

# General Education Course Inclusion Proposal

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD

*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:** PL 270 World Religions

**Home Department:** Philosophy

**Department Chair Name and Contact Information** (phone, email): Chet DeFonso (cdefonso@nmu.edu)

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

**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 PL 270 is to help students investigate, understand, and analyze the beliefs, practices, and history of major world religions.

By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to do the following: (1) identify the central beliefs, practices, and historical events of several major world religions; (2) compare the views of these religions regarding issues such as the nature of divinity, the afterlife, violence, interfaith dialogue, sexuality, race, and the role of women; and (3) evaluate different perspectives on the ethical, social, political, theological, and philosophical problems facing these religions.

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

**Critical Thinking Component:** To satisfy the *Evidence* outcome dimension, PL 270 requires students to select ideas drawn from scholarly texts, sacred scriptures, classroom lecture, and personal experience that support their analysis of the beliefs, practices, and history of major world religions. To satisfy the *Integrate* outcome dimension, PL 270 requires students to synthesize ideas contained in scholarly texts, sacred scriptures, and classroom lecture with their existing knowledge and experience in order to develop new insights regarding the beliefs, practices, and history of major world religions. To satisfy the *Evaluate* outcome dimension, PL 270 requires students to appraise the merits of the claims and arguments contained in scholarly texts or sacred scriptures regarding the beliefs, practices, and history of major world religions.

To assess all three dimensions, PL 270 requires students to write weekly one-page reading response papers as well as two research papers. Completing each of these assignments requires analyzing evidence, integrating ideas, *and* evaluating arguments.

**Social Responsibility in a Diverse World Component:** To satisfy the *Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks* dimension, PL 270 requires students to demonstrate knowledge of the beliefs, practices, and historical events central to major world religions. To satisfy the *Intercultural Awareness* dimension, PL 270 requires students to compare and contrast the views of multiple world religions regarding issues such as the nature of divinity, the afterlife, violence, interfaith dialogue, sexuality, race, and the role of women. To satisfy the *Intercultural Engagement* dimension, PL 270 requires students to raise questions, pose problems, and develop positions regarding the beliefs, practices, and history of religions other than their own. To satisfy the *Ethical Issue Recognition* dimension, PL 270 requires students to analyze the views of at least one major religion regarding an ethical issue such as the role of women in religion, the morality of homosexuality, racial segregation, and violence committed in the name of religion.

To assess the *Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks* dimension, PL 270 requires students to take a series of in-class multiple-choice tests. To assess the *Intercultural Awareness* dimension, PL 270 requires students to write two research papers that involve comparing and contrasting the views of different major world religions. To assess the *Intercultural Engagement* dimension, PL 270 requires students to write weekly reading response papers that involve critically reflecting on major religions other than their own. To assess the *Ethical Issue Recognition* dimension, PL 270 requires students to write one research paper that involves comparing and contrasting the views or practices of major world religions regarding an ethical issue. (One of the two research papers for the class must be dedicated to an ethical issue.)

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

PL 270 has a broad target audience. It is, of course, partly for those few who wish to head into the ministry. But religion plays an important role in many other fields, including anthropology, art, English, history, international studies, philosophy, political science, and sociology. PL 270 draws students from these disciplines who wish to explore the religious dimension of their major. In addition, PL 270 draws students with a purely personal interest in religion. Some of these students want to delve more deeply into their own religious heritage. Others wish to investigate traditions other than the one(s) they encountered in their early childhoods (typically Christianity).

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

PL 270 is an elective for Philosophy majors and minors as well as for Religious Studies minors. It is a required course for International Studies majors.

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

Typically taught by Antony Aumann and Sirpa Heide Nelson.

**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.*

<b>DIMENSION</b>	<b>WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED</b>	<b>PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT</b>
<b>Evidence</b>	Assesses quality of information that may be integrated into an argument	<p><b>Task Type and Frequency:</b> 1-page reading response papers (weekly) and research papers (2 per semester). Completing each of these assignments requires analyzing evidence, integrating ideas, <i>and</i> evaluating arguments.</p> <p><b>Overall Grading Weight:</b> 40%</p> <p><b>Expected Proficiency Rate:</b> 75%</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Religious Studies requires students to reflect in a sustained and careful fashion about complex and foreign systems of thought. Most students find it difficult. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status.</p>
<b>Integrate</b>	Integrates insight and or reasoning with existing understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding	<p><b>Task Type and Frequency:</b> 1-page reading response papers (weekly) and research papers (2 per semester). Completing each of these assignments requires analyzing evidence, integrating ideas, <i>and</i> evaluating arguments.</p> <p><b>Overall Grading Weight:</b> 40%</p> <p><b>Expected Proficiency Rate:</b> 75%</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Religious Studies requires students to reflect in a sustained and careful fashion about complex and foreign systems of thought. Most students find it difficult. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status.</p>
<b>Evaluate</b>	Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines	<p><b>Task Type and Frequency:</b> 1-page reading response papers (weekly) and research papers (2 per semester). Completing each of these assignments requires analyzing evidence, integrating ideas, <i>and</i> evaluating arguments.</p> <p><b>Overall Grading Weight:</b> 40%</p> <p><b>Expected Proficiency Rate:</b> 75%</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Religious Studies requires students to reflect in a sustained and careful fashion about complex and foreign systems of thought. Most students find it difficult. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status.</p>

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD**

*Attainment of the SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD 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.*

<b>DIMENSION</b>	<b>WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED</b>	<b>PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT</b>
<b>Knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks</b>	Knowledge of elements important to members of another culture	<b>Task Type and Frequency:</b> Tests (6 per semester). These tests will assess factual and theoretical knowledge of religion. <b>Overall Grading Weight:</b> 45% <b>Expected Proficiency Rate:</b> 75%. <b>Rationale:</b> Religious Studies requires students to acquire in-depth knowledge of complex and foreign systems of thought. Most students find it difficult. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status.
<b>Intercultural Awareness</b>	Awareness of multiple cultural perspectives	<b>Task Type and Frequency:</b> Research papers (2 per semester). Completing these papers will involve comparing and contrasting the views of different major world religions. <b>Overall Grading Weight:</b> 20% <b>Expected Proficiency Rate:</b> 75%. <b>Rationale:</b> Religious Studies requires students to reflect in a sustained and careful fashion about complex, foreign systems of thought. Most students find it difficult. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status.
<b>Intercultural Engagement</b>	Being willing to engage with cultures other than one’s own	<b>Task Type and Frequency:</b> 1-page reading response papers (weekly). Completing these papers will involve critically reflecting on major religions other than the students’ own. <b>Overall Grading Weight:</b> 20% <b>Expected Proficiency Rate:</b> 75%. <b>Rationale:</b> Religious Studies requires students to reflect in a sustained and careful fashion about complex foreign systems of thought. Most students find it difficult. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status.
<b>Ethical Issue Recognition</b>	Awareness of ethical issues as they relate to cultures	<b>Task Type and Frequency:</b> Research paper (1 per semester). At least one of the two research papers required for the class will

		<p>involve comparing and contrasting the views or practices of major world religions regarding an <i>ethical</i> issue.</p> <p><b>Overall Grading Weight:</b> 10%</p> <p><b>Expected Proficiency Rate:</b> 75%.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Religious Studies requires students to reflect in a sustained and careful fashion about complex foreign systems of thought. Most students find it difficult. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status.</p>
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