

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: PL 280 Philosophy of Religion

Home Department: Philosophy

Department Coordinator Name and Contact Information (phone, email): Antony Aumann (aaumann@nmu.edu)

Expected frequency of Offering of the course (e.g. every semester, every fall): Every third 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 primary goal of PL 280 is to help students investigate classical and contemporary arguments for and against the existence of God. Along the way, the course helps students examine questions such as the following: What is the nature of God? Is it coherent for God to be all-powerful? What about all-knowing? Does modern science undermine belief in miracles? Can more than one religion be true? Finally, does reason and logic even matter when it comes to faith?

By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to do the following: (1) analyze and discuss philosophical texts pertaining to religion; (2) articulate and critique arguments concerning a variety of issues in the philosophy of religion; and (3) construct a coherent argument for their own view on an important topic in the field.

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

Critical Thinking Component: To satisfy the *Evidence* dimension, PL 280 requires students to analyze the real-world examples, armchair intuitions, and theoretical frameworks relied on in philosophical arguments concerning religion. PL 280 assesses this dimension in two ways: (a) weekly responses to the assigned readings (either a 1-page essay or a similarly substantive literary product, such as a dialogue or a poem), and (b) two traditional essay exams (a mid-term and a final).

To satisfy the *Integrate* dimension, PL 280 requires students to synthesize ideas contained in assigned readings with their own personal experiences and insights in order to develop and defend a philosophical position of their own concerning religion. PL 280 assesses this dimension through a traditional 2,000-word research paper.

To satisfy the *Evaluate* dimension, PL 280 requires students to appraise the merits of classic and contemporary philosophical arguments concerning a variety of issues in religion, most notably the existence and non-existence of God. PL 280 assesses this dimension through two traditional essay exams (a mid-term and a final).

Note: There is a long and respectable history of responding to religious phenomenon in a literary or artistic manner rather than with discursive prose. Thus, it is possible for students to express their views and attitudes toward religious phenomena and ideas in (for example) a poetic form. Literary responses, however, are not permitted on the essay exams or the research paper. These assignments must make use of a traditional academic format.

Integrative Thinking Component: To satisfy the *Connections to Experience* dimension, PL 280 requires students to use ideas discussed in the assigned readings to acquire new insights into the religious questions they face in their personal lives. PL 330 assesses this dimension through weekly responses to assigned readings that take the form of either a 1-page essay or a similarly substantive literary product, such as a dialogue or a poem.

To satisfy the *Transfer* dimension, PL 280 requires students to use the philosophical arguments concerning religion contained in the assigned readings to deepen their own personal understanding of religion. In addition, it requires students to use their own experiences and intuitions concerning religion to challenge and refine the philosophical arguments contained in the assigned readings. PL 280 assesses this dimension through (a) weekly responses to the assigned readings (either a 1-page essay or a similar substantive literary product, such as a dialogue or a poem) and (b) a traditional 2,000-word research paper.

To satisfy the *Integrated Communication* dimension, PL 280 requires students to select an appropriate means to express their own views regarding the religious claims and arguments contained in assigned readings. PL 280 assesses this dimension through weekly responses to the assigned reading, which can take the form of a traditional 1-page philosophical essay, a dialogue, a poem, or some other appropriate literary or artistic product.

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

The class has a dual target audience. It is intended to reach students with an interest in philosophy on the one hand and students with an interest in religion on the other hand. Because of this dual focus, the class does not presuppose any background knowledge of religion or philosophy.

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

PL 280 serves as an elective for the philosophy major and minor; it also serves as an elective for the religious studies minor. It is not a requirement or an elective for any other major or minor. (PL 280 used to be required for the Religious Studies Minor, but a proposal has passed through CUP and Academic Senate making it merely an elective.)

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

N/A.

**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	WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED	PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT
Evidence	Assesses quality of information that may be integrated into an argument	<p>Task Type: Both (a) responses to assigned readings (either a 1-page essay or a similarly substantive literary product, such as a dialogue or a poem), and (b) traditional essay exams. Completing these assignments requires students to reflect critically on the experiences, phenomena, and intuitions that serve as starting points or foundational pieces of evidence for philosophical arguments regarding religion.</p> <p>Frequency: (a) Reading responses are weekly (approx. 10 per semester); (b) there are two essay exams (mid-term and final)</p> <p>Overall Grading Weight: (a) Reading responses are 25% of final grade; (b) essay exams are 20% each for a total of 40% of final grade.</p> <p>Expected Proficiency Rate: 75% of students will attain proficiency</p> <p>Rationale: Philosophy requires students to reflect in an unusually sustained and careful fashion about very abstract issues. Most students find it difficult and unnatural. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status here.</p>
Integrate	Integrates insight and or reasoning with existing understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding	<p>Task Type: A traditional 2,000-word research paper. Completing this assignment will require students to integrate arguments contained in assigned readings with their own personal insights and intuitions.</p> <p>Frequency: One.</p> <p>Overall Grading Weight: 20% of final grade.</p> <p>Expected Proficiency Rate: 75% of students will attain proficiency.</p> <p>Rationale: Philosophy requires students to reflect in an unusually sustained and careful fashion about very abstract issues. Most students find it difficult and unnatural. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status here.</p>
Evaluate	Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines	<p>Task Type: Essay exams. Completing this assignment will require students to judge the merits of arguments contained in the reading.</p> <p>Frequency: Two (a mid-term and a final)</p> <p>Overall Grading Weight: 20% each for a total of 40% of final grade</p> <p>Expected Proficiency Rate: 75% of students will attain proficiency.</p> <p>Rationale: Philosophy requires students to reflect in an unusually sustained and careful fashion about very abstract issues. Most students</p>

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**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.

DIMENSION	WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED	PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT
Connections to Experience OR	Connects academic knowledge to experiences	Task Type: Responses to assigned readings that take the form of either a 1-page essay or a similarly substantive literary product. Completing this assignment will require students to apply ideas and arguments contained in assigned readings to the religious questions they face in their personal lives. Frequency: Weekly (approx. 10 per semester) Overall Grading Weight: 25% of final grade Expected Proficiency Rate: 75% of students will attain proficiency. Rationale: Philosophy requires students to reflect in an unusually sustained and careful fashion about very abstract issues. Most students find it difficult and unnatural. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status here.
Connections to Discipline	Makes connections across disciplines	N/A
Transfer	Adapts and applies skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation to new situations	Task Type: <i>Both</i> (a) responses to assigned readings that take the form of either a 1-page essay or a similarly substantive literary product, <i>and</i> (b) a traditional 2000-word research paper. Completing these assignments will require students to use ideas and arguments found in assigned readings to deepen their own personal understanding of religion. In addition, it will require them to use their own personal experiences regarding religion to critique ideas and arguments found in assigned readings. Frequency: (a) Reading responses are weekly (approx. 10 per semester); (b) there is only one research paper. Overall Grading Weight: (a) Reading responses are worth 25% of final grade; (b) research paper is worth 20% of final grade. Expected Proficiency Rate: 75% of students will attain proficiency. Rationale: Philosophy requires students to reflect in an unusually sustained and careful fashion about very abstract issues. Most students

		<p>find it difficult and unnatural. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status here.</p>
<p>Integrated Communication</p>	<p>Communicates complex concepts by choosing appropriate content and form</p>	<p>Task Type: Responses to the assigned reading that can take the form of a traditional 1-page philosophical essay, a dialogue, a poem, or some other appropriate literary product. Completing this assignment will require students to choose the format that best suits the particular religious ideas and attitudes they want to express.</p> <p>Frequency: Weekly (approx. 10 per semester)</p> <p>Overall Grading Weight: 25% of final grade.</p> <p>Expected Proficiency Rate: 75% of students will attain proficiency.</p> <p>Rationale: Philosophy requires students to reflect in an unusually sustained and careful fashion about very abstract issues. Most students find it difficult and unnatural. Experience suggests approximately a quarter fail to achieve “proficient” status here.</p>