TO: Core Curriculum Office – Faculty Senate Office  
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MS 1125

FROM: The Department of Architecture Academic Affairs Committee  
Department of Architecture  
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DATE: September 10, 2013

RE: ARCH 345 – History of Building Technology

The Department of Architecture is requesting that ARCH 345 – The History of Building Technology – be approved as satisfying American History Core curriculum. At the September 2, 2013 Core Curriculum Committee meeting, the course was unanimously approved on the consent agenda, only to be brought up for review an hour later and tabled for further discussion at the October meeting.

The Department of Architecture Academic Affairs Committee would like to clarify its rationale for bringing the ARCH 345 course forward for certification in the American History core component category. We believe the qualifications of the instructor and the content of the course to be exemplary and within the spirit of the American History component area. This course is taught by Shelley Holliday, a structural engineer with years of professional experience. She is well versed in contemporary and historical factors that have impacted technology and built environments over the years. This course does present and considers interactions among individuals, communities, states, the nation and the world that address contributions to the development of the United States and its global role in the world with respect to building technology.

There is no doubt that courses satisfying the American History core curriculum component category have traditionally been housed only in History Departments. While Texas Tech does offer a course in Woman’s Studies 3323 (History of Women in America) satisfying the American History core, it is unique. The course is also cross listed with History 3323 and is taught by an instructor ad locked to the History Department. However, we see no compelling reason for continuing this trend.

The Department of Architecture Academic Affairs committee believes Colleges outside of the History Department are capable of offering credible, rigorous coursework specific to their discipline within the spirit of the American History core component category.
Texas A&M encourages multi and cross disciplinary perspectives. There is no doubt other Colleges are represented in the History offerings. We note that numerous courses in the History Department are tailored to other Colleges at Texas A&M: HIST 359 (American Environmental History), HIST 363 (History of Science in America), HIST 364 (History of Technology and Engineering in America), HIST 360 (History of Energy in America), HIST 362 (History of Science), HIST 361 (Technology and Engineering in Western Civilization), HIST 446 (Aerospace History), HIST 470 (American Business History). In addition, the THECB website lists the following History courses as satisfying Social and Behavioral Science core curriculum component: HIST 455 (History of the American City), HIST 335 (Socio horticulture). This committee does find it curious that while the Department of History can cross into multiple core curriculum component areas (American History / Language, Culture and Philosophy/Social and Behavioral Science), to date no other College has been able to offer courses in the American History core curriculum component area.

Given projected increased enrollments at Texas A&M, along with University funding tied more directly than ever to mandated target enrollments and, we see no compelling reason why all American History courses must be taught by the Department of History. To do begins to privilege one Department by providing an ensured enrollment of more than 100,000 students a year (assuming a total TAMU enrollment of 50,000 + who are required to take two required American History courses).

More importantly, the Department of Architecture does not wish to provide its students with a core curriculum housed solely in the Department of Architecture. We celebrate the diversity ensured by having our students attend classes in other Departments. We wish to offer this ARCH 345 class as a large class that would attract students throughout the University, while allowing them to study American History from another perspective.

Thank you for your continued work on the Core curriculum committee and for the consideration you have given this course.