Draft submitted to Core Curriculum Humanities Subcommittee on the criteria, goals, and outcomes of the History course in the core.

I. Rationale:

History seeks to understand and to explain the story of human experience, since the past provides the only laboratory of human experience actually lived. Historical study complements and builds on the foundational courses in the core through its appreciation of the complexity of humankind, recognizing in the men and women who make history the spiritual and material, the intellectual and the emotional diversity of the human condition. History further advances the goals of the core curriculum through an interdisciplinary methodology that seeks to reconstruct our collective past. It is the story of individuals, the story of individuals in society, and the story of the political, religious, economic, and social ideologies and institutions they create in their search for identity, purpose, and value. History recognizes both the commonality of the human experience and the reality of cultural, class, racial, and gender distinctions that enrich that experience.

I. Criteria for the History core course:

A. A thematic or topical approach (as opposed to a survey) to a relatively broad period of time covering more than a century involving the interactions of several different cultures, including those outside of what is traditionally viewed as the West.

B. A focus on historical methodology as well as historical information.

C. Significant amounts of reading, writing, and discussion, using primary sources and historical scholarship which may include journal articles, monographs, and works of synthesis.

D. Emphasis on understanding change and continuity within the selected geographical area and chronological period.

E. Courses to be taught primarily by trained historians.

II. Goals for the History core course:

A. Students will develop an understanding of the specific historical content of the course.

B. The course will acquaint students with the rich variety of sources that historians use to explore the past.

C. Students will begin to develop critical historical skills including chronological reasoning, an awareness of periodization, the ability to analyze sources, and an ability to make comparisons in context.

III. Outcomes for the History core course:

A. The course will help students “achieve a synthesis of knowledge that provides a basis for informed judgment, not simply fact finding,” by teaching them to develop an appreciation of
how different historical circumstances contribute to a diversity of views and experiences in the human community.

B. Students will learn that historical inquiry is an ongoing process, “that the present is recognizably formed from past influences” but also that the present influences our understanding of the past. They will learn to identify the historical roots of contemporary issues and challenges, with attention to social values and the role of religion in the human experience.

C. Students will acquire a new understanding of specific historical subjects that will provide an entrée into other core courses and programs such as Peace and Justice; Environmental Studies; Humanities; Gender and Women’s Studies, and various area studies programs.

D. The course will enhance students’ ability to communicate, in written and verbal form, thesis-driven arguments about the past and strengthen their critical thinking by teaching them how to analyze and critique historical evidence and arguments.