1. Please provide an updated abstract of your proposal (a paragraph or two) and a brief biographical sketch (no more than one page).

My project is a study of the poetry and poetics of Hart Crane, an American Modernist poet from the early twentieth century who is perhaps most well known for his epic poem *The Bridge* (1930). Primarily, I am interested in the twin issues of mediation and history in Crane’s poetry. The larger context for Crane’s work is a discussion between two publications, *transition* (1927-1938) and *Modern Quarterly* (1923-1933), about whether the function of language is to communicate or to express; this debate has its origins in a longer history of the artistic and intellectual movements of Classicism, Romanticism, Naturalism, and Symbolism. I argue that Crane is interested in expression over communication, a choice that has decisive effects on his poetry as well as his views of poetic mediation and historical interpretation. The aim of my project is to articulate how Crane conceives of poetic expression in distinction to communication, and how this affects an understanding of mediation and history. These issues are particularly relevant for Crane because he writes during a time of new media’s proliferation – such mass media as photography, film, and radio transformed society and aesthetic practices – and a time of perceived historical crisis.
I was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan and lived there until I was ten years old. Then, in sixth grade, I moved to Connecticut, where I currently reside in a small seaside town called East Lymc. At Cornell, I study English and Film without focus in regards to a historical period. In addition, I work at Cornell Cinema, my only activity that I will have done for all four years of my time at Cornell.

II. Statement of purpose (3-5 pages). Please describe your project in detail: explain the significance of your research and your reasons for wishing to engage in it, and tell us where you will carry out this research and what resources you will use. Discuss briefly how your project relates to existing research in your field on the same subject. Be sure to include a bibliography.

In his book Axcl's Castle (1931), literary critic Edmund Wilson writes a history of Symbolism, which he views as largely influencing contemporary modern poetry. Wilson starts his history in the 17th century with the discoveries of Descartes and Newton, and the rise of Classicism. For Wilson, the period of Classicism is centered on society as a whole and promotes a view of the universe as a rational mechanical system. Romanticism in the late 17th and 18th centuries reacts to Classicism's position by asserting the importance of the individual and the irrational nature of living matter — at the time, biology was an important developing science. Then in the 19th century, Darwin's theory of evolution, by reducing life processes to a set of mechanistic procedures and showing how living things function in a general system, shifts the focus away from the individual and back towards society as a whole. This development in science is mirrored in the arts by Naturalism (or Realism), which aims to show how man reacts in specific social environments. Symbolism finally emerges as a reaction to Naturalism. For Wilson, Symbolism resembles Romanticism in its preoccupation with the individual and its irrational forces.

In the 20th century, the framework of Classicism-Romanticism, Naturalism-Symbolism continues in the arts in a way. The immediate precursors in thought are Marx and Freud, the former representing Classicism and Naturalism's concern with society as a whole, the latter
Romanticism and Symbolism's concern with the irrational forces of the individual. The tension between the two modes plays out specifically in a debate between two publications: *transition* (1927-1938), an avant-garde literary journal published in Paris by the American expatriate Eugene Jolas, and *Modern Quarterly* (1923-1933), a politics and arts magazine published by the critic V. F. Calverton. To summarize their debate, Calverton and Jolas argue about whether the function of language is to communicate or express. Calverton advocates for the former, aligning himself with a Classicist position that values society over the individual. Jolas takes the position of Romanticism and argues that the aim of language and literature is individual expression.

What does any of this have to do with Hart Crane, the American Modernist poet at the center of my project? It turns out actually that Crane and his writings are located within this context of literary history: the debate between Calverton and Jolas is important not only because Crane was a part of Jolas' literary social circle in Paris for a time and had published poems in *transition*, but also because he had signed Jolas' manifesto proclaiming that "The writer expresses. He does not communicate." I argue that Crane shares Jolas' view of language's and literature's ability to express – but what are the terms of this expression, and how is it actually different from communication?

My project is primarily concerned with this basic question of communication versus expression in Crane's poetry. But the stakes of the question are more complicated than they may appear at first. For one, the question takes place during the time of new mass media technologies such as photography, cinema, telephone, telegram, radio, etc. – in a word, during the Machine Age. This means that the question of whether literature is supposed to communicate or express is a question of media and is directly related to the function of other important new media. Secondly, the question becomes implicated with the status of historical knowledge and interpretation when the role of the artist and poet is articulated as someone who captures the spirit of the times, makes sense of what is happening in the world around him/her. Does the poet, then, communicate his/her historical moment or express it – and what is at stake in this
difference? The issues of media and history are not arbitrarily brought together but rather tightly intertwined (with each other and with the status of literature): media are historical in the sense that they shape history and also record, or inscribe, it; history is mediated in that it is something located in media and, as a result, is something that we must read and interpret.

What is at stake, then, in asking such questions with regards to Crane’s poetry is our very conception of media, history, language, and the literary activities of reading and writing. To give an idea of what direction my project may take, I suggest that Crane is interested in literature as a medium that can express certain things, specifically historical knowledge, that are incommunicable in a conventional sense. For example, basically all historical knowledge depends on inscriptive media – that is to say, such media as writing, film, photography, recorded sound, fossils, etc. Non-inscriptive media, things that are not recorded, are almost impossible to preserve for history’s sake unless preserved in memory and passed on orally. How, then, do we gain access to these non-communicable bits of knowledge? And, at the same time, how do we read inscriptive media as communicating something more than what they reveal on their surface? For it is evident, especially to literary scholars, that language means more than the denotative meaning of its content, a photo more than what its portrays for the eye. Such questions and issues motivate my readings of Crane as a poet interested in media and literature’s role among new media; historical knowledge and its interpretation; and visionary, even prophetic, poetics.

I will conduct the majority of my research through Cornell’s libraries on campus in Ithaca. I plan to stay in Ithaca over the summer, so most of the research grant money will go towards covering living expenses. In addition, I will conduct research at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University. Beinecke houses Hart Crane’s papers (http://drs.library.yale.edu/fedora/get/beinecke:crane/PDF) and Eugene Jolas’s papers as well (http://drs.library.yale.edu/fedora/get/beinecke:jolas/PDF). Some of the research grant money, then, will cover travel expenses to and from Yale.
Writings and research on Crane can be roughly divided into three periods. Critics responding to Crane's work at the time of publication were mostly concerned with evaluating the success of his poetic project – the consensus at the time was that *The Bridge* (1930), his major poetic work, represented a failure, causing Crane's reputation as a poet to languish. Then Brom Weber reignited interest in Crane with his *Hart Crane: A Biographical and Critical Study* (1948). Following this, Weber also published a collection of Crane's letters in 1952 and a volume of complete poems in 1966. The second period of Crane scholarship in the 50s, 60s, and 70s, then, follows Weber's lead and is largely concerned with redeeming Crane's reputation as a poet, showing how he had not in fact failed in his poetry. The third period of Crane scholarship, starting in 80s and continuing up until the present, is perhaps mostly due to a general shift in literary studies away from American New Criticism. Lee Edelman's book on Crane, the subject of Edelman's dissertation, applies a post-structuralist deconstruction reading to Crane's poetry. And then the majority of research on Crane after Edelman is about sexuality and queer theory, a major work being Thomas Yingling's *Hart Crane and the Homosexual Text* (1990). My project aims to explore and read Crane's poetry in regards to issues not normally taken up in recent scholarship, the issues of media and history, and to read these problems in a more rigorous, expansive manner than has been accomplished.

**Bibliography**


III. IRB review. Any research involving human subjects must be reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (http://www.irb.cornell.edu/). Such reviews can take several weeks, so plan accordingly.

Does your research proposal involve human subjects? (yes or no) No
If yes, please provide documentation separately to Dean McMillan (cam23) from the Institutional Review Board indicating that your project has been approved or is exempt from review.

IV. Budget. Please use the worksheet on page 3 to provide a budget for your research. Your budget may include living expenses such as rent and groceries, travel, photocopying, and