Dear Senate President Lugo,

The Department of History objects to the inclusion of ANT 207 and ENG 210 in the consent agenda for the Senate meeting on 13 November 2012.

The Department of History objects to the inclusion of ANT 207 and ENG 210 in the University Studies (US) Category “Historical and Philosophical Approaches” (HPA) and offers the following three reasons.

1. These courses offer neither a historical nor a philosophical approach to the material.
An essential element of the HPA “DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE,” from US document:
Courses in the Historical and Philosophical Approaches component will introduce students to the major interpretative methodologies used in the study of history, philosophy, or religion. . .

ANT 207 is a social science course with a lab component; it does not correspond to the methodological rationale of the HPA category.
Catalog description of ANT 207
The concepts and aims of archaeology, its history as a scientific discipline and its present role in the social sciences. Attention to basic principles in field work and to recent advances. Partially satisfies University Studies II: Approaches and Perspectives/Understanding Human Institutions and Behaviors. Partially Satisfies University Studies III: Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster/Modeling. The lab for this course is ANTL 207.

Because ANT 207 is social science, it is already located in another category of the “Approaches and Perspectives” portion of US, namely in “Understanding Human Institutions and Behaviors.” ANT 207 is clearly and properly focused on conveying its own disciplinary approach, rooted in the social sciences. Does ANT 207 belong in two parallel sections of Approaches? How many distinct disciplinary approaches can any one course really provide?

ENG 210 is a literature course, with ENG courses as pre-requisites; it does not correspond to the methodological rationale of the HPA category.
Catalog description of ENG 210
(CL A 210 ) Prerequisite or corequisite: ENG 103 or ENG 201, or consent of instructor. The major mythological systems of Western society - Greek, Roman, and Norse. Mythology of other parts of the world, especially the Ancient Middle East, and related material are also considered. Partially satisfies University Studies II: Approaches and Perspectives/Aesthetic, Interpretive, and Literary Perspectives.

Because ENG 201 is a literature course, it is already located in another category of the “Approaches and Perspectives” portion of US, namely in “Aesthetic, Interpretive, and Literary Perspectives.” Does ENG 210 belong in two parallel sections of Approaches? How many distinct disciplinary approaches can any one course really provide?
History is both a discipline (an “approach”) and a subject. The HPA category should not become a grab-bag of courses that happen to include the chronological development of particular topic. Almost every phenomenon can be usefully placed in some historical context and most courses include such discussions, however brief. But those exercises do not make a history course.

The US curriculum has wonderful opportunities for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary education in the Explorations, Competencies, and Cluster portions of the curriculum, along with components 5 (Living in Our Diverse Nation) and 6 (Living in a Global Society) of Approaches and Perspectives. We believe that disciplinary perspectives must be maintained, not obliterated, in the first four components of the Approaches and Perspective portion of US. Indeed, the very first goal of US is that students “acquire foundational knowledge, theories and perspectives in a variety of disciplines.”

2. In the interest of a genuinely broad undergraduate education, US categories should be populated with a bias toward restricting the number of different course prefixes represented, so that students will select from a wide variety of disciplines to satisfy requirements. If UNCW populates every US category with many different disciplines, it will build a curriculum in which a student can move through multiple categories and layers of US by always picking courses from the same discipline: ENG, or ANT, or whatever. Does the faculty want that type of curriculum? Would such a curriculum offer “a coherent program of general education”? (University Studies report p. 4).

3. If disciplinary boundaries are stretched so far that ANT 207 and ENG 210 are added to the HPA category, then the floodgates are open for almost any course to appear in almost any category.

We can easily imagine four of our current courses on the History of Science being added to the category Scientific Approaches to the Natural World, our History and Film course being added to Aesthetic, Interpretive, and Literary Perspectives, and our Sport in the Ancient World and History of Medicine courses being added to Lifetime Wellness, to cite just a few examples. Those are all course proposals that we consciously did not make, because we thought they violated the spirit of the US curriculum with its continuing respect for disciplinary integrity. Does the faculty wish to build a curriculum in which students can satisfy History requirements with English courses and Science requirements with History courses? If that structure of US comes to pass, then students will move through many categories of US by choosing from only a few disciplines in which they are comfortable. We believe that is not good education, nor is it the model of US that UNCW hoped to create.

In sum, we believe that if ANT 207 and ENG 210 are added to the HPA category, UNCW is taking a big step in the wrong direction as we move through the important work of building an appropriate curriculum for our students.