**General Education Course Inclusion Proposal**

**INTEGRATIVE THINKING**

*This proposal form is intended for departments proposing a course for inclusion in the Northern Michigan University General Education Program. Courses in a component satisfy both the Critical Thinking and the component learning outcomes. Departments should complete this form and submit it electronically through the General Education SHARE site.*

**Course Name and Number:** Introduction to Philosophy, PL 100

**Home Department:** Philosophy

**Department Chair Name and Contact Information** (phone, email): Keith Kendall (kkendall@nmu.edu)

**Expected frequency of Offering of the course** (e.g. every semester, every fall): every semester

**Official Course Status**: Has this course been approved by CUP and Senate? YES

*Courses that have not yet been approved by CUP must be submitted to CUP prior to review by GEC. Note that GEC is able to review courses that are in the process of approval; however, inclusion in the General Education Program is dependent upon Senate and Academic Affairs approval of the course into the overall curriculum.*

**Overview of course** (please attach a current syllabus as well): *Please limit the overview to two pages (not including the syllabus)*

1. Overview of the course content

This course serves as an introduction to major philosophical questions, problems, concepts, and theories in the history of western philosophy. The course also provides students with an understanding of several of the main areas of philosophy: logic, epistemology (theory of knowledge), philosophy of mind, and ethics or feminist theory. The goal of the course is for students to become familiar with central problems, concepts, figures, theories, and methodologies in this philosophical tradition.

By the end of the course, students are expected to do be able to do each of the following: 1. identify key philosophical problems, figures, concepts, theories, and methodology. 2. understand the primary concerns and competing theoretical answers (and differences between them) to fundamental philosophical problems (e.g., the nature of mind, the nature of knowledge, the nature of the moral good), and 3. integrate and apply knowledge of both the standards and methodology of philosophical analysis (e.g., dialectical method) to a range of philosophical and new contexts .

1. Explain why this course satisfies the Component specified and significantly addresses both learning outcomes

**Critical Thinking Component:**

Virtually the entire course is designed to encourage, teach, and test the skill of critical thinking. Critical thinking is, in effect, the primary methodology of western philosophy, by which its history and theories unfold: its theories, concepts, arguments, proceed by way of argument construction, argument analysis, synthesizing different components of arguments, etc., as the practitioner seeks the best understanding of key philosophical problems. Every element of the course, including each learning-module and the means by which mastery of the module’s content is assessed, is essentially an exercise in critical thinking.

**Evidence:** To satisfy the evidence dimension, the students in PL 100 are *consistently required* to evaluate the basis of assertions, positions, theories, etc., and they do so with each topic throughout the course. Such analysis in terms of evidence or justification is one of the major focuses of the course, and a primary skill the students develop in the course. Indeed, a *majority of course materials* focus on the critical assessment of philosophical theories, efforts to analyze their inadequacies, and to understand how later theories develop out of the critique of earlier theories.

**Integrate:** To satisfy the integrate component, students are required to apply the readings from core course components (e.g., logic and theory of knowledge) to both “real life” examples and to philosophical examples which pose concrete questions about the nature of the material world, the nature of perception, the nature of mind, the moral good, and so on.

**Evaluate:** Again, students in the course *throughout the course* must engage in critically evaluating numerous possible answers to fundamental philosophical questions. This is a focus throughout the course. Students evaluate these answers and theories both in accordance with criteria of evidence and in terms of their foundation in reason. Because much of the history of philosophical positions itself unfolds as a response to such evaluation, students cannot master the course material without both learning how those critical evaluations work and by practicing their own skills at critical evaluation.

**Integrative Thinking Component:**

**Connections to Experience** Dimension: Students must use the knowledge gained in each of the course modules to evaluate real-world problems: for example, from the logic component of the course, students must apply their knowledge of fallacious reasoning to concrete examples of reasoning. More generally, students must use their knowledge gained in the course to evaluate a range of problems they encounter is everyday life (disputes about whose opinion is correct or justified, assessment of the validity by which others arrive at conclusions, evaluation of competing reasons for or against an ethical position).

**Transfer:** Students in the course must apply the knowledge they acquire through the reading to the evaluation of new problems or arguments periodically throughout the course.

**Integrated Communication:** Students must apply core philosophical concepts and theories to a variety of philosophical questions and issues. To fulfill this dimension, students will be provided a choice of either developing formal argument outlines or writing argument analysis essays.

Because the nature of introductory philosophy courses is inherently tied to critical thinking and to integrative thinking, the assessments used throughout the course are necessarily tied to both of these objectives. (Below, however, I identify and describe the assessments explicitly tied to particular dimensions of these outcomes.) To assess each of these dimensions, students must take a number of quizzes and exams, and write either formal argument outlines or argument analysis essays. In exams, in addition to answering multiple-choice questions, students will be given a choice between developing their own formal outline of philosophical arguments or writing an essay analysis of those arguments.

1. Describe the target audience (level, student groups, etc.)

The target audience for Introduction to Philosophy is primarily incoming freshman who have no prior exposure to philosophy. Ordinarily, the students either are seeking to fulfill a general studies requirement or have a vague interest in exploring philosophical questions.

1. Give information on other roles this course may serve (e.g. University Requirement, required for a major(s), etc.)

Historically, this course has served to help students fill general education requirements, but it also counts toward both a minor and a major in philosophy.

E. Provide any other information that may be relevant to the review of the course by GEC

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
CRITICAL THINKING**

*Attainment of the CRITICAL THINKING Learning Outcome is required for courses in this component. There are several dimensions to this learning outcome. Please complete the following Plan for Assessment with information regarding course assignments (type, frequency, importance) that will be used by the department to assess the attainment of students in each of the dimensions of the learning outcome. Type refers to the types of assignments used for assessment such as written work, presentations, etc. Frequency refers to the number of assignments included such as a single paper or multiple papers. Importance refers to the relative emphasis or weight of the assignment to the entire course. For each dimension, please specify the expected success rate for students completing the course that meet the proficiency level and explain your reasoning. Please refer to the Critical Thinking Rubric for more information on student performance/proficiency in this area. Note that courses are expected to meaningfully address all dimensions of the learning outcome.*

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| **DIMENSION** | **WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| **Evidence** | Assesses quality of information that may be integrated into an argument | *For each dimension*, the student’s level of achievement is measured by a series of quizzes, tests, and/or essays. The questions on the means of assessment are designed to assess the student’s ability to evaluate evidence in relation to arguments or positions, to apply their course knowledge (especially regarding reasoning and standards of evidence) to reach a deeper understanding and a critical evaluation of the concepts, problems, and theories on which the quizzes, tests, and/ or papers focus.  Often times, owing to the nature of the material covered in readings and lectures, simply a clear grasp of the theories, concepts, and objections to the theories is itself a sufficient means of assessing whether the students have become proficient in each of the three dimensions.  The course will assess *each dimension* of the Critical Thinking Outcome by means of ten quizzes, 4 exams, and multiple Integrated Communication questions (see below) either embedded in the quizzes or exams or separately assigned. While some dimensions will be weighted more heavily on certain assessments (for example, logic and reasoning will be weighted more heavily in the reasoning module; evidence evaluation will be weighted more heavily in the epistemology module, and so on), each dimension will nonetheless be assessed by each exam and/or essay.  Type and Frequency:  Quizzes: approximately every ten days (10 in total)  Exams: approximately one per month (3, if independent essays are assigned; 4, if essays are embedded in the exams).  Essays: approximately every 3 weeks.  Weight: Quizzes will count for 20% of the student’s overall grade. Exams will count for 20 % of the student’s grade (Slightly less, if independent writing assignments are assigned). If independent of the exams, the essays will count for 20 % of the student’s grade.  The expected proficiency with respect to the multiple choice portion of the assessments is 75%. Based on 2 decades of teaching the course, I find the majority of students do reach the “proficient” level of achievement. However, because the subject and methods of philosophy are almost entirely new to the majority of students, and because many students find the subject and methods of philosophy quite challenging, approximately 25 % of students will not reach the proficiency level.  The expected proficiency with respect to the formal argument outlines or essays in the course assessments is somewhat lower, approximately 65-70 %. Students seem to struggle with the nature of the criteria by which formal arguments and essays are evaluated in philosophy courses, and in addition to grappling with unusual and difficult subject matter and material, this makes it less probable that the students will achieve higher than 70 %.  **Specifics:**  Type: Specific assessments most explicitly tied to the Evidence Dimension are the assessments covering 1. Logic/reasoning, 2. Theory of knowledge.  Frequency: There are a total of 4 quizzes and 2 exams covering these areas explicitly tied to the Evidence Dimension.  Weight: The assessments explicitly tied to the Evidence Dimension have the following weights:  Quizzes: 40% of the total Quizzes; Exams: 50 % of the total Exams. |
| **Integrate** | Integrates insight and or reasoning with existing understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding | (See general explanation above.)  **Specifics:**  Type: Specific Assessments most explicitly tied to the Integration Dimension are the assessments covering 1. Logic/Reasoning, 2. Theory of knowledge, 3. Ethics, 4. Philosophy of Mind. In addition to quizzes, there are individual exams covering each of these areas.  Frequency: Quizzes about every 10 days; exams every 4 weeks. Weight: Because virtually all of the assessments in the course are assessments of this dimension, the weight is 100%. |
| **Evaluate** | Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines | (See general explanation above.)  **Specifics:**  Type: Specific assessments most explicitly tied to the Evaluate Dimension are the assessments covering 1. Logic/Reasoning, 2.Theory of Knowledge, and 3. Ethics. In addition to quizzes on each of these, there are 3 individual exams covering each of these major areas.  Frequency: 6 Quizzes; 3 Exams over the semester.  Weight: Since about ¾ of the course materials address this dimension, the weight is about 75%. |

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
INTEGRATIVE THINKING**

*Attainment of the INTEGRATIVE THINKING Learning Outcome is required for courses in this component. There are several dimensions to this learning outcome. Please complete the following Plan for Assessment with information regarding course assignments (type, frequency, importance) that will be used by the department to assess the attainment of students in each of the dimensions of the learning outcome. Type refers to the types of assignments used for assessment such as written work, presentations, etc. Frequency refers to the number of assignments included such as a single paper or multiple papers. Importance refers to the relative emphasis or weight of the assignment to the entire course. For each dimension, please specify the expected success rate for students completing the course that meet the proficiency level and explain your reasoning. Please refer to the Rubric for more information on student performance/proficiency in this learning outcome. Note that courses are expected to meaningfully address all dimensions of the learning outcome.*

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| **DIMENSION** | **WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| **Connections to Experience**  *OR* | Connects academic knowledge to experiences | Because of the nature of the course subjects or learning modules in this course, students will necessarily have to make connections to their own experience throughout the course. The core learning modules into which the course is divided each apply to a fundamental component of every student’s experience: the reasoning component applies to virtually all thinking and conversing; theories of knowledge apply to virtually all belief and knowledge formation; ethical theory applies to daily personal and political contexts, and so on.  The means of assessment for each of the dimensions of integrative thinking will again be largely the same for each dimension.  Specific Assessments types for this outcome include 4 exams and 10 quizzes.  Frequency: Approximately one quiz every ten days and one exam every four weeks.  Importance: Each exam will count for 20 % of the total course grade; the quizzes will be equally weighted and the combined quiz total will account for 20 % of the total course grade.  (The third dimension will be more directly assessed by the student’s choice between formal argument outlines or written argument analysis essays (either embedded in the quizzes and/or exams or independently assigned essays). See below under Integrated Communication. )  Again, *For each dimension*, the student’s level of achievement is measured by a series of quizzes, tests, and/or essays.  Expected proficiency for multiple choice questions is 75%, as justified above.  Expected proficiency for essay component is between 65-70 %, as justified above.  **Specifics:** Type: Assessments most explicitly tied to the Connection to Experience Dimension are the assessments covering 1. Logic/reasoning, 2. Theory of Knowledge, 3. Ethics, 4. Philosophy of mind.  Frequency: Quizzes every ten days; Exams every 4 weeks.  Weight: Because this dimension is emphasized in the materials throughout the course, this dimension’s weight is 100%. |
| **Connections to Discipline** | Makes connections across disciplines |  |
| **Transfer** | Adapts and applies skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation to new situations | All skills learned in the course with respect to reasoning, evaluating evidence, and understanding the criteria for the justification of belief apply across the board to experience. Therefore, to the extent that students master these skills, they will automatically apply them to new situations. Equally, the skills and abilities the students acquire in the reasoning section of the course are needed throughout on each of the assessments which in every case test the student’s reasoning: this is the foundation of philosophy, and therefore is rightly tested by all assessments.  Types: 10 quizzes and 4 exams.  Frequency: One quiz approximately every ten days and one exam every four weeks.  Importance: Each exam will count for 20 % of the total course grade; the quizzes will be equally weighted and the combined quiz total will account for 20 % of the total course grade.  Expected proficiency for multiple-choice questions is 75%, as justified above.  Expected proficiency for argument outlines or argument essays is between 65-70 %, as justified above.  **Specifics:**  Assessments more explicitly tied to the Transfer Dimension include the assessments on 1. Logic/Reasoning, and 2. Ethics.  Type: Quizzes and Exams  Frequency: 4 quizzes; 2 exams.  Weight: approximately 50%. |
| **Integrated Communication** | Communicates complex concepts by choosing appropriate content and form | **Specifics:**  Type: This dimension will be primarily assessed by allowing students to *choose between* developing a *formal outline* of the relevant philosophical arguments (formally numbering premises, conclusions, and identifying the relevant inferences) *or* developing an *essay analysis* of the relevant philosophical arguments, or, for their final exam, developing a PowerPoint Presentation in which they carefully and accurately present their analysis of the relevant philosophical arguments. Each choice will require students to use complex philosophical concepts clearly and accurately, and to apply them to appropriate content and in an appropriate form.  This dimension will also be informally evaluated every week in the course through student responses to forum questions: for their forum responses, students will be able to choose between posting a formal argument outline or posting a written argument analysis using the central concepts for the week’s content, or posting a voice podcast in which they provide an oral analysis that makes use of the central concept for the week’s content.  Frequency: Integrated communication formal assessment will take place periodically throughout the course, approximately every third week. This dimension will also be informally assessed every week in “low stakes” forum assignment (see above).  Importance: Approximately 20% of each of 3 exams.  Expected proficiency for formal argument outlines or argument essay component is between 65-70 %, as justified above. |