

## Proposal of the Curriculum Sub-Committee of the Humanities Project

### I. BROAD GOALS

The Arts and Humanities enrich and illuminate every aspect of human experience. They teach us how to make sense of the past, and its continued life in the present. They are fundamental to liberal arts and sciences education in America.

The Humanities Project was launched in the academic year 2011-12 to reaffirm these values and to translate our convictions into concrete new initiatives. *Mapping the Future* surveys the evolution and current state of the Arts and Humanities, and forcefully underscores the need to reinvigorate student engagement with humanistic studies today. Harnessing the great potential of interdisciplinary teaching and research will be central to such reinvigoration.

The committee working on the curriculum focused on two key challenges:

1. How can we reenergize undergraduate interest in humanities concentrations and courses? This is the challenge of **Reinvigorating Student Recruitment**.
2. How can we foster an enhanced sense of a Divisional community, with greater collaboration and synergy across departments? This is the challenge of **Improving Integration within the Division**.

Project deliberations in 2011-12 led us in the fall of 2012 to imagine a new Humanities Concentration as the way to achieve these goals. However, after many thoughtful discussions both within the committee and with colleagues across the Division, we concluded that an alternative, more multifaceted strategy would prove more effective.

### II. THE BASIC STRATEGY

#### A. *Reinvigorating Student Recruitment*

The critical period for attracting student interest lies in the initial semesters of undergraduate study. Our proposal for reenergizing undergraduate engagement with the arts and humanities, accordingly, turns on three initiatives for this initial period.

##### 1. *New Gateway Courses into the Arts and Humanities*

This is our cornerstone initiative.

New gateway courses into the Arts and Humanities will advance three crucial aims:

- **Inspire** students to appreciate the wonderful possibilities of the arts and humanities.
- **Offer a clear entrypoint** into the exploration of the arts and humanities, and orient students toward more advanced study in the Division.
- **Provide a common experience shared** by a large number of students.

Concretely, the gateway courses that we envisage include:

a) **Three Humanities Frameworks Courses** (the Art of Listening, the Art of Reading, the Art of Looking) to debut in 2013-14.

b) **Full-Year Arts and Humanities survey course** designed for freshmen and sophomores to be developed in 2013-14 and offered in 2014-15.

##### 2. *Freshman Advising and Outreach*

Concretely, we propose increased efforts to: 1) encourage greater participation from Arts and Humanities faculty in freshman advising, and 2) educate all freshman advisors about the new initiatives (and of course, about the arts and humanities more generally.) The Division will highlight the Arts and Humanities during Visitas, Freshman Orientation, and provide varied advising opportunities and outreach events during the

freshman year.

### *3. Freshman Seminar Program*

In addition to encouraging Divisional faculty to offer seminars in the program, we propose efforts to enhance coordination and collaboration between clusters of Arts and Humanities Freshman Seminars with joint activities or events.

#### **B. Improving Integration within the Division**

We fully expect that the new gateway courses (see A.1. above) will not only inspire, guide, and bring together students, but will also promote faculty interaction across departments because they will be taught by small groups of faculty and owned by the entire Division.

Two further initiatives are central to our plan for nurturing a more synergistically integrated Division of the Arts and Humanities:

##### *1. Reviving an Arts and Humanities section in the Course Offerings*

Reviving an Arts and Humanities section starting in 2013-14 will facilitate cross-divisional teaching and offer greater visibility to courses that transcend the cultural and/or disciplinary boundaries into which departments are divided. By encouraging cross-disciplinary teaching initiatives that reach beyond our Division and even beyond FAS, this new Arts and Humanities section will enable our Division to promote intellectual exchange and a more active culture of collaboration across the university.

##### *2. Departmental Accreditation of Gateway and Arts and Humanities Divisional Courses*

We can work more effectively toward creating a more integrated Division if the various Arts and Humanities concentrations agree to count the gateway courses and some Arts and Humanities divisional courses for concentration credit. Such accreditation will provide strong incentives for students to take these courses, and even more vitally, ensure that students in a wide diversity of concentrations have a core of common curricular experiences. This proposal would bring relief to the staffing burdens in some smaller programs by allowing for sharing of faculty resources—a sharing that will become essential as the Division fully implements a 3+1 teaching load in 2014-15.

### **III. PROSPECTS**

Beyond the concrete projects outlined above for the coming academic year, we propose to explore a series of other projects over the next few years:

#### *Establishing Oversight and Advising Structures*

The success of our outreach efforts and our ability to sustain these long-term initiatives will depend upon strong divisional oversight. We will need a faculty committee to coordinate new and on-going curricular initiatives and offerings and to ensure that divisional resources are used to our best advantage. The faculty committee will play a leading role in helping departments identify ways to streamline and strengthen their offerings in coordination with the new teaching initiatives.

The entire series of Arts and Humanities initiatives takes as its departure point the strong individual advising that ladder faculty will provide to undergraduates who take our courses, starting in freshman year.

#### *Providing Enhanced Course Navigation Tools*

Countless gems of the Arts and Humanities curriculum are as if “invisible” to the many students who focus on General Education courses and the departmental offerings of their concentration. Developing an enhanced navigation tool that shows the connections (in terms of themes, approaches, or works studied) between courses offered in seemingly unrelated departments will help students consider a broader range of possibilities.

#### *Offering Humanities Internships*

Students are understandably concerned about their eventual employment prospects. But Harvard students are generally unaware of how many employers seek graduates with strong humanities training. Developing a robust program of Arts and Humanities internships—several of which will pilot this summer—should allay some of this concern, and show our students the diverse professional careers to which an Arts and Humanities concentration can lead.

#### *Developing Arts and Humanities Junior and Senior Seminars*

Faculty-led junior and senior seminars, in which students develop substantive projects, discussing their work with classmates from different Arts and Humanities concentrations and sharing their work with a broader divisional audience, would enhance students’ sense of a greater Arts and Humanities community and promote cross-fertilization across disciplines.

#### *Building a Humanities Commons*

We envision building upon the activities of the Humanities Center, and working toward a more vertically integrated divisional culture that will bring together Arts and Humanities faculty and students around issues of contemporary relevance. We think it particularly important to include events that will interest undergraduates as well, and give them a strong sense of community in the Division.

#### *Creating Course Clusters*

Organized clusters of related courses could allow faculty to collaborate in the exploration of a major theme or problem, and make it possible to guide students through deep, sustained intellectual inquiries that unfold over several semesters. Each course cluster would develop its own mini-culture, providing students with yet another base in the division.

#### *Offering a Humanities Secondary Field*

The new humanities gateway courses are intended to appeal to potential concentrators, but also to students who will concentrate in other divisions. We seek to develop alternative ways for the latter group to take better advantage of our divisional offerings and to shape a coherent “field” of secondary study. The gateway courses can serve as the foundation for a secondary field in the humanities, which will give students an excellent grounding in humanistic study broadly conceived.

### *Creating an Interdisciplinary Humanities Concentration*

Eventually, we hope to pilot an interdisciplinary humanities concentration for students who seek a bolder and more individual pathway, combining our various initiatives into a rigorous program of study — akin to the model used for student programs in Special Concentrations, which is predicated on intensive legwork, planning, and advising. As in Special Concentrations, students would work out a substantive proposal and identify faculty mentors, and an interdisciplinary faculty committee would give feedback and approval.