Caroline Dunn, Sabbatical Proposal, Fall 2021

Overview
I write to formally request a sabbatical for Fall 2021 in order to complete my monograph, *Ladies-in-Waiting in Medieval England*. My last sabbatical occurred during the 2013/14 academic year.

Introduction to the Project
My proposed monograph, *Ladies-in-Waiting in Medieval England*, examines female attendants who served queens and aristocratic women during the last three medieval centuries. The social, political, and economic relevance of these often-overlooked female servants moves us beyond the stereotypes entrenched by romantic literature. Appointment as a lady-in-waiting brought fiscal and social challenges, yet could also bring great rewards, particularly in royal circles. Service bestowed honor upon damsels and their families, and ladies who enjoyed close access to the queen and sometimes the king could parlay these contacts into diverse political and financial favors. They earned compensation in kind and in wages. Some gained retirement annuities after years of loyal attendance. Damsels also exploited their connections to win royal patronage for their kin; they networked to achieve crucial introductions, financial rewards, and royal pardons. A sabbatical would support the completion of a scholarly monograph analyzing the roles of highborn female attendants at court and in English society. This will be the first scholarly and comprehensive examination of elite female servants in medieval England.

This project employs a wide investigative lens to capture an image of female aristocratic life in medieval England from the perspective of those who witnessed the major historical events of the era but who usually played their active roles behind the scenes. Investigating ladies-in-waiting clarifies the nuances of the soft power wielded by women who lacked official authority within governing institutions or patriarchal households. A *longue durée* methodology enables me to chart continuity as well as explore how challenges and opportunities for ladies-in-waiting changed over time. Households increased in size and complexity over the course of the Middle Ages, for example, and offered greater roles and opportunities for female servants. Yet this investigation also reveals continuity, in the frequency of marriages contracted between male and female household staff, for example, and in the cyclical swings of hostility against immigrants – kin and friends of foreign queens – serving at court.

My study of the familial, economic, and diplomatic roles and contributions of medieval ladies-in-waiting thus offers unexpected insights into areas of modern concern. Since so many ladies-in-waiting were already married, this project sheds light on the historical challenges women faced when negotiating the kinship networks of both natal and spousal lineages and juggling motherhood with career opportunities. Adding the international dimension, in the cases of foreign ladies-in-waiting, of immigration, diplomatic ties, and concerns about xenophobia, reveals the important roles that could be played by these surprisingly understudied medieval women.

Background Research and Preparation
Exhaustive archival research (conducted at the National Archives, the British Library, the Society of Antiquaries, and the St John’s College Archives in Cambridge), together with examinations of printed collections of source materials, has yielded the names of over 1,200
women serving queens and noblewomen during these centuries, with nearly 4,000 references to specific activities chronicling their experiences as ladies-in-waiting collated in a Microsoft Access relational database. I have presented preliminary findings at conferences and published three articles on narrower aspects of the project. The monograph is the necessary next step both to promote my research agenda and to advance scholarly research. At this stage (Spring 2021), I have completed, in addition to the database, extensive notes in outline form for all chapters and rough drafts of three chapters. Last year (February 2020) I was awarded a Bonnie Wheeler fellowship from the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship that funded course releases in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. Unfortunately Fall semester required excessive teaching prep due to Covid so while I made some progress, it was not as much as I had previously hoped.

Sabbatical Semester – Fall 2021 – Goals and Activities
The proposed monograph consists of seven chapters (listed below). My hope is to have five completed before the start of the sabbatical, during which I will complete the rest. I was awarded a CU SEED research grant to allow me one last trip to the UK National Archives to consult a few manuscripts necessary for the completion of the book (if Covid prevents travel before the end of 2021, I will use the funds to hire a London-based researcher to take digital photos of the documents). The sabbatical time would also offer me time to incorporate the newly-researched data, work on revisions, and also write and send a book proposal. I plan to send the proposal to Cambridge, since they published my first book, but will ask them for quick turnaround since Susan Ferber from Oxford has written to me to express interest.

Products of the Sabbatical
The pre-eminent deliverable of this research project will be a scholarly monograph, *Ladies-in-Waiting in Medieval England*. This publication will enhance my reputation as a medieval historian, the reputation of the History Department, the College of Arts, Architecture, and Humanities, and that of Clemson University as a whole. Although writing and bringing to publication a single-authored monograph is a lengthy process, this type of single-authored text remains the most highly-valued form research dissemination within the field of History.

Here is a list of proposed chapters, not necessarily with final titles.

- Chapter 1 - Introduction (Historiography, Terminology, Methodology)
- Chapter 2 - Household Composition and Placement
- Chapter 3 - Courtier Families
- Chapter 4 - Duties and Daily Life
- Chapter 5- Ceremony and Politics
- Chapter 6 - Rewards for Service
- Chapter 7 - Conclusion

The likely audience for my scholarship consists of medievalists and historians interested in themes of women and power, female career experiences, aristocratic daily life, and international relations achieved through informal diplomatic ties of marriage and service. Given the recent popularity of aristocratic women and ladies-in-waiting in historical fiction and film, I hope that my conclusions will ultimately reach a wider audience of amateur historians and authors and readers of historical fiction.
Sabbatical logistics – Administrative Responsibilities
As is common in our department, my History major advisees would have to be temporarily reassigned for Spring semester. I do not believe this would create an undue burden. Nor do I believe my removal from the teaching roster would be problematic considering our recent influx of colleagues, like assistant professors Kathryn Langenfeld and Ryan Hilliard, who would be available to teach HIST 1720, and new lecturer Tara Wood, who can teach British history. I hope to have an incoming MA student in the Fall semester, but he would be busy taking his first round of graduate classes and becoming acclimated to the program. After chairing two search committees and serving on both departmental and college advisory committees during the past three years, I stepped back from service during 2020/21 and would require no special elections to fulfill terms on committees.