**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 340 Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy

**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 odd-year 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

From the current bulletin: The course covers the grand historical debates over economic systems. Classical liberalism, anarchism, Utopian socialism, centrally-planned socialism, and state capitalism will all be explored. Students will be introduced to Marxian, Austrian School, and Public Choice Theory perspectives.

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

EC 340 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 340 students are expected to determine which facts serve as relevant and important information for describing and explaining the performance of real-world capitalism, real-world socialism, and real-world democratic processes in the contemporary mixed economy.

Within the *Integration* dimension. EC 340 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. This course covers different theoretical points of view – such as Marxian analysis and those of the “Austrian” and Public Choice schools of thought. EC 340 requires that students develop the ability to see and interpret data and events through the lenses of these different (and competing) economic theories, to understand and apply the comparative economic way of thinking to complex historical and contemporary issues.

The *Evaluation Dimension* is addressed by students being required to develop proficiency in these different conceptual frameworks, and evaluate and judge these points of view with respect to their accuracy in explaining the rise of capitalism, the rise and fall of socialism, and the operation of our current political-economic system.

*Perspectives on Society:*

EC 340 requires students to understand differing economic systems from multiple and critical perspectives. In the *Analysis of Society* dimension students will be expected to develop and apply the basic tools provided by the differing schools of thought mentioned in the previous section. The theory espoused by the earlier classical economists will explore their defense of constitutional democracy and free-market economies as the best set of institutions to encourage freedom and economic growth. Once students have demonstrated proficiency, they will be exposed to the Marxist critique of classical economics and of capitalism in general. Here, students are expected to master – at a basic level – not only Marxist economics (the labor theory of value and the theory of exploitation, for example) but also the closely-related basic Marxist philosophy (its dialectical-materialist approach and its views on alienation and ideology). Having demonstrated proficiency in Marxism, students will then be expected to develop an understanding of more contemporary economic theory as a critical alternative to both classical and Marxian perspectives, and address a host of applications to post-socialist political and economic institutions.

EC 340 is filled with applications that nicely fit the *Ethical Issues* dimension. The defense of free-market capitalism, for example, places a great deal of weight on natural rights theory, the ethics and virtues of personal liberty, the justice of the voluntary exchange of goods and resources, and the ideal of constitutional democracy as a means to channel private interest into the public good. Marxists (and non-Marxists, too) challenge these capitalist ethics by focusing, for example, on natural rights as mere ideology, and the injustices of wage labor and the pursuit of profit. Marxism posits a socialist future that will be fully just and truly democratic. Contemporary economic theory challenges Marxism not only in the economic theory dimension, but asks if some form of socialist justice can actually be achieved under the ideal Marxist system. Students will be required to demonstrate an understanding and proficiency in these differing points of view on these types of ethical issues.

The *Development and Context of Society* dimension is of great importance in EC 340 as well, as it is not a course in mere theory. Students are expected to not only develop a critical understanding of competing economic theories. They are also required to apply those points of view to understand the historical development of capitalism in the 1700s and 1800s, the rise of socialism in Eastern Europe in the early to mid-1900s, the fall of socialism in the 1990s, and the emergence of the mixed-economy of our present era.

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

An elective offered by the Department of economics, EC 340 currently fits in the old Liberal Studies program, which requires junior standing, with at least one course in economics recommended. As that program is being phased out, the course will drop the junior standing requirement, and require EC 101 or EC 201 or permission of instructor, without a particular year-of-study requirement. The course is popular with economics majors and minors who would like to complete summer coursework, as well as a broad spectrum of students from other majors and minors who have an interest in questions of comparative economic theories and systems.

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

* Upper division elective for economics majors and minors.
* Currently applies toward the division IV liberal studies requirement.
* Currently applies toward the upper division liberal studies requirement.

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

EC 340 is offered as a complete online course over the first 6-week summer session. All lecture notes and reading materials are available through EduCat with links to online books and articles. It has been taught by Dr. David L. Prychitko since 2002.

**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 tests, in addition to a Pretest at the beginning of the semester and a Posttest at the end. Students will be asked to exhibit critical thinking on the tests by demonstrating their understanding of how economic theory in general focuses on facts and data using cause-and effect analysis.  *Frequency:* Pre and Posttests: 2 times per semester; Tests 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, analytical abilities, and performance in this course since 2002. |
| **Integrate** | Integrates insight and or reasoning with existing understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding | *Task type:* Objective tests, 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 applybasic economic theory from several schools of thought to draw analytical conclusions regarding historical and contemporary events.  *Frequency:* Pre and Posttests: 2 times per semester; Tests 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, analytical abilities, and performance in this course since 2002. |
| **Evaluate** | Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines | *Task type:* Objective tests, 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 applyingbasic economic theory from several schools of thought to historical and contemporary events.  *Frequency:* Pre and Posttests: 2 times per semester; Tests 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, analytical abilities, and performance in this course since 2002. |

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY**

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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 tests, online discussion forum responses.  Students will be tested and evaluated in their ability to understand competing economic theories and the policy stances that those theories promote.  *Frequency:* Tests: 3 times per semester; Discussion forum responses: minimum 5 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 range of student aptitudes, analytical abilities, and performance in this course since 2002. |
| **Ethical Issues** | Addressing ethical issues in society | *Task type:* Objective tests, online discussion forum responses.  Students will be tested and evaluated in their ability to apply competing economic theories to explore both the intended and unintended consequences of proposals and policies that promote a variety of justice-related concerns and objectives within different economic systems.  *Frequency:* Tests: 3 times per semester; Discussion forum responses: minimum 5 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, analytical abilities, and performance in this course since 2002. |
| **Development and context of society** | Explore themes in the development of human society | *Task type:* Objective tests, online discussion forum responses.  Students will be tested and evaluated in their ability to apply competing economic theories to analyze the historical evolution of different economic systems.  *Frequency:* Tests: 3 times per semester; Discussion forum responses: minimum 5 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, analytical abilities, and performance in this course since 2002. |