October 17, 2011

Undergraduate Educational Policies Committee
Saint Mary’s College of California

Dear colleagues:

The History department would like to express its full support for the proposal to add a new course on “Introduction to Historical Methods,” as a lower division class. The entire department developed the syllabus in collaboration, although we envision Professor Carl Guarneri being the primary faculty member teaching the course at the start. Eventually, the class would circulate among the whole department, in the same manner we each teach the upper division historiography course and the senior capstone. We believe this particular class will bring more academic rigor to our program and will help history majors and minors do better in their upper division courses and be more successful in the senior thesis course (History 106). On a secondary plane, we also believe that minors who take the course will improve on the range of skills the class addresses and be better students in their chosen major. The course will be a regular lecture and discussion class, with three hours of contact per week during the regular 14 week semester. The course will count as one unit.

We are confident that you will agree with us that History 10 will strengthen the department’s curriculum and the college’s as well. Should you have any further questions or require additional supporting materials, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Myrna Santiago
Professor of History
Chair, History Department
New course proposal

School: Liberal Arts
Department: History
Course number: History 10 (lower division)
Course title: Introduction to Historical Methods

Justification for the course:

After lengthy discussions about the uneven results of our capstone, History 103 (numbered 106 since fall 2011), a thirty-page term paper that is supposed to demonstrate that students have mastered the skills of the discipline, the History department decided in 2001 that we needed to offer a lower division methods course. Under the leadership of Professor Carl Guarneri, the department met for a whole day in April (2001) and forged the new class together. We envisioned History 10 as a sophomore class that would cover the range of skills our students need to learn to do well in all history upper division courses. For that reason, we decided we wanted to make History 10 a pre-requisite for the upper division courses on historiography (104), theories and uses of history (105), and senior thesis (106).

The proposed syllabus spells out exactly the topics we intend to cover throughout the semester. There are five basic topics we want to focus on: historical thinking, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research, popular historical genres, and trends and connections in historical writing. The learning objectives we are pursuing with these topics are detailed each of the sections under the five headings: identifying the uses of history; finding facts and the process of reconstructing events; knowing what historical context is; historical analysis and decision-making in history; how causation works; developing a historical argument; evaluating and comparing historical interpretations; creating historical narrative; using statistics and quantitative methods in history; analyzing evidence; learning to do historical research; writing the history paper; introducing what oral history is; introducing what public history is; evaluating historical films and fiction; introducing what historiography is; differentiating between micro and macro history; introducing comparative history; and introducing how history may fit into the rest of the disciplines and how it can tie to the present and the future.

The assignments that the course would use to make sure students are learning the material they will be exposed to will include short papers, quizzes, oral presentations, and short essay exams. The pass/fail option will not be allowed in this class.
Student population:

We anticipate a varied student population for this course. As a requirement, all history majors and minors will have to take the class, but we can see students from other programs (Politics, Sociology, International Area Studies) to be interested in it too. Ideally, sophomores would be taking the course, with 25 being the cap in any given semester.

Relationship to present College curriculum:

A lower division methods course will strengthen the College curriculum in general. Most methods courses offered in the College right now (Anthropology, Politics, Sociology, English, for example) are upper division. Making a lower division alternative available to all students adds variety and choice to them. We do not anticipate competing with any department, on the contrary, we can complement our colleagues’ work by getting students working on questions of methodology before junior or senior year.

Implementation costs:

There are no implementation costs for this course, since it requires no additional equipment or space of any kind.

Library resources:

Our library liaison, Sue Birkenseer, has produced a report demonstrating that our library already has the necessary holdings to support History 10 (report enclosed). We will continue to work with her to develop the collection as necessary, naturally.

Course credit and grading options:

History 10 would be a one credit course, taught as a regular lecture and discussion course with three contact hours per week. The standard expectation is one hour of homework per hour in the classroom. The course lasts one semester.

Prerequisites, co-requisites:

There are no prerequisites or co-requisites for this course.

Course description for the College catalog:

This course covers the gamut of skills historians use to analyze and write history. Students will learn to think like historians do, looking at and using the tools of the historian to find evidence, evaluate it, interpret it, and write history. This course is a pre-requisite for History 104, 105, and 106.
Library Resources Review

This review is for History 10, Introduction to Historical Methods

This report was prepared at the request of Myrna Santiago in order to present her proposal to the UEPC.

I. Library Resource Needs

A. Faculty Course Preparation: Myrna provided a reading list of books for his course
B. Reserve Readings and film/videos for reserve: none indicated yet
C. Types of materials needed for student assignments. There is at least one 8 page interpretative paper which would include both primary and secondary sources.

II. Currently Available Library Resources

A. Reference Materials: The Library provides general resources on history in print, and online. These sources are best used by students to check simple factual information on historical events, or terms relating to historiography.
B. Books: The Library has an extensive collection of books, both print and electronic, relating to history and historiography. With continuing input from the instructor, this collection can be improved for this course, and for general campus needs.
C. Periodicals: The Library subscribes to thousands of (mostly online) periodicals. Examples of periodicals that the Library has access to include: History and Theory, History Teacher, Journal of Interdisciplinary History, and Journal of Social History. There should be sufficient access to periodicals for students to complete any research projects in this course.
D. Media/Videos: The Library has a good collection of videos relating to general world history.
E. Electronic Resources: Students gain access to online journals and online encyclopedias through our databases. Many of them are in full-text. The following databases offered at the Library have material relating to scholarship and research in the area of history. These databases are sufficient for the research projects in this course.
   - Historical Abstracts and America: History and Life provides access to scholarly literature for history issues
   - HAPI provides scholarship in the history and literature of Latin and Central America as well as for the Latino community in the US
   - ERIC and Education FT offer scholarship in the areas of education and teaching
   - Gale Virtual Reference Library and Oxford Reference Online are scholarly general reference access for terms, events, biography
III. Additional Resources Needed
A. Reading list of books not yet in the Library:

Furay, Conal and Michael Salevouris. The Methods and Skills of History: A Practical Guide. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2000. (The Library would not purchase this book as it is a workbook, and really best for classroom use)


B. Periodicals:
Unknown needs

C. Video/Film:
Unknown needs

If there is a desire to purchase all possible materials for the Library, the cost would be approximately $53. This very modest amount can easily be absorbed by the normal purchasing capabilities of the Library. All videos and new materials can be a part of an ongoing allocation process to gain new material annually to better the collection for all students.

IV. Opportunities to Develop Information Literacy Skills
This course offers excellent opportunities to develop information literacy skills. This course was created to be a pre-requisite to the History 106 Seminar in Historical Research, and offers at least one research paper, with the possibility of more as it is developed. The Library is eager to be involved in this process, and very willing to work with faculty and students to aid in this important developmental skill.

Susan Birkenseer
Reference and Instruction Librarian
Saint Mary’s College
October, 2011