TO: University of Oregon Curriculum Committee

FROM: College Scholars Program
Marjorie Taylor, Professor of Psychology (Director)
Ian F. McNeely, Associate Professor of History (Coordinator of CAS 101)

CC: Rick Colby (CASCC chair), Mike Jefferis (Registrar’s Office), Andrew Marcus (CAS Associate Dean), Lexy Wellman (CAS curriculum coordinator, ICGER)

RE: Honors (“H”) designation for College Scholars CAS 101 and Gen Ed courses

DATE: March 9, 2012

The College Scholars program wishes to establish a procedure for the courses it offers to be designated with an “H” on student transcripts. These include:

- CAS 101 Reacting to the Past (historical role-playing simulations)
- Small honors-level versions of select Gen Ed courses (roughly eight per year)*

The rationale for the change is to give College Scholars students tangible recognition, on the transcript, for demonstrated achievement at the honors level in these specific courses. Currently our students receive no formal recognition for participation in the College Scholars program.

We believe that both the CAS 101s and the Gen Ed courses meet the formal criteria for “H” designations formulated by the UOCC and recently endorsed by the Undergraduate Council. Attached please find separate, specific rationales for each.

All of these courses have already been approved through the conventional CASCC and UOCC process. We are merely asking that the “value-added” honors enhancements be recognized with a formal “H” designation.

The conundrum we face is that College Scholars offers a different set of Gen Ed courses each year.† Each is a smaller, enhanced version of a larger, conventional Gen Ed course that a given faculty member already teaches, and each retains the prefix and number of its home department. This flexible approach to curriculum is designed to maximize student choice as well as the number of faculty who teach in the program. After all, the main purpose of College Scholars, at least in its first two years, is to orient top students to the panoply of disciplines housed in CAS.

Given our commitment to flexibility and diversity, we feel that it is unusually important to institute robust quality-control procedures to ensure that none of our offerings is inappropriately given an “H” designation. At the same time, we wish to avoid overburdening the CASCC and UOCC, not to mention faculty teaching in the program, by requiring them to submit a full-blown proposal each time we wish to offer a new honors-level Gen Ed course. The timetables for course scheduling and curriculum review would render this all but impossible in any case.

* During AY 2011-12, these are ASTR 123 (Imamura), EC 201 (Harbaugh), SCAN 354 (Stern), REL 355 (Colby), CLAS 314 (Bowditch), PHIL 170 (Mann), and ANTH 175 (Snodgrass).
† The content of the CAS 101s also varies from section to section, but all of them follow the same nationally-established pedagogy and impart the same social-science skills, and of course all have the same prefix and number.
We therefore propose that the **College Scholars Advisory Board** be given responsibility for ensuring that each individual College Scholars Gen Ed course meets the criteria for “H” designations. The Board would not screen courses for disciplinary content, since that is up to the instructor. Nor would it duplicate the regular departmental, CASCC, and UOCC course proposal process that originally approved them. We also assume that honors-level courses would continue to fulfill the same group-satisfying and multicultural requirements as their non-honors versions.

Instead, the Board would scrutinize courses for specific enhancements in depth, engagement, mentoring, and other specific criteria dictated by the university-level honors policy. In addition, the Board and Director would work with faculty members who are new to the program to ensure that, in adapting an existing course to the College Scholars format, each one knows exactly what an honors-level course offering entails.

This year’s Board includes Barbara Altmann (Romance Languages), Louise Bishop (English, Clark Honors College), Alan Dickman (Environmental Studies), Andrew Marcus (Associate Dean of Social Sciences in CAS, ex officio), Ian McNeely (History), Geraldine Richmond (Chemistry), and Reuben Zahler (History, GSS Director). Faculty on the Board are carefully recruited for their interest in and dedication to honors education and because they represent a range of CAS disciplines. Collectively, they form an ideal oversight group because they are already acquainted with a variety of best practices in honors-level instruction.

As an additional safeguard, the College Scholars Advisory Board would report to the CASCC chair on which courses would be given new “H” designations. We ask that the UOCC devolve its oversight responsibility to CASCC and to our Board, where rigor and quality can most effectively be monitored. This arrangement would be similar to the one enjoyed by the Clark Honors College for its own group-satisfying and multicultural colloquia (HC 421H, HC 431H, HC 441H and HC 424H, HC 434H, HC 444H, respectively). These colloquia—whose content varies just as dramatically from course to course and year to year—all count for Gen Ed credit, carry “H” designations, and are independently vetted by the Honors College itself.

We considered whether to propose a series of new CAS-prefixed courses to mirror the Honors College’s approach. Instead, we favor adding an “H” to existing Gen Ed courses that already carry departmental prefixes and numbers. We believe that this will not cause any problems with articulation, degree audits, etc. The more important reason, though, is, again, to provide a visually accessible depiction of student achievement on the transcript. A transcript with range of courses bearing “H” designations represents the diversity of the College Scholars curriculum more accurately and more compellingly than a smattering of cryptically numbered, inconsistently titled “CAS” courses. It also more faithfully reflects the difference between the Honors College (which has an in-house curriculum) and College Scholars (which spans all of CAS). Thus, while the Honors College as such is recognized on the transcript, College Scholars is not, since it is more appropriately regarded as an enhanced version of a regular CAS course of study.

We believe this solution is the best way for us to capitalize on the expertise of the CAS faculty to offer rigorous, engaged instruction to top students in the College without in any way diluting the meaning of UO honors. We would be happy to come to the UOCC to address any concerns.

‡ Honors College Associate Dean Dan Rosenberg reports that their procedure is as follows. A CFP generates course proposals and vitae from external faculty who wish to teach honors courses. These are vetted, along with online teaching evaluations, by a three-person CHC committee, which then forwards its recommendations to the whole CHC faculty. Not all proposals are accepted. The CHC works with faculty who need to be acculturated to the CHC’s best practices. “There is no special formula, only due diligence.”
Attachment 1: Rationale for CAS 101H (Reacting to the Past)

**Preparedness.** The academic skills needed to successfully participate are expected to be different for honors courses. Prerequisites should spell out specialized background skills (e.g., mathematics abilities, language fluency), or necessary experience or achievement (e.g., participation in an honors program, a cumulative GPA of at least 3.30 in their major). Include justification for the exclusion of nonhonors students.

CAS 101 ("Reacting to the Past") revolves around intense historical role-playing simulations or "games" in which students play roles, give speeches, and produce writings informed by historical texts (e.g. by Plato, Confucius, or Rousseau). Nonhonors students can often enjoy playing the roles, but marshalling arguments from the texts, which is the real pedagogical goal of these games, requires a level of preparedness more likely to be found in honors students.

CAS 101 is therefore restricted to College Scholars students, mostly in their first year at UO. College Scholars is an honors-level program open only to students with a high school GPA of 3.75 or greater and a combined SAT reading and math score of 1200 or greater (or a combined ACT score of 26 or greater).

**Content.** Content of the class, and the level of analysis, should be significantly deeper than for nonhonors classes (e.g., use of primary sources rather than texts, participation in modeling or simulation exercises, elaborating the subject in broader context or within more comprehensive theory). Please manifest this contrast in the proposal by explicit comparisons and examples.

As an intense simulation-based course, CAS 101 immerses students more deeply in the subject matter than is the case in standard lecture-and-discussion courses. This is because, in confronting one another with the words and ideas of the characters they play, students are repeatedly forced to revisit very complex arguments from multiple perspectives. In the Ming Dynasty succession crisis simulation, for example, the *Analects* of Confucius comes alive as a fount of arguments for political action—both for and against the Chinese Emperor—rather than as a dull-as-dust compendium of platitudes about filial piety, ritual, and respect for authority, which is the way it is often read. Even the best-taught conventional courses often cannot elicit this level of engagement with texts like the *Analects*, or the *Republic*, or *The Social Contract*. Preparatory and post-mortem phases ensure that the lessons of the simulation phase are reinforced by more conventional forms of instruction.

**Class size.** Classes should be small enough to promote intensive student participation. The committee expects that lectures or colloquia will be smaller than twenty students; larger lectures may be suitable if smaller discussion or lab sections of twelve or fewer students facilitate direct interaction with the faculty and other students. Other class sizes will be considered only if it is demonstrated that other factors (e.g., a cohesive student cohort, multiple instructors present in the classroom) insure the continued, active participation of all students.

CAS 101 games are designed to accommodate anywhere from 13 to 25 players; each game is field-tested and vetted by a national consortium of Reacting to the
Past educators for, among other things, optimal size. Typically we cap them at 23, though they usually enroll fewer than 20.

Intensive participation by all students is simply dictated by the need to play a role in the game and interact with other students. Positive peer pressure and the rules of the game combine to make it very difficult for any student to evade engagement. During the weeks when a game is running, students will typically run the class from start to finish—with little or no intervention by the instructor—until forced to stop two hours later by the class schedule.

Together with our freshman colloquia and various events, CAS 101 builds on, but also helps create, a cohesive student cohort within College Scholars.

**Mentoring.** The faculty member(s) teaching the course should be available for close advising outside of class. Instruction tailored to individual students or groups is encouraged.

Faculty serve as gamemasters in CAS 101 simulations, acting not only as referees but also as coaches for individual students and groups of students called “factions.” Students typically become so immersed in their roles that they seek out the instructor much more frequently than is the case in regular classes. This gives the instructor regular opportunities to assign additional readings, offer possible topics for students to research and develop in their speeches and writings, and suggest alliances or contacts with other students playing complementary roles in the game. Sometimes students spontaneously arrange to meet with each other in groups outside of class. Other times, the game rules require them to form factions based on common intellectual and political agendas peculiar to their roles. Either way, instructors act as consultants to students meeting outside of class as they feel their way through their roles.

**Faculty.** Honors classes are taught by faculty members with doctorates or other terminal degrees in their fields. Other instructors, assistants, or course visitors may only be used to accompany these principal faculty instructors in class. Proposals should identify faculty members available to teach, and explain why the course and the faculty members are a good match.

All CAS 101s are taught by PhDs, and the Rippey Endowment which helps to fund them stipulates that tenured professors teach sections supported by the endowment. Thus, of the 9 instructors that will have offered CAS 101 in 2010-11 and 2011-12, 5 are full professors, 2 are associate professors, and 2 are veteran instructors with PhDs in history with very strong teaching records. There is strong interest in teaching this class among core, tenure-related CAS faculty in a variety of relevant disciplines, so it should not be difficult to maintain this level of faculty quality.

Faculty who want to teach CAS 101 do not need to be experts to teach a game in a given field (in fact, it helps when one is not a subspecialist). But faculty do need and receive specific training, typically by attending a national training workshop hosted each year at Barnard College.
Monitoring. Honors courses are resource intensive. They can evolve as student and faculty interests change. Proposals should identify how colleges, departments, or units will monitor the continuing suitability of the course for meeting student needs and its place in the curriculum.

Prof. McNeely is specifically tasked by College Scholars with monitoring the CAS 101 curriculum. This includes recruiting faculty to teach the class and arranging for new instructors to attend the Reacting to the Past training workshop at Barnard. A national consortium maintains quality control in the Reacting to the Past, developing new games, tweaking existing ones, articulating general standards, and conducting formal assessments to study how well the pedagogy works, often as a condition of external grants supporting the program. CAS is committed to the pedagogy and has historically secured various forms of donor support to keep it going.

Articulation. Proposals should explain how the course connects to the rest of the curriculum and why the course is not suitable as a more advanced course (e.g., upper division vs. lower division) instead. Proposals should include the typical curricular paths of students eligible for this class. Proposals should include what course equivalencies are appropriate and what articulation agreements are needed.

Reacting to the Past is in principle appropriate at any level—even and especially for faculty members themselves! But we have chosen to offer it to honors first-year students (and a few upperclass students) so as to make CAS 101 a cohort-building, gateway experience for students in the College Scholars program. This is why we selected the “101” number. Resources permitting, we may someday develop upper-division courses that incorporate Reacting’s simulation pedagogy at a more advanced level without, however, duplicating CAS 101.

No articulation agreements are needed.

Implementation. An honors course will be given a unique three digit course number and an “H” suffix. Because of limitations, a multilisted course designated by an “M” may not carry an “H.” Generic course numbers, designating courses that are not reviewed, will not carry “H” suffixes. Student credit hours will be assigned as is done with regular courses.

Again, we propose converting CAS 101 into CAS 101H.
Attachment 2: Rationale for College Scholars Gen Ed courses

**Preparedness.** The academic skills needed to successfully participate are expected to be different for honors courses. Prerequisites should spell out specialized background skills (e.g., mathematics abilities, language fluency), or necessary experience or achievement (e.g., participation in an honors program, a cumulative GPA of at least 3.30 in their major). Include justification for the exclusion of nonhonors students.

College Scholars is an honors program restricted to students with a high school GPA of 3.75 or greater and a combined SAT reading and math score of 1200 or greater (or a combined ACT score of 26 or greater). Students who are invited to join the program must formally apply, indicating their future academic interests in nonbinding application statement. These admissions criteria, we believe, help ensure a minimum level of preparedness for—and commitment to—the program.

Offering Gen Ed courses restricted to College Scholars students enables instructors in the program to expect more of their students and to add enhancements to course content in some of the ways described below.

Nonhonors students will continue to have access to these same Gen Ed courses in regular formats.

**Content.** Content of the class, and the level of analysis, should be significantly deeper than for nonhonors classes (e.g., use of primary sources rather than texts, participation in modeling or simulation exercises, elaborating the subject in broader context or within more comprehensive theory). Please manifest this contrast in the proposal by explicit comparisons and examples.

The specific content enhancements found in College Scholars Gen Ed courses will vary from discipline to discipline and instructor to instructor. In every case, the College Scholars Advisory Board will use this precise content rubric to ensure that courses being offered in the program meet honors-level standards of rigor and depth.

In some cases, instructors may be able to articulate how the combination of smaller class size and better-prepared students alone ensures a deeper level of analysis of the same content found in their regular-format Gen Ed courses. In most cases, however, faculty members will be expected to incorporate specific content enhancements. These might include additional reading at a more advanced and/or theoretical level, in-class presentations and break-out exercises, written papers substituted for in-class exams, or simulation exercises.

Examples from a range of this year’s College Scholars Gen Eds include:

- **ASTR 123H (Imamura):** additional text and other secondary sources required; more intensive engagement between faculty and students owing to small class size; separation into small groups during lecture for performance of in-class laboratory exercises; other time-intensive exercises such as evaluation of required written reports.
• EC 201 (Harbaugh): each student personally assigned an additional book to read in one-on-one consultation with the instructor (examples include *The Worldly Philosophers* or *Thinking Strategically*); each student then discusses his/her assigned book in office hours one-on-one. Also: in-class economics experiments with students as both assistants and experimental subjects (example: supply-and-demand simulation involving a vote on a tax); brings professor’s own research on experimental economics into the classroom.

• CLAS 314 (Bowditch): addition of 10 one-page reading responses based on questions circulated 24-48 hours in advance by instructor (2 questions, 2 paragraphs, often analyzing primary-source passages); addition of advanced secondary reading on gender in antiquity—e.g. on Marxist and psychoanalytic interpretations of primary-source texts read in the class.

**Class size.** Classes should be small enough to promote intensive student participation. The committee expects that lectures or colloquia will be smaller than twenty students; larger lectures may be suitable if smaller discussion or lab sections of twelve or fewer students facilitate direct interaction with the faculty and other students. Other class sizes will be considered only if it is demonstrated that other factors (e.g., a cohesive student cohort, multiple instructors present in the classroom) insure the continued, active participation of all students.

In the future, College Scholars Gen Eds will be capped at 22 (to date, enrollments have varied from 9 to 35), which only slightly exceeds the recommended 20-person cutoff. We think that the cohesiveness of the student cohort warrants a bit of leeway in terms of class size. So too do specific content enhancements, such as small-group work, ensuring that students who may otherwise be reluctant to participate will be incentivized to do so.

Again, the program requirements are designed to generate a cohesive student cohort. These requirements include mandatory CAS 101 (Reacting to the Past) and CAS 110/120/130 (freshman colloquium) courses as well as external programming. A cohort spirit helps break the ice and lower the psychological hurdle that keeps more reserved students from participating.

**Mentoring.** The faculty member(s) teaching the course should be available for close advising outside of class. Instruction tailored to individual students or groups is encouraged.

We will ask faculty members to make a specific commitment to advising and mentoring articulated on the syllabus and reinforced in class meetings. We will ensure that each faculty member, in addition to offering advice on his/her own course and discipline, is also familiar with the specific requirements and general philosophy of the College Scholars program. We want students to see faculty a key resource for guidance as they plot their way through the College’s offerings. This enhances what is already the main purpose of the mandatory freshman colloquia.

**Faculty.** Honors classes are taught by faculty members with doctorates or other terminal degrees in their fields. Other instructors, assistants, or course visitors may only be used to accompany
these principal faculty instructors in class. Proposals should identify faculty members available to teach, and explain why the course and the faculty members are a good match.

All of these classes will be taught by regular career faculty who in most cases are already tenured. Our instructors typically already teach the conventional, non-honors versions of these same classes and so by definition are a good match.

We have had very good success recruiting distinguished faculty to offer these Gen Eds and intend to maintain that track record in the future. Again, this year’s list includes Lowell Bowditch (Classics), Rick Colby (Religious Studies), Bill Harbaugh (Economics), Jim Imamura (Physics), Bonnie Mann (Philosophy), Josh Snodgrass (Anthropology), and Michael Stern (German & Scandinavian). All of these faculty are tenured.

**Monitoring.** Honors courses are resource intensive. They can evolve as student and faculty interests change. Proposals should identify how colleges, departments, or units will monitor the continuing suitability of the course for meeting student needs and its place in the curriculum.

The College Scholars Advisory Board meets regularly to monitor and make adjustments to the entire program—its curriculum, enrollments, financing, and relations to other departments and units, including the Honors College. The Director is also supported by the deans and administrative staff of CAS and by the CAS 101 coordinator.

Currently we are seeking to increase the number of students actively participating in the College Scholars curriculum. Attrition over the course of the first two years is a recurring problem. If we succeed in reversing this trend, we will remain vigilant against the possibility that increased student participation will end up putting pressure on the class sizes for our Gen Ed courses.

**Articulation.** Proposals should explain how the course connects to the rest of the curriculum and why the course is not suitable as a more advanced course (e.g., upper division vs. lower division) instead. Proposals should include the typical curricular paths of students eligible for this class. Proposals should include what course equivalencies are appropriate and what articulation agreements are needed.

Again, these courses are more intensive versions of existing Gen Ed courses, but are not more advanced in terms of content. As with any Gen Ed course, they do not have specific prerequisites (besides the need to meet the College Scholars admissions criteria) or fall into a required sequence. Students’ typical curricular path is just as it is for conventional Gen Ed courses.

By adding “H”s to existing courses, instead of creating a new set of courses and course numbers, we hope to avoid any articulation problems. It is our understanding, pending confirmation by the Registrar, that adding “H”s in effect only modifies the transcript by adding an honorific, and does not otherwise change the way the course shows up in degree audits or other automated course-tracking systems. Nor will any articulation agreements be affected by this
change, because these courses will count for that purpose in the same way as their non-honors equivalents.

This is another reason why adding “H”s to existing courses strikes us as a more elegant and straightforward alternative to the creation of a raft of entirely new courses.

**Implementation.** An honors course will be given a unique three digit course number and an “H” suffix. Because of limitations, a multilisted course designated by an “M” may not carry an “H.” Generic course numbers, designating courses that are not reviewed, will not carry “H” suffixes. Student credit hours will be assigned as is done with regular courses.

We will work with the Registrar’s Office to implement these changes.