**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:** EC 101 Introduction to Economics

**Home Department:** Economics

**Department Chair Name and Contact Information** (phone, email): Dr. Robert Quinn, 227-1383, roquinn@nmu.edu

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

**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**

EC 101 is a survey of basic principles of economics with an emphasis on their application to current issues and/or historical events. The course explores the relationship between scarcity, choice, and opportunity cost, develops and applies graphical analysis to explain the coordinating properties of markets, and analyzes the intended and unintended consequences of various economic policies, including the impact of monetary and fiscal policies on the economy. (Syllabi differ from instructor to instructor; a current winter 2015 syllabus from one of the instructors is attached.)

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

EC 101 fits the *Critical Thinking* and the *Perspectives on Society* learning outcomes as defined by NMU’s General Education requirements. In economic analysis and its application the two learning outcomes have a great degree of overlap.

*Critical Thinking:*

Critical thinking is the basis of scientific economics, and it is especially displayed through the application of the analysis to real-world events, whether contemporary or historical. The *Evidence* dimension is of great importance, as one cannot talk sensibly about economic issues without collecting or addressing facts and data regarding economic variables. EC 101 students are expected to determine which facts serve as important information for explaining or predicting an economic event and which may be deemed irrelevant or even misleading.

Which leads directly into the *Integration* dimension. EC 101 students learn that facts and data do not “speak for themselves.” It takes a systematic point of view – a theory of cause and effect among the events that are to be explained – that links the relevant facts together into a coherent, testable whole. EC 101 requires that students develop the ability to see and interpret data and events through the lens of basic economic theory, to understand and apply the economic way of thinking to complex social issues.

The third dimension, *Evaluation*, is addressed in EC 101 by students being required to use economic analysis (a conceptual framework, rather than their own mere opinion) to critically judge economic claims and policy proposals. EC 101 students are expected to develop enough understanding of basic economic principles to evaluate real-world issues (see next section) proficiently.

*Perspectives on Society:*

EC 101 requires students to apply economic theory to real-world social events. In the *Analysis of Society* dimension the applications are many and vary among the instructors. They include the microeconomic analysis of issues that appeal to student concerns such as price gouging, the minimum wage, the regulation of business, environmental policy, health care policy, social security, crime and underground markets, income inequality, globalization, as well as the macroeconomic analysis of mass unemployment, recession, inflation, financial speculation, bailout policies, and the wedding of corporations with the political process.

Many of these topics carry significant content in the *Ethical Issues* dimension. Those in other disciplines often ask, for example, does social justice require a higher minimum wage, or universal healthcare, or policies to reduce income inequality and improve economic development? How ought we to deal with fragile financial markets, or the crushing burden of recessionary unemployment, or the national debt, and so on? These questions are constantly being raised in the media, on blogs, and in classrooms across campus – they capture the students’ attention in a variety of ways. EC 101 students are expected to understand that, while economics as a social science is not designed to raise and philosophically adjudicate among ethical claims, it does offer an analysis of the systematic economic consequences of pursuing particular ethical positions and their implementation in the public policy realm, and EC 101 students are required to do precisely that type of analysis.

The *Development and Context of Society* dimension is addressed in several ways in the EC 101 course, and varies among the interests of the instructors. The general focus here is largely on themes that relate to the nature and development of commercial society, and the ways that the market system, financial institutions, and the legislative and regulatory structures of government interact with one another. Specific topics may include discussions on the emergence of the Federal Reserve System and the evolution of monetary policy over the past 100 years, the role that specialization, investment, and entrepreneurial innovation play in long-term economic growth and development, the use of regulation as a means to deal with market failures and also as means to serve corporate interests, the long-term impact of our growing national debt, and social and economic changes that arise through international trade and globalization.

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

EC 101 is intended to serve as the student’s first introduction to college-level economics. (Students who already have credit in, or are currently enrolled in, another economics course are not able to use EC 101 towards their degree.) For decades EC 101 has attracted a wide variety of students from across majors and programs. Roughly 95% of the students who enroll in EC 101 are not economics majors. The course is not required for the economics degree, but it does attract many non-majors into the economics degree program. It is the Economics Department’s most popular course.

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

* EC 101 currently [applies toward the Division IV liberal studies requirement](http://www.nmu.edu/bulletin1415/node/64?processtype=self&action=courseid&phase=phase1&elementid=4050&subaction=)
* EC 101 is among the economics electives required for the Social Work major
* EC 101 is among the economic issues electives required for the Public Relations major
* EC 101 is among the economics electives required for the Elementary Education Social Studies major
* EC 101 is among the economics electives required for the Secondary Education Social Studies major
* EC 101 is a recommended elective in the Multimedia Journalism major

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

This course is taught by 5 out of the 6 faculty members in the Economics Department, with several sections – both in-class and online – offered every semester, including summer. All sections are capped at 50 students each.

**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 | *Task type:* Objective quizzes/examinations, in addition to a Pretest at the beginning of the semester and a Posttest at the end. ~~Students will be~~ *~~tested in their understanding~~* ~~of how basic economic principles (such as supply and demand, cost and benefit analysis) are developed and integrated into an analytical framework that addresses empirical matters and real-world events.~~ Students will be asked to exhibit critical thinking on the quizzes and examinations by demonstrating their understanding of how basic economic principles (such as supply and demand, cost and benefit analysis) provide a causal analysis of real-world data and events, as opposed to, for example, identifying mere statistical correlations that can lead to incomplete arguments about complex economic matters.  *Frequency:* Minimum 3 times per semester  *Overall grading weight:* 30-40%  *Expected proficiency rate:* The department expects 70% or greater student proficiency upon course completion. This is a reasonable goal given the wide range of student aptitudes and analytical abilities in this course, and is consistent with average grades among our EC 101 courses in general. |
| **Integrate** | Integrates insight and or reasoning with existing understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding | *Task type:* Objective quizzes/examinations, in addition to a Pretest at the beginning of the semester and a Posttest at the end. Students will be *tested in their ability to apply* basic economic principles (such as supply and demand, cost and benefit analysis) to draw analytical conclusions regarding empirical matters and real-world events.  *Frequency:* Minimum 3 times per semester  *Overall grading weight:* 30-40%  *Expected proficiency rate:* The department expects 70% or greater student proficiency upon course completion. This is a reasonable goal given the wide range of student aptitudes and analytical abilities in this course, and is consistent with average grades among our EC 101 courses in general. |
| **Evaluate** | Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines | *Task type:* Objective quizzes/examinations, in addition to a Pretest at the beginning of the semester and a Posttest at the end. Students will be *tested in their ability to clearly evaluate conclusions after applying* basic economic principles (such as supply and demand, cost and benefit analysis) to empirical matters and real-world events.  *Frequency:* Minimum 3 times per semester  *Overall grading weight:* 30-40%  *Expected proficiency rate:* The department expects 70% or greater student proficiency upon course completion. This is a reasonable goal given the wide range of student aptitudes and analytical abilities in this course, and is consistent with average grades among our EC 101 courses in general. |

**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.*

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| **DIMENSION** | **WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| **Analysis of society** | Analysis of social issues, structures and processes or events | *Task type:* Objective quizzes/examinations, essay exams/assignments, and possibly -- *depending upon* class composition and interest of instructor – a student project.  Students will be tested and evaluated in their ability to use basic economic principles to analyze, predict, and explain a wide variety of current social issues and policy proposals that include, but also go well beyond, matters of purely “financial” interest.  *Frequency:* Exams and essays minimum 3 times per semester, student project (if adopted by instructor) once a semester  *Overall grading weight:* 30-40%  *Expected proficiency rate:* The department expects 70% or greater student proficiency upon course completion. This is a reasonable goal given the wide range of student aptitudes and analytical abilities in this course, and is consistent with average grades among our EC 101 courses in general. |
| **Ethical Issues** | Addressing ethical issues in society | *Task type:* Objective quizzes/examinations, essay exams/assignments, and possibly -- *depending upon* class composition and interest of instructor – a student project.  Students will be tested and evaluated in their ability to apply basic economic principles to explore both the intended and unintended consequences of policies and economic institutions that promote a variety of normative stances and justice-related concerns and objectives, and to understand the difference between positive and normative economics.  *Frequency:* Exams and essays minimum 3 times per semester, student project (if adopted by instructor) once a semester  *Overall grading weight:* 30-40%  *Expected proficiency rate:* The department expects 70% or greater student proficiency upon course completion. This is a reasonable goal given the wide range of student aptitudes and analytical abilities in this course, and is consistent with average grades among our EC 101 courses in general. |
| **Development and context of society** | Explore themes in the development of human society | *Task type:* Objective quizzes/examinations, essay exams/assignments, and possibly -- *depending upon* class composition and interest of instructor – a student project.  Students will be tested and evaluated in their ability to apply basic economic principles to understand and explain the broader institutional context of socio-political arrangements and economic systems.  *Frequency:* Exams and essays minimum 3 times per semester, student project (if adopted by instructor) once a semester  *Overall grading weight:* 30-40%  *Expected proficiency rate:* The department expects 70% or greater student proficiency upon course completion. This is a reasonable goal given the wide range of student aptitudes and analytical abilities in this course, and is consistent with average grades among our EC 101 courses in general. |