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Re-submission

Request for Curriculum Council Action

TO: Zahia Drici, Associate Dean of Curriculum

DATE SUBMITTED: 9/24/2009

(Please submit 14 double-sided copies of your proposal)

FROM: (Name) WILLIAM E. MORRIS (Department) PHILOSOPHY

1. Proposed Action (Please check all that apply):

	Title	Number	Units
<input type="checkbox"/>	New Course (No Gen Ed)	/	/
<input type="checkbox"/>	New Course (Gen Ed)	/	/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gen Ed for Existing Course:		
	<u>HUME'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION</u>	<u>268</u>	<u>1</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Deletion	/	/
<input type="checkbox"/>	Change title from	/	/
	to	/	/
<input type="checkbox"/>	Change number from	/	/
	to	/	/
<input type="checkbox"/>	May Term Course	/	/
<input type="checkbox"/>	New Major/Minor		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Revised Major/Minor		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	/	/

2a. Please check the category, if any, for which you are requesting General Education unit credit:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Analysis of Values | <input type="checkbox"/> Gateway Colloquium | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Science Lab |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Arts | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intellectual Traditions | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Science Issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contemporary Social Institutions | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Science Lab |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural and Historical Change | <input type="checkbox"/> Second Language | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Formal Reasoning | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Science Issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Fitness |

2b. Please check the flag(s), if any, you are seeking:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing Intensive | <input type="checkbox"/> Global Diversity | <input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Diversity |
|--|---|---|

3. Please insert here the proposed catalog course description. Course descriptions should be limited to no more than 50 words, not counting (a) title; (b) prerequisites; (c) General Education category; and (d) when offered.

Hume's Philosophy of Religion (WI)

Introduction to the philosophy of religion of David Hume (1711-1776). Generally regarded as the greatest philosopher ever to write in English, Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, one of the most influential works in philosophy of religion, critically examine the idea of intelligent design. Offered annually.

4. Please list any prerequisites: NO PREREQUISITES

5. When will this course first be offered? OFFERED FALL + SPRING 2009-10

6. Please indicate how often course is offered. Check only the single item that best describes this course. Because these are the only intervals used in the University Catalog, please do not edit or alter the list to fit a particular course. For example, if your course is offered every third year—an interval that does not appear in the Catalog—you might choose "Offered as needed" or "Offered occasionally" instead.

- Offered each semester
- Offered each Fall Term
- Offered each spring
- Offered each May Term
- Offered each semester and May Term
- Offered occasionally
- Offered in alternate years
- Offered in alternate years, Fall Term
- Offered in alternate years, Spring
- Offered in alternate years, May Term
- Offered annually
- Offered every third semester
- Offered as needed
- Offered on request
- Offered by arrangement

7. Is/are any other department(s) affected in any way by this request (e.g., course is cross-listed, team-taught, etc.)?
 No. Yes. In what way?

N/A

Signature of the Head(s) of the Affected Department(s), School(s) or Program(s)

8. **WRITTEN RATIONALES:** If this proposal presents a new course (whether for General Education credit or not), an existing course for which General Education credit is now being sought, a May Term course, or a new major, minor or concentration, please attach a written rationale, following the guidelines found in the *Curriculum Development Handbook*. Please note that CC cannot evaluate incomplete proposals, so to expedite consideration of your submission, you are encouraged to read and follow the guidelines carefully.

9. The Curriculum Council assumes that the faculty members of your department have seen and approved of this request. Please sign below if this assumption is correct:

[Handwritten Signature]

Signature of Faculty Member Primarily Responsible for This Proposal

[Handwritten Signature]

Signature of the Head of the Department, School or Program

Hume's Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy 268
(Approved as a Writing Intensive course, April 2009)

Course Description: David Hume (1711-1776) is generally regarded as the greatest philosopher ever to write in English, and his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* are one of the most influential works in the philosophy of religion. We will begin with an introduction to Hume's thought by reading *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, emphasizing his discussions of the problem of evil, miracles, and design. Next we will examine several of his essays on specific topics in the philosophy of religion: suicide, immortality, superstition and enthusiasm, as well as his short work, *The Natural History of Religion*. The majority of the course, however, will be devoted to a close and critical reading of the *Dialogues*.

Course Objectives: The central aim of this course is to develop a critical understanding of Hume's thought and how his arguments on topics in the philosophy of religion fit into his conceptual framework. Developing this kind of critical understanding requires that students develop the ability to present their own arguments in support of their own theses in clearly written, well-structured essays. To help students develop critical understanding, they will do various exercises and assignments, both formal and informal, to develop skills of *comprehension, communication, and criticism*. These skills have several components, including:

- the ability to read a text carefully and critically
- the ability to determine the author's main conclusions
- the ability to determine the main line of argument the author offers in support of these conclusions
- the ability to think and talk about these arguments in non-technical language
- the ability to communicate the details of these arguments precisely and concisely
- the ability to critically evaluate these arguments

Category Goals and Course Criteria:

1. IT courses examine ideas. Hume's *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* is one of the most important and influential works in the philosophy of religion. The *Dialogues* are a deep, critical examination of the argument from design — the primary argument in the case for the idea that the universe, and the order we find in it, is the product of intelligent design. The characters in the *Dialogues* represent the major stances in the debate about design, which occupied all of the major writers on natural religion in eighteenth-century Britain. Critically examining and evaluating their arguments is a terrific way for students to learn how to read a text, to understand arguments and their structures, and to eventually arrive at a principled critical opinion about these arguments.

2. IT courses focus on ideas that have shaped culture. The *Dialogues* present all the central voices in the debate about design. As we read the *Dialogues*, students will come to understand why so many scientists, theologians, and philosophers accepted the argument from design as a consequence of the dramatic advances in the natural sciences made in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Hume's arguments, voiced in the person of the character Philo in the *Dialogues*, were also influenced by the science of his day, especially the work of Newton, but draw radically

different conclusions about the worth of the design argument. Hume's devastating critique of the argument, which significantly influenced Darwin among others, was central to the shift in attitude toward the idea of intelligent design.

3. IT courses examine the development of ideas of over time and in relation to other ideas.

As my responses to 1 and 2 already indicate, this course concentrates on the ideas in science and natural theology, such as the emergence of the modern conception of probability, that made the design argument so appealing to the "republic of letters" in 18th century Britain, and allowed it to hold sway over earlier non-probabilistic arguments from design. Hume joined the design debate after radically changing the ongoing philosophical debates about causation and inferences from experience with a far more sophisticated understanding of probable inference than any of his opponents possessed. Applying these ideas permitted him to critique the argument from design in ways that are as forceful today as they were in his own.

4. IT courses actively engage students in interpreting and evaluating primary texts. All of the texts in this course are primary sources: Hume's *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, *The Natural History of Religion*, and *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, plus several of his essays, along with handouts or e-reserve materials from Hume's contemporaries. All of these readings require students to grasp their arguments and to express them clearly, concisely, and coherently, either verbally or in writing. Class discussions and further writing assignments develop their abilities to critically evaluate these arguments and support their positions with well-argued defenses. Our reading of the *Dialogues* in particular will be very close and critical. This course has already been approved as a Writing Intensive course for second-year students. In my application to Curriculum Council for WI, I spelled out the writing assignments I'll be using in great detail.

Assessment: In addition to adding a Supplement to the standard course evaluation form, which will provide feedback on the students' perceptions of how well the course fulfilled both the Intellectual Traditions and the Writing Intensive goals, I will carefully review the students' written materials so that I can arrive at a considered opinion about how well they have succeeded in meeting both these goals. If the Writing Implementation Committee proposes additional assessment mechanisms for courses at this level, I will of course use their instruments as well.