

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 330 Existentialism

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): 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 goal of PL 330 is to help students investigate in a non-trivial way questions about the meaning of life and the nature of human existence. Representative topics include anxiety, boredom, death, despair, guilt, loneliness, nihilism, self-deception, and suicide. Readings are typically taken from the works of canonical figures in the existentialist tradition, such as Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Camus.

By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to do the following: (1) analyze and discuss central texts in the existentialist tradition; (2) explain the answers given by important existentialist thinkers to classical philosophical questions as well as everyday human problems; (3) critically evaluate these answers; and (4) develop and defend a thesis of their own concerning an issue that arises in the existentialist tradition.

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

Critical Thinking Component: To satisfy the *Evidence* dimension, PL 330 requires students to analyze the real-world examples, armchair intuitions, and theoretical frameworks relied on in philosophical arguments concerning the meaning of life and the nature of human existence. PL 330 assesses this dimension through weekly reading responses (either 1 written page or a similarly substantive literary product) and two essay exams.

To satisfy the *Integrate* dimension, PL 330 requires students to synthesize ideas contained in assigned readings with their own personal experiences in order to develop and defend philosophical positions of their own. PL 330 assesses this dimension through a substantial research paper.

To satisfy the *Evaluate* dimension, PL 330 requires students to appraise the merits of philosophical arguments concerning existentialist questions presented in assigned readings. PL 330 assesses this dimension through two essay exams.

Integrative Thinking Component: To satisfy the *Connections to Experience* dimension, PL 330 requires students to use ideas discussed in the assigned readings to acquire new insights into the existential problems they face in their everyday lives. PL 330 assesses this dimension through weekly reading responses (either 1 written page or a similarly substantive literary product).

To satisfy the *Transfer* dimension, PL 330 requires students to use the theories regarding core issues in existentialism contained in the assigned readings to deepen their understanding of their own everyday lives. In addition, it requires students to use their everyday experiences to develop and challenge the theories regarding core issues in existentialism contained in the assigned readings. PL 330 assesses this dimension through weekly reading responses (either 1 written page or a similarly substantive artistic product) and a substantial research paper.

To satisfy the *Integrated Communication* dimension, PL 260 requires students to select an appropriate means to express their own views regarding the theories regarding core issues in existentialism contained in assigned readings. PL 330 assesses this dimension through weekly reading responses, 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. On the one hand, it is intended to reach majors and minors who wish to deepen and broaden their understanding of the field. On the other hand, it is intended to reach students who are neither majors nor minors but simply have an interest in exploring in an unusually sustained and critical fashion the existential problems they face in their everyday lives. Because of this dual focus, the class does not presuppose any background knowledge of philosophy.

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

The class serves as an elective for the philosophy major and minor. It is not a requirement or an elective for any other major or minor.

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: Reading responses and essay exams. Both assignments will involve analyzing the real-world examples, armchair intuitions, and theoretical frameworks relied on in philosophical arguments concerning the meaning of life and the nature of human existence.</p> <p>Frequency: Reading responses are weekly; there will be two exams</p> <p>Overall Grading Weight: Responses are 25%; exams are each worth 20%</p> <p>Expected Proficiency Rate: 75%</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: Research paper. This assignment will require students to synthesize ideas contained in assigned readings with their own personal experiences in order to develop and defend philosophical positions of their own</p> <p>Frequency: There will be one term paper</p> <p>Overall Grading Weight: 20%</p> <p>Expected Proficiency Rate: 75%</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. These assignments will require students to appraise the merits of philosophical arguments concerning existentialist questions presented in assigned readings.</p> <p>Frequency: There will be two exams</p> <p>Overall Grading Weight: Exams are each worth 20%</p> <p>Expected Proficiency Rate: 75%</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 <i>OR</i>	Connects academic knowledge to experiences	Task Type: Reading responses. Completing these assignments will require students to use ideas discussed in the assigned readings to acquire new insights into the existential problems they face in their everyday lives. Frequency: Weekly Overall Grading Weight: 25% Expected Proficiency Rate: 75% 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: Reading responses and a research paper. Completing these assignments will require students to use the theories regarding core issues in existentialism contained in the assigned readings to deepen their understanding of their own everyday lives. In addition, it will require students to use their everyday experiences to develop and challenge the theories regarding core issues in existentialism contained in the assigned readings. Frequency: Responses are weekly; there will be one term paper Overall Grading Weight: Responses are 25%; term paper is 20%

		<p>Expected Proficiency Rate: 75%</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>
<p>Integrated Communication</p>	<p>Communicates complex concepts by choosing appropriate content and form</p>	<p>Task Type: Reading responses. In this assignment, students will be required to select an appropriate means to express their own views regarding the theories regarding core issues in existentialism contained in assigned readings. They will choose between a traditional 1-page philosophical essay, a dialogue, a poem, or some other appropriate literary or artistic product.</p> <p>Frequency: Weekly</p> <p>Overall Grading Weight: 25%</p> <p>Expected Proficiency Rate: 75%</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>