its relationship to the region, beginning perhaps in 1937 when President Clemens Granskou recruited a promising young graduate student at the University of Iowa to begin a writing program at Augustana so that young writers could “preserve the heritage of their forefathers in song and drama, poetry and prose.” In the succeeding years, Herbert Krause encouraged generations of young writers as he, himself, became a nationally recognized author, publishing three novels, a book of poetry, and scores of articles. In 1965, under the aegis of “The Center of Western Studies” and with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, Krause and history professor William Wyatt undertook a pilot study called “Changing Social Patterns on the Lingering Frontier” in an attempt “to measure and evaluate in dynamic terms the frontier attitude as it has existed in South Dakota from the inception of settlement in the 1880s and 1890s down to the present time.” In 1969, with a grant from the American Lutheran Church, Augustana established the Center for Community Organization and Area Development (CENCOAD). Seeking to achieve a better quality of life for rural and urban communities in the greater Sioux Falls area, CENCOAD addressed such issues as water resources, land use, and education systems, and offered assistance to area pastors and congregations before it closed in 1983.

Acting upon the desire of Krause and other faculty for a regional research center, the Augustana College Board of Regents officially established the Center for Western Studies (CWS) in 1970 for the purpose of documenting the exploration, settling, and development of the Prairie-Plains. Though occupying little more than office space in Mikkelsen Library until 1980, CWS quickly became a catalyst for several regional studies projects. With a three-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1974 and sponsorship by CWS, Augustana sought “to develop truly interdisciplinary courses, to strengthen independent studies, and to infuse into courses throughout the College appropriate Western material,” as one of the program directors, Arthur R. Huseboe, characterized the project (*CWS Newsletter* July 1975: 3). Consisting of three January workshops involving students and faculty and three summer institutes continuing faculty training—a total of thirty-six faculty and the vice presidents of student affairs and academic affairs—“The Western Experience” program encouraged faculty to integrate an understanding of the region into the college curriculum and to develop new courses in regional studies. These goals were realized at no additional cost to the college.

Augustana fostered the development of several other regional programs during this period. In order to provide information and research services to area businesses and professions, the Augustana Research Institute (ARI) was formed in 1973, through which faculty and students have conducted such projects as political polls and marketing studies. To meet the educational needs of adult learners, in 1969 Augustana and Sioux Falls College founded the Sioux Falls Continuing Education Center, today known as Kilian Community College. In 1976, the SHALOM Center was established at Augustana College to address the need for continuing theological education for area clergy and laity. As a development of the annual Nordland Fest, the Nordland Heritage Foundation (NHF) was established in 1977 to support the preservation of Norwegian heritage, particularly that of the settlers on the Northern Prairie-Plains. First among its many projects was the relocation of the Berdahl-Rolvaag House to campus and the establishment of Heritage Park for the preservation of historic structures. Recently, the NHF has directed its resources toward funding a chair in Norwegian Studies at Augustana. The Archeology Lab moved to campus in the late 1970s, initially under the auspices of CWS.

With support from the South Dakota Humanities Council and in cooperation with CWS, then under the direction of Sven G. Froiland, Augustana sought to raise awareness of Native American issues through a series of lectures in the early 1980s called the KINI Conference. Since 1984, the Augustana Library Associates has sponsored readings and lectures by such major regional authors as William Least Heat Moon, Verlyn Klinkenborg, Linda Hasselstrom, Will Weaver, Robert Bly, Jon Hassler, and Kent Meyers. In 1985, the Humanities Division and the Center for Western Studies, in cooperation with the South Dakota Humanities Council, conducted a two-day humanities seminar called "Ethnic Diversity on the Prairie Plains," directed by Arthur R. Huseboe and Harry F. Thompson. In the mid-1980s, funded by a three-year grant from the Mellon Foundation, and using the lecture space and research facilities of CWS, Augustana offered summer workshops in regional studies to area high-school teachers.

In observance of South Dakota's State Centennial and in partnership with the South Dakota Arts Council and the South Dakota Humanities Council, CWS administered the History of the Arts in South Dakota Project (1986-89). In his 1987 inaugural address, President Lloyd Svendsbye spoke of Augustana itself as a "center for western studies" and in 1989 encouraged CWS director Donovan Hofsommer to explore the possibility of beginning a Western Studies program at Augustana. Discussions with faculty ensued, but Hofsommer left before a program could be designed. More recently, in the spirit of writing-across-the-curriculum pedagogy, CWS director Arthur R. Huseboe proposed requiring an "H" (Heritage) component of Augustana students, but this, too, was not implemented.

Both independently and cooperatively, various departments have addressed issues of regional significance. For example, the three-year RIVER QUEST project (1993-95), under the direction of Steve Van Bockern of Augustana's Education Department and funded by the National Science Foundation-Statewide Systemic Initiative, enabled South Dakota schoolteachers and college students to participate in a series of skill-development workshops designed to further their understanding of Big Sioux River-related issues.

Survey of Regional Studies Programs

Several area colleges and universities offer programs in American Studies and/or Native

American Studies, but few offer a program in the study of the plains or prairie region. Carleton College, for example, offers a major in American Studies, whereas Dakota Wesleyan University offers a minor in American Indian Studies. St. Olaf, home to the Norwegian American Historical Association, offers a major in American Studies but does not offer a regional studies program. For the purposes of this project, the regional studies programs described below are offered at institutions that also have a regional studies center. Included are examples of programs in Native American Studies since any Northern Plains regional studies program would incorporate courses in this area and Augustana already offers a concentration in Native American Studies. Additional information about each of the programs examined is on file with the author of this report.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UN-L)

In cooperation with its Center for Great Plains Studies, UN-L offers both a major and minor in Great Plains Studies. The Center for Great Plains Studies, founded in 1976, advises majors in Great Plains Studies, publishes journals (*Great Plains Quarterly* and *Great Plains Research*), manages large editorial projects (*The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* and *The Great Plains Encyclopedia*), maintains an extensive collection of Western art and a library of books and documents of Americana and Canadian Plains materials, sponsors an annual symposium on Great Plains topics, and arranges faculty and student exchanges at cooperating universities. The Center also works in partnership with the Plains Humanities Alliance, one of nine regional centers established by the NEH Regional Humanities Centers initiative.

Southwest State University (SSU)

SSU requires each student to take a three-credit course in Regional Studies and offers a minor in Rural and Regional Studies. The course Introduction to Rural and Regional Studies “emphasizes concepts of locality and region in relation to geographical, social, demographic, and cultural factors, with southwestern Minnesota as a primary focus in the latter part of the course.” SSU’s Center for Rural and Regional Studies, established in the 1960s, “fosters interdisciplinary research and teaching among University faculty and programs. The Center supports SSU’s founding mission to study, represent, and serve southwestern Minnesota, the tallgrass prairie bioregion, and the central North American grassland biome. Its work encompasses environmental, ecological, demographic, geographic, social, cultural, and historical studies. Topics of special interest include the upper Midwestern agricultural economy, the region’s unique migrant streams, evolving ethnic communities, and the experiences and daily lives of its people.”

Emporia State University

Through its Center for Great Plains Studies, established in 1977, Emporia State University “emphasizes the study of the grasslands as one of its primary responsibilities to Kansas and the region.” The Center sponsors such programs as Great Plains summer classes, Great Plains/Great Books, Lifelong Learning/Great Plains classes, and the annual Tallgrass Writing Workshop.

North Dakota State University

NDSU's Institute for Regional Studies, founded in 1950, sponsors programs in four areas: collections, publications, outreach, and the Center for Social Research. The research collections are housed in the library, and the publications program resides in the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Outreach activities involve various units of the University and include radio and television production, public programs, and oral history. The Center for Social Research, established in 1976, facilitates such social science research as conducting focus-group research and computerized telephone surveys. The Institute "stimulates and coordinates the activities of NDSU in regional scholarship" and "rests on the assumptions that scholars in a land-grant university have a particular interest in the affairs of their own region and that regional scholarship is a good thing. However, good regional scholarship is informed by national developments, international context, and comparative studies. It recognizes the cultural diversity that exists within every region, and it draws on the insights of many academic disciplines." In cooperation with its history department and the Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU offers a major in public history for students who wish to pursue careers in museums, archives, and special collections libraries.

Grinnell College

Although Prairie Studies is neither a major nor a concentration at Grinnell College, Grinnell's Center for Prairie Studies, established in 1999, "promotes integrative learning about the natural and cultural heritage of the tallgrass prairie region. Based on the idea of place-based education, the Center attempts to draw student and faculty attention to the prairie region, its past and present, its character and its problems. The Center sponsors courses and course components, internships, guest speakers, special symposia, artistic events, and outreach to the community of Grinnell and the region. Thoroughly multidisciplinary in conception, the Center also uses interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary study of the prairie as a way of advocating a new relationship between humans and the natural environment."

University of South Dakota (USD)

Through its Institute of American Indian Studies, USD offers a major, double major, and minor in American Indian Studies. In addition to providing support, coordination, and advising for the American Indian Studies Program and the American Indian World Views Thematic Cluster, the Institute maintains the South Dakota Oral History Center and the Joseph H. Cash Memorial Library and sponsors programs "to promote education and awareness of American Indian culture, issues, and problems; advising and mentoring; recruitment and retention of American Indian students, faculty members, and staff; and, strengthening relations with tribes, tribal colleges, and other appropriate American Indian organizations in the state and region." The American Indian Studies degree program is offered in conjunction with Black Hills State University; both institutions "share a completely articulated program of studies with a common core, and offer an integrated, statewide opportunity for serious study and research in American Indian culture and issues." Through the College of Fine Arts, USD also sponsors the Oscar Howe Summer Art Institute, founded by Oscar Howe to encourage students interested in Native American art.

Black Hills State University (BHSU)

The Center for American Indian Studies at BHSU administers four academic programs: the major and general minor in American Indian Studies, the minor in American Indian Studies-Teaching, and the minor in American Indian Studies-Communications. The Center was established “to act as a coordinating and liaison facility for issues and programs dealing with Indian students; to promote awareness of American Indian cultures, value systems, and social problems among both Indian people themselves and members of the larger society; to assist the University in both recruiting and retaining students of American Indian ancestry; to act as a liaison with tribal governments, tribal educational facilities, and American Indian organizations in the Northern Plains region, when so requested; and to support, encourage, and seek funding for research and publication pertaining to all areas of American Indian culture, language, and heritage.”

Results of Survey

The survey instrument, distributed to 33 selected current and former Augustana faculty and administrators on October 30 and again, via e-mail to non-respondents, November 13, produced a 60% response rate. The questionnaire asked seven questions: (1) why should Augustana offer/not offer a regional studies program on the Northern Plains; (2) what courses might be offered in such a program; (3) whether it should be offered as a minor or major; (4) whether such a program should be offered in cooperation with existing programs at other institutions; (5) how might CWS participate; (6) whether the respondents would be willing to attend a meeting about the program; and (7) any additional comments. The following summary of survey responses does not include comments by members of the CWS staff.

The general enthusiasm among the respondents to the idea of a regional studies program was tempered by the realization that current financial concerns might constrain the introduction of a new academic program. One division chair pointed out that any new program would need to be viewed in the context of the current downsizing of the faculty, that any division of available resources would be viewed with prejudice, and that faculty might be more receptive if permanent external funding could be found to underwrite the program.

Nevertheless, respondents recognized the distinctiveness that a regional studies program would bring to Augustana and that, in the words of one respondent, it could put the college in the “forefront of what is becoming an increasing movement in American academics—the multidisciplinary study of place and human-ecological interaction” and the establishment of interdisciplinarity as a corrective to over-specialization. Some noted the college’s current emphasis on internationalism while neglecting also to provide students with opportunities to learn to appreciate and understand the culture and ecology of the region, especially those who plan to teach in the region. One respondent noted that the study of the region could help students acquire a deeper understanding of themselves: “Our identity is cemented, our history comes alive, the purpose of our lives seems clearer.” While many recognized the necessity of taking into consideration current student interest, one respondent challenged the college to think of audience not only as students but also as teachers, librarians, museum professionals, and others outside the traditional student model. One department chair brought the idea for discussion to his department meeting and pointed out the timeliness of inaugurating such a program during the

Bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (2004-06). Courses identified by faculty in the survey that might contribute to a regional studies program are the following:

- Introduction to Archeology (ANTH 270)
- Introduction to Field Methods in Archeology (ANTH 272)
- Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (ANTH 271)
- Museum Methods II (ANTH 372)
- Introduction to Environmental Science (BIOL 180)
- Principles of Ecology (BIOL 348)
- Ornithology (BIOL 336)
- Introduction to Chemistry (CHEM 110)
- History and Philosophy of Education (EDUC/Graduate Program)
- Seminar in Later American Literature: Literature of the Great Plains (ENGL 330)
- Methods and Philosophies of History (HIST 251)
- History Seminar (HIST 490)
- History of the American West (HIST 303)
- History Internship (HIST 395/396)
- Introduction to Minority Studies (NAST 110)
- Native American Perspectives (NAST 304)
- Native American Social Systems (NAST 320)
- Arts of Native Americans (NAST 336)
- Plains Indian Religion (NAST 343)
- Story and Theology (RELI 211)

Faculty also noted that Interim courses, special topics courses, independent study courses, senior seminars, research seminars, and capstone courses could supplement the courses listed above and suggested the following possibilities:

- History of Schooling
- Norwegian Immigrant Literature
- Postcolonialism
- Ecocriticism
- Rural Studies
- State and Local Politics
- Ecological World of the Lewis and Clark Expedition
- Sociology of the Reservation
- Red and White Theology
- Belonging to the Earth

Recent Interim courses with regional themes have focused on the arts in Sioux Falls and the 2002 congressional election. Based upon these suggestions, it is clear that interested faculty could offer an array of innovative courses on regional themes.

The majority of respondents indicated that a regional studies program should be offered as a minor, citing as models the minors being offered currently in anthropology, gender studies, and gerontology. Several indicated that a minor should be offered first and then expanded to a major based on demand, although the marketability of a major was questioned by some. One suggested a graduate program using the cohort model, consisting of a series of summer programs

with a thesis component based on research using primary documents at CWS. One remarked, “The credentialing a minor provides would enhance a student’s résumé, if the midwest was to be home.”

Most respondents opposed cooperating with another institution, though one pointed out the benefits of shared internships and resources, noting that current international programs might provide examples of regional studies programs abroad, and another suggested cooperating with SDSU, presumably because of the university’s regional emphasis. One respondent, a faculty member serving on CWS’s Committee for the Future, indicated that the committee has been considering collaborative ties with regional studies centers through which CWS would establish a data bank of regional information that would link seekers to sources.

Reactions to the possible role that CWS might assume in a regional studies program varied, although all respondents indicated that CWS should play a key role. While recognizing the many ways CWS currently participates in regional studies—through collections, exhibits, publishing, conferences, forums, art shows, and other special programs—respondents suggested that CWS might consider offering “foundational” courses in Northern Plains Studies and “theme-based research topics” in conjunction with the Dakota Conference, creating joint positions with the college for visiting scholars who would teach regular courses at the college and specialized courses via a regional studies program. Some interest was expressed in establishing a regional studies journal, possibly web-based, that would involve faculty members as contributors and editors. One faculty member noted that an archives component could be incorporated into his methods class, and another suggested that CWS staff with faculty status might serve as advisors or co-advisors for students pursuing a regional studies minor. According to one department chair, CWS would be the “centerpiece” of a regional studies program and should be the “prime mover in progressive development, networking fiscal, curricular, and human resources and vision casting for the program.”

Current CWS Participation in Regional Studies

As several respondents remarked, the Center for Western Studies already plays a significant role in the study of the region, usually through educational experiences offered outside of the conventional classroom. Through the annual Dakota Conference on Northern Plains History, Literature, Art, and Archaeology, sponsored by CWS beginning in 1990, both academic and non-academic scholars are brought to campus to address issues of importance to the region. Past conference themes include rural education, crossing (gender and disciplinary) boundaries, the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and the intersection of politics and values. Among the speakers the conference has brought to campus are Glenda Riley, president of the Western History Association; Robert Archibald, president of the American Association for State and Local History; USD Distinguished University Professor Wayne Knutson; Tom Isern, director of the Institute for Regional Studies; Alan Woolworth, Research Fellow at the Minnesota Historical Society; and Siouxland author Frederick Manfred.

A leading theorist and practitioner of regional studies is the keynote speaker at the 2003 Dakota Conference. Joseph Amato is dean of rural and regional studies at Southwest State University and author of such books on regional studies as *Rethinking Home: The Case for Writing Local History* (U of California P, 2002). Other featured speakers are John E. Miller,

professor of (rural) history at SDSU and author of *Looking for History on Highway 14* and two books on Laura Ingalls Wilder, and former US Congressional candidate Stephanie Herseth, president of the South Dakota Farmers Union Foundation and an advocate for rural communities. Both undergraduate and graduate credit in English, history, and education are offered at the conference through Augustana, and beginning this year, South Dakota teacher certificate renewal credit is available. Also beginning in 2003, the Dakota Conference will be held during the academic year as a way to encourage participation by Augustana and other area college faculty and students. A photo-journalistic exhibit documenting regional economic issues by a recent Augustana graduate will be featured at the 2003 conference.

For the past twenty years, many Augustana classes have received a formal introduction to CWS research collections, and several classes have made extensive use of the collections. The History Seminar class, for example, devoted the 2001 spring semester to studying the records of the Kansas 9th Cavalry, "H" Company, producing a web-based analysis of the documents. With its emphasis on writing local history, The Methods and Philosophies of History class makes regular use of CWS collections.

Since 1992, as funding has been available, CWS has offered paid internships in archives and museum collections management for undergraduate and graduate students in cooperation with St. Cloud State University, USD, and Augustana College. CWS has also conducted independent study courses in book publishing and marketing.

CWS has published over seventy books on regional topics since 1977. Among the more significant contributions to regional studies are the following: *Natural History of the Black Hills and Badlands*, *Through Trials and Triumphs: A History of Augustana College*, *An Illustrated History of the Arts in South Dakota*, *The Geography of South Dakota*, *The Lizard Speaks: Essays on the Writings of Frederick Manfred*, and *Sioux Country: A History of Indian-white Relations*. In 2003 CWS will publish a study of nutrition and health on the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and in 2004 a new history of South Dakota by leading scholars from South Dakota and other states.

Articles by CWS staff members have appeared recently in such journals as *Great Plains Quarterly*, *Western American Literature*, *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains*, *South Dakota History* and in such reference works as *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *Literary History of the American West*, and *Updating the Literary West*. Through these CWS has made significant contributions to scholarship in Northern Plains studies.

Now in its twenty-third year, the Artists of the Plains Art Show and Sale promotes regional artists, many of whom are Native Americans. The Boe Forum on Public Affairs in the Center for Western Studies brings speakers of national and international stature to Sioux Falls to speak on issues of interest to residents of the region.

CWS staff have also helped shape the debate on regional issues through service on state and local boards, including the South Dakota State Historical Society Board of Trustees, South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota State Historical Records Advisory Board, Sioux Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau Board of Directors, Sioux Falls Board of Preservation, and Nordland Heritage Foundation Board of Directors.

Proposed Minor in Northern Plains Regional Studies

Based upon survey results and examples of regional studies programs at other

institutions, a minor in Northern Plains Studies might consist of a selection of 18 credits from a field of more than 30 possible credits:

- Anthropology (3-6 credits)
 - Introduction to Archeology
 - Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
- Native American Studies (3-6 credits)
 - Native American Perspectives
 - Native American Social Systems
- History (3-6 credits)
 - History of the American West
 - Methods and Philosophies of History
- English (3 credits)
 - Literature of the Great Plains
- Biology (3 credits)
 - Principles of Ecology
 - Environmental Science
- Interim (3 credits)
 - Introduction to the Northern Plains
- Elective (3 credits)

Conclusion

The study of a geographic and cultural region has been shown to be pedagogically and theoretically sound. Acknowledging the importance of regionalism and its relationship to the humanities, for example, the National Endowment for the Humanities, under the NEH Regional Humanities Centers initiative, recently established nine regional centers across the country. As Joseph Amato, a European history and regional studies scholar, points out in *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History* (U of California P, 2002), the origin of local history and, by extension, regional history can be traced to the civic and political histories of late medieval and Renaissance Italian city-states by such Florentine humanists as Lorenzo Valla and Niccolo Machiavelli (2). More recently, historians associated with the French Annales school, such as Philippe Aries and Fernand Braudel, demonstrated the value of the history of everyday life through case studies of village and rural life. Elsewhere, such historians as Carlo Ginsberg (Italy), Natalie Zemon Davis (America), and those associated with the History Workshop group (England) focused on writing micro-histories. In a series of studies appearing in the 1960s and 1970s and especially in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault called for a new history—specific rather than total history, “the space of a dispersion” rather than a world-view, multidisciplinary rather than disciplinary history (10).

Drawing upon the work of Kent C. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place* (U of Iowa P, 1993) and essays collected by Hildegard Hannum, *People, Land, and Community* (Yale UP, 1997), Grinnell’s Andelson locates the study of the prairie in what is known as “place-based education,” which, Andelson explains, “begins with the premise that the local, one’s locale, can be an excellent classroom. For one thing, knowing where you live—both in its natural and cultural character, the environment and the

community—helps you live more wisely. If you feel not just in a place but *of* it as a result of knowing it well, you might take better care of it, as anthropologists generally believe that Native Americans, whose education was passionately place based, did theirs” (“An Experimental Multidisciplinary Program” 3).

Amato’s own work is itself informed by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* (1969). “The need for a sense of place (as real and constructed),” Amato writes in *Rethinking Home*, “intensifies as impinging nations, economies, technologies, and ideologies get larger, more complex, and increasingly abstract. In the last three to four decades in Europe, regionalism, despite moves toward overall unification, has exploded” (15). The history of southwest Minnesota, for example, becomes the history of the world’s grasslands, from the North American grasslands to those of South America and Russia, for “[w]riting the history of any region is a matter of telling the story of developing markets and new technologies, burgeoning democracies, and centralizing states” (28).

Much of the necessary groundwork for a minor or at least a concentration in Northern Plains Studies at Augustana College is already in place. Minors currently being offered in gender studies and anthropology could serve as models for a similar program in regional studies, possibly attached to the History Department. Augustana’s interdepartmental major might also serve as a point of reference for organizing a regional studies program. The recently enacted legislative mandate requiring students who plan to teach social studies at the high-school level in South Dakota to take a course in South Dakota history should also be a factor in structuring a regional studies minor. Further, a regional studies program would bestow coherence on what is otherwise an assemblage of seemingly disparate programs and agencies: an anthropology minor, a Native American Studies concentration, the Archeology Lab, and CWS. Sometimes called the “college on wheels” because it migrated with its people from Illinois to South Dakota, Augustana is, more than most, a college *of* the people. Perhaps through the deliberate study of these people, the people who preceded them, and the people who have arrived more recently, Augustana might better fulfill its mission to students and supporters.

Intellectual Biography of the Author of this Report

While acknowledging and asserting the value of international studies, especially study-abroad programs, as director of research collections and publications at the Center for Western Studies, Harry Thompson believes that Augustana has the potential to offer a unique program in the equally valuable area of regional studies. Thompson studied literary and historiographic theory and the contemporary British novel with Jennifer Jeffers, a specialist in Samuel Beckett and the contemporary Irish novel at the University of South Dakota. At the University of Rochester, he studied the late Victorian and modern British novel, especially the works of George Eliot, with Conrad and Hardy scholar Bruce Johnson, Shakespeare’s history plays with Elizabethan drama specialist Cyrus Hoy, and Yeats and Auden with Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Anthony Hecht. Informed by the poststructuralist approaches of Foucault and other French theorists, Thompson’s Ph.D. (the product of doctoral programs at both universities) is in the twentieth-century British novel, with emphasis on Graham Swift and the contemporary British historiographic novel. Thompson also holds master’s degrees in English from the University of Rochester; in teaching/secondary education from Colgate University, where he wrote a thesis on

contemporary American drama; and in American Studies from Baylor University, where, as Dixon Wecter Fellow in American Studies, he studied with Mark Twain scholar E. Hudson Long and wrote his thesis on Robert Frost. As an undergraduate at Houghton College, he majored in English and minored in writing and Latin and took his January term in England.

Thompson is the author of five articles on American literary publishing houses in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (1986), principal editor of *A Common Land, A Diverse People: Ethnic Identity on the Prairie Plains* (1987), and author of several guides to archives. His article “Meriwether Lewis and His Son: The Claim of Joseph DeSommet Lewis and the Problem of History” was published in *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains* in 2000, and his study of the western novel and the authority of history appeared in *Western American Literature* in 2002.

Submitted to the Granskou Award Committee on February 19, 2003