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To Whom It May Concern,

As the Interim Undergraduate Director in Department of Classics, and also as an OSU Professor who is himself committed to innovative pedagogy that bridges the Humanities and the Arts, I write to offer my support for the brilliant Team-Teaching proposal ‘Odysseus in the Oculus Rift’, by Tom Hawkins (Classics) and Ken Rinaldo (Art). This is a truly exciting and original course, that builds on a developing research collaboration between two of our most dynamic Faculty in the Arts & Sciences college, and brings it alive and kicking into the classroom. Judging from the proposal, this would be a wonderful course for a whole range of students, but it would be especially important for our department and our Classics majors, who are constantly searching for courses that approach the ancient world from a vibrant and contemporary perspective. By revitalizing ancient literary and philosophical texts with expansive and experimental art and technology perspectives, Hawkins and Rinaldo’s course projects the future of our discipline and offers a new model for interactive, interdisciplinary work between Arts, Humanities and Sciences.

Like any Classics course, ‘Odysseus in the Oculus Rift’ is committed to the perennial questions of the human experience, specifically how we relate to other life-forms (plants, animals), supernatural and mechanical beings (gods, monsters, robots) and moralizing figures and ideas (e.g. heroes, superheroes and mortality). However, the means by which Hawkins and Rinaldo will set out to engage these questions and themes will do nothing short of revolutionize how the discipline of Classics can be perceived in the 21st century. Rather than as an elitist, stuffy and irrelevant subject, this course will show how Classics can engage in and collaborate with the creative and technological ambitions of the contemporary world.

Furthermore, by combining the expertise of these two extraordinary professors in a single class is an important way for the College to support new ways for cutting-edge research activities to filter into the University classroom. For example, just imagine how students will react to the combination of Prof. Rinaldo’s incredible Cyclops-like robotic-animal hybrid *Fusiform Polyphony* taught side-by-side with Hawkins’ approach to the Polyphemus episode in Homer’s *Odyssey* in terms of his own new research project on ideas of ugliness, disgust in ancient animal/human

bodies and narratives, across the Greek and Roman genres of iambic and fable, satire and the novel? It will be team-teaching at its most exciting, dynamic and effective.

In my own explorations of the interface between Classics and Contemporary Art, I have found that the most fruitful and transformative ways of approaching the topic is to look for broad currents and themes, rather than direct or allusive reference. With the bridging of the humanist questions of Homer's *Odyssey*, Attic tragedy and philosophy with experimental artistic and technological approaches and activities, this course would be a brilliant opportunity for students to test this for themselves. Perhaps most importantly Hawkins and Rinaldo would encourage a dramatic cross-fertilization of teaching methods that straddle the Humanities, Arts and Sciences.

I cannot support this proposal strongly enough. It is fresh, exciting and the students will gain an experience into a remarkable fusion of ancient and modern that will be nothing short of a transformative.

Yours faithfully,

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