

# General Education Course Inclusion Proposal

## PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY

*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:** PL180 Fundamentals of Ethical Theory

**Home Department:** Philosophy

**Department Coordinator Name and Contact Information** (phone, email): Antony Aumann (x1682, [aaumann@nmu.edu](mailto:aaumann@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)*

### A. Overview of the course content

The goal of PL180 is to help students investigate philosophical questions concerning the nature of ethics. Ethics is the branch of philosophy that considers questions about good/bad, right/wrong, virtue/vice. The aim is to introduce students to important ethical theories, types of ethical reasoning inspired by those theories, and to critical thinking about various ethical issues.

By the end of the course, students should be able to (1) comprehend, question, and analyze philosophical texts about ethics, (2) identify the significant theories of ethics, discuss differing perspectives on these issues, and explain the justifications given for the different perspectives, and (3) formulate and defend a philosophical thesis about an ethical issue.

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

**Critical Thinking Component:** To satisfy the *Evidence* outcome dimension, PL180 requires students to analyze the ~~real-world~~ examples, ~~armchair~~ intuitions, and theoretical assumptions relied on in the philosophical arguments concerning ethics contained in the assigned readings. **Students must uncover assumptions made in the arguments, consider whether the examples used in the readings are appropriate to the subject matter, and consider whether to trust the author's intuitions about the examples.** (Intuitions are a primary 'data' source for philosophy. Authors will often describe a case and then prompt the reader to consider whether she finds the conduct in the case right or wrong.) To assess this dimension, PL180 will require students to complete weekly one-page reading responses or similarly substantive reading quizzes.

To satisfy the *Integrate* outcome dimension, PL180 requires students to synthesize ideas contained in assigned readings and their own personal experience concerning ethics in order to develop philosophical positions of their own.

This demands students make connections between their own lives and the topics and issues in the readings. Further, students must consider which aspects of various theories they encounter should be retained and which should be rejected. To assess this dimension, PL180 will require students to complete weekly one-page reading responses or similarly substantive reading quizzes.

To satisfy the *Evaluate* outcome dimension, PL180 requires students to appraise the logical merits of philosophical arguments concerning ethics presented in assigned readings. This requires students consider whether philosophical positions are consistent with each other and relevant examples given in the readings, as well as consider whether the theories they encounter and develop are well-supported. To assess this dimension, PL180 will require students to complete weekly one-page reading responses or similarly substantive reading quizzes.

**Perspectives on Society Component:** To satisfy the *Analysis of Society* outcome dimension, PL180 requires students to use the ideas and arguments discussed in the assigned readings or in class to analyze ethical issues that are of current societal interest. This obliges students to make connections between the course material and current issues of interest. For example, students might apply a theory encountered in the readings to help consider whether it is morally permissible to utilize nonhuman animals for nourishment. To satisfy this dimension, PL180 will require students to write argumentative papers where they defend an ethical position discussed in class and the readings.

To satisfy the *Ethical Issues* outcome dimension, PL180 requires students to use classical and contemporary philosophical views regarding ethics and morality to identify the reasons why people hold the views they do regarding ethical issues within their society. This demands that students see the connections between the theories they encounter in the class and common patterns of thinking they observe, in particular, they must consider how people who object to their position might reply and what they should say in response. To satisfy this dimension, PL180 will require students to write argumentative papers where they defend an ethical position discussed in class and the readings.

To satisfy the *Development and Context of Society* outcome dimension, PL180 requires students to use major ethical themes to understand the viewpoints of others who disagree with them about relevant ethical issues. This requires students appreciate the reasons why other people hold the positions they do and to understand why, to those people, their positions seem reasonable. To satisfy this dimension, PL180 will require students to write argumentative papers where they defend an ethical position discussed in class and the readings.

### **C. Describe the target audience (level, student groups, etc.)**

PL180 is an introductory-level philosophy course. It is intended to both give philosophy majors/minors an overview of the major theories of/approaches to ethics and also to introduce students with no prior background in philosophy to the topics and methods of philosophy. The class does not presuppose any background knowledge of philosophy or ethics.

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

PL180 is a recommended elective for the philosophy major and minors. It is not a requirement or elective for any other major or minor.

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

PL180 is approved by CUP.

Please see syllabus in separate file (embedded links did not work well).

**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.

DIMENSION	DIMENSION GUIDANCE	PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT
<b>Evidence</b>	Assesses quality of information that may be integrated into an argument	<p><b>Task Type:</b> Reading response papers or quizzes. Completing these papers or quizzes involves analyzing evidence, integrating ideas, <i>and</i> evaluating arguments. <b>Students must consider what information in the reading is relevant to particular claims made in the reading.</b></p> <p><b>Frequency:</b> Weekly (14 per semester)☐</p> <p><b>Overall Grading Weight:</b> 20%☐Expected Proficiency Rate: 75%.☐</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Philosophy requires students to reflect in an unusually sustained and careful fashion about very abstract issues. Most students find it challenging. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status here.</p>
<b>Integrate</b>	Integrates insight and or reasoning with previous understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding	<p><b>Task Type:</b> Reading response papers or quizzes. Completing these papers or quizzes involves analyzing evidence, integrating ideas, <i>and</i> evaluating arguments. <b>Students must update their own views about what people who hold a particular position believe in light of new evidence in the text.</b></p> <p><b>Frequency:</b> Weekly (14 per semester)☐</p> <p><b>Overall Grading Weight:</b> 20%☐</p> <p><b>Expected Proficiency Rate:</b> 75%.☐</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Philosophy requires students to reflect in an unusually sustained and careful fashion about very abstract issues. Most students find it challenging. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status here.</p>
<b>Evaluate</b>	Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines	<p><b>Task Type:</b> Reading response papers or quizzes. Completing these papers or quizzes involves analyzing evidence, integrating ideas, <i>and</i> evaluating arguments. <b>Students must consider whether the views they encounter in the text are reasonable, consistent, and logically supported given the information present in the text.</b></p> <p><b>Frequency:</b> Weekly (14 per semester)☐</p> <p><b>Overall Grading Weight:</b> 20%☐</p> <p><b>Expected Proficiency Rate:</b> 75%.☐</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Philosophy requires students to reflect in an unusually sustained and careful fashion about very abstract issues. Most students find it challenging. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status here.</p>

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY**

Attainment of the PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY 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.

DIMENSION	WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED	PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT
<b>Analysis of society</b>	Analysis of social issues, structures and processes or events	<p><b>Task Type:</b> Argumentative paper. Completing these papers involves analyzing social issues, ethical issues, <i>and</i> exploring themes in the development of human society. <b>For example, students might write a paper which involves the consideration of which types of nonhuman animals we typically use for food.</b></p> <p><b>Frequency:</b> Twice</p> <p><b>Overall Grading Weight:</b> 35% (15% and 20%)</p> <p><b>Expected Proficiency Rate:</b> 75%.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Philosophy requires students to reflect in an unusually sustained and careful fashion about very abstract issues. Most students find it challenging. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status here.</p>
<b>Ethical Issues</b>	Addressing ethical issues in society	<p><b>Task Type:</b> Argumentative paper. Completing these papers involves analyzing social issues, ethical issues, <i>and</i> exploring themes in the development of human society. <b>The above paper would involve considering the ethics of the use of such nonhuman animals for food.</b></p> <p><b>Frequency:</b> Twice</p> <p><b>Overall Grading Weight:</b> 35% (15% and 20%) <b>Expected Proficiency Rate:</b> 75%.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Philosophy requires students to reflect in an unusually sustained and careful fashion about very abstract issues. Most students find it challenging. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status here.</p>
<b>Development and context of society</b>	Explore themes in the development of human society	<p><b>Task Type:</b> Argumentative paper. Completing these papers involves analyzing social issues, ethical issues, <i>and</i> exploring themes in the development of human society. <b>A persistent theme in human societies is our degree of dependence on and interaction with nonhuman species. Thus, the paper would also involve an exploration of this common theme.</b></p> <p><b>Frequency:</b> Twice</p> <p><b>Overall Grading Weight:</b> 35% (15% and 20%)</p> <p><b>Expected Proficiency Rate:</b> 75%.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Philosophy requires students to reflect in an unusually sustained and careful fashion about very abstract issues. Most students find it challenging. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status here.</p>