



FASS Professor Dr. Teresa Hubel receives five-year SSHRC Grant

London, ON - The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) is the federal agency that promotes and supports postsecondary-based research and training in the humanities and social sciences. Huron University College is thrilled to report that Dr. Teresa Hubel, Professor and Chair of the English Department was awarded an Insight Grant geared for larger projects with interdisciplinary and/or international scope.

Together with Dr. Nandi Bhatia, Associate Dean of Research in Arts and Humanities at Western, Dr. Srividya Natarajan, Academic Councillor at King's University College, and joined by a renowned Indian playwright, an accomplished local dancer and another Canadian scholar, Dr. Hubel will continue researching the study of the role of women in India. The aim is to deepen understandings of the multifaceted entanglements of Devadasis and Tawaifs (who jointly might be called 'courtesans') with British colonialism, Indian nationalism, and the construction of a modern feminine identity in India.

Both the Tawaifs and the Devadasis have been the subject of so many literary texts, films, photographs and paintings. Today, Bollywood films in particular have revealed the influence of courtesans in the formation of the Indian public sphere.

"I'm interested in creating a new appreciation for these incredibly old traditions," says Dr. Hubel. "The whole point is to understand how influential these women really were."

"Historically, India fought with the British to stop British Imperialism so they could govern themselves," explained Dr. Hubel. "This social reform took the dance and music away from these families of women. They viewed them as corrupt in many ways. The suppression of Tawaifs and Devadasis contributed to the modern notion of an ideal womanhood, an ideal that actually limited the range of available roles for women in India."

Dr. Hubel and her team hope to uncover the true nature of these incredible women and understand how influential they really were. "We want to put them back in the story," said Dr. Hubel. "We'd like to create a new appreciation for these old traditions."

This fascinating research begins this summer and extends over the next five years.