September 27, 2013

TO: Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee

FROM: Carmen Manning, Chair
Department of English

RE: Proposed Program Name Change

On September 27, 2013, the English Department voted to recommend changing the name of the Literature emphasis in advance of new course proposals and revised distribution requirements.

FROM: Literature (Major code, 540-206; Minor code, 540-407)

TO: Critical Studies in Literatures, Cultures, and Film

The same name will be used for both the major and minor iterations of the program.

Some explanations for the name change:

The present name for the emphasis no longer reflects the multiplicity of disciplinary approaches, methodologies, and pedagogies practiced by department members. This change reflects a refining and enlarging of the current program and name, based on evolving curricular philosophies over more than ten years since the last major program change. During those ten years, there has been significant evolution in the faculty and staff who teach literature in our department. New hires have brought with them the latest in theory and practice while junior and senior faculty have advanced their approaches to teaching and learning through significant involvement in strategic planning, liberal education reform, interdisciplinary leadership positions, and professional development across the university—all of which inform our current discussions about reform.

The name change reflects a continuing commitment of the English Department to maintain a high level of rigor and depth in our work for students completing liberal education core credits as well as English majors and minors seeking disciplinary expertise.

The new emphasis name is presented strategically at this time as the first of two major actions stemming from a multi-year (and ongoing) review of the literature program. In May 2012, an Ad Hoc Literature Committee was chartered and charged with conducting a thorough review of student experiences and literature curricula, and in consultation with the wider department, to implement recommendations for changes in the emphasis. For the 2014-5 catalog, our action steps include changing the name of the emphasis and revising our film course offerings. For the 2015-6, the department will review and propose any necessary changes in the distribution requirements for literature majors and minors.
The name change will achieve the following specific objectives:

- **To foreground, by including in the title “Critical Studies,” the process and outcomes of studying literatures, cultures and film as a skill-based practice, rather than only calling attention to the genres themselves.** By doing so, we hope to emphasize that critical studies involves the consumption and production of texts—critical reading and analysis, research, synthesis, creative interpretation, argument and rhetorical craft.

- **To integrate courses in critical theory, film, and popular culture into the literature course array:** The name change will help formalize opportunities for students in the emphasis to take currently available and proposed courses in critical theory (English 384 and 484/684), popular culture studies (English 272 and 372), and film studies (English 181 and 381; 281 and 481/681 are being proposed for the 2014-5 catalog). Currently, such courses (which, at present, are not formally listed as literature courses) can be included among literature requirements only if a substitution form is filed. This name change will be followed up with minor course revisions as needed to allow the courses listed above to count within the literature array.

- **To create opportunities for new and existing courses that cross national traditions and chronological periods to count more often within the emphasis requirements.** Current distribution requirements for literature emphasis students are predominantly structured in relation to nationality (i.e. American and British literature) and historical period (English 348: Topics in American Literature Since 1865). In our current round of curricular review, we will seek ways that other course themes will be integrated regularly within the emphasis (such as transnational literatures; film and theory courses with content from more than one historical period; courses that are organized by genre). The revised title will more accurately reflect this emerging course array for Critical Studies students.

- **To integrate courses focused on non-US literary traditions into the emphasis.** To present the term “literatures” rather than literature in the title emphasizes that literature is not a singular tradition. Instead, literature is an expressive practice that is diverse and global at its foundations (the term “cultures” is presented in the plural form for similar reasons). We are fortunate to have recruited a diverse literature faculty in terms of geographical and cultural expertise, and the opportunity to offer courses in a greater range of literary traditions will enrich student experiences and keep our offerings current within the field.