To: Brian Bachmann, CEP Chair  
From: Edward Wright-Rios, Chair, Department of History  
Re: Delete Option 3 capstone alternative credit for history major  
Date: Jan. 20, 2015

The department has voted, unanimously (17-0) to delete “Option 3” under item “3. Capstone course (3-6 hours) of the history major. This vote was taken on October 13, 2014.

RATIONALE
In the fall of 2009 the Department of History decided to offer “capstone alternative” courses. The idea was to broaden the array of topical and thematic seminars that upperclassmen could take and in which history majors could fulfill their capstone requirement. In many ways the five-year experiment has been a success, but in a particularly crucial realm it has been disappointing—students taking capstone alternative courses tend to produce less rigorous research papers than in our standard capstone seminars (History 295). This is something that each DUS noted as they accessed the seminar papers at the end of each year. In truth some papers produced in capstone alternative courses were truly excellent, but the general level remained lower than what typically emerged from 295s. We have discussed the issue in the undergraduate studies committee (Professors Michael Bess, Arleen Tuchman, Tom Schwartz, and Edward Wright-Rios) and as a full department. What seems clear is that because not all students enrolled in capstone alternative classes are doing the capstone option the classes are not centered on research and writing in the same way as the 295s. In a sense, professors in these classes can’t “teach the paper” like the 295s typically do since sometimes more than half the class is not doing this kind of project.
Furthermore, in keeping with Vanderbilt’s new strategic plan, we see our capstone papers as our undergraduate history majors’ “immersion” experience, and we believe that it is important to maintain the rigorous standards that make it a deeply meaningful and rigorous. Therefore, after considerable debate, we decided as a department to cease offering capstone alternative courses as such. We will still teach the topics as upper level seminars. However, we will require all history majors to fulfill their capstone requirement in a standard 295.

CURRENT CATALOG ENTRY
3. Capstone course (3–6 hours)
   One of the following, to be taken in the junior or senior year; all of the options will require the student to write a major paper. Any capstone course within the student’s area of concentration will count toward the five-course requirement for that concentration.

   Option 1: 293b, Internship Research (3 hours). Must be taken in conjunction with 293a (internship training). Prerequisite: 200W. Note: A student may take 293b as an elective before completing 200W but in this case 293b will not count as a capstone course.

   Option 2: 295, Majors Seminar (3 hours). Prerequisite: 200W.

   Option 3: 284a–290a (except for 286c, 287d, 287e, 288a), Undergraduate Seminar (3 hours). Prerequisite: 200W. Note: A student may take any of these courses as an elective before completing HIST 200W but in this case the course will not count as a capstone course.
Option 4: 298a–298b, Senior Honors Seminar (6 hours). Limited to seniors in the History Honors Program. Note: At the discretion of the director of honors and the director of undergraduate studies, a student who has taken 298a but does not take 298b may be considered to have fulfilled the capstone requirement for the major.

PROPOSED CATALOG ENTRY
3. Capstone course (3–6 credit hours)
   One of the following, to be taken in the junior or senior year; all of the options will require the student to write a major paper. Any capstone course within the student’s area of concentration will count toward the five-course requirement for that concentration.

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   Option 2: 295, Majors Seminar (3 credit hours). Prerequisite: 200W.

   Option 3: 284a–290a (except for 286c, 287d, 287e, 288a), Undergraduate Seminar (3 hours). Prerequisite: 200W. Note: A student may take any of these courses as an elective before completing HIST 200W but in this case the course will not count as a capstone course.

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RE: Delete Option 3 capstone alternative credit for history major

Dear Professor Harrington,

The Committee on Educational Programs convened on January 15th to review the proposal Delete Option 3 capstone alternative credit for history major. The catalog copy was approved (6 voting in favor) contingent upon these minor revisions:

a. Number 4 becomes number 3
b. Mark as ‘credit hours’ in each instance of ‘hours’ throughout
c. A clean catalog copy is required for submission to Council.

If these minor changes are acceptable, please incorporate them into your document and forward them to me. I will forward your corrected proposal to Faculty Council after which, pending their approval, your proposal will proceed to A&S Faculty vote.

Regarding the proposed changes in the Economics History catalog copy, our committee bylaws require a separate proposal package submitted with a cover letter from David Carlton to the CEP committee so that we can officially vote and transmit to Council.

Please let me know if I may be of any assistance.

Best Regards,

Brian O. Bachmann
cc: Karen Campbell
Dear Jonathan,

Attached you will find the application materials for a modification to an entry in the history major, approved by the Committee for Education Programs on January 15, 2015 and revised by Professor Rogaski as per request. We are recommending this for consideration by Faculty Council.

Best Regards,

Brian Bachmann