**General Education Course Inclusion Proposal**

**PERSEPCTIVES 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:** PS101 Introduction to Political Science

**Home Department:** Political Science

**Department Chair Name and Contact Information** (phone, email):

Carter Wilson, ext.: 1502, [carwilso@nmu.edu](mailto:carwilso@nmu.edu)

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

1. Overview of the course content:

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to the political science discipline. It is divided into four parts. Part one provides an overview of the discipline and an exposure to the subfields, the methods of research, and the basic theories of politics and government. It provides a sketch of major political philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, and Mills. This part explores how these philosophers explored philosophical questions about the formation and development of governments and the different forms and types of government. It covers normative issues such as the strengths and weaknesses of each forms, the structural conditions for stable governments and the preconditions for democratic forms of government. This section also covers normative issues such justice, and the different forms of justice.

Part two examines the organizations and functions of political institutions. These institutions include legislative, executive, judicial, and bureaucratic entities, as well as the organization of national and sub-governments. This part exposes students to the difference between parliamentary systems and the U.S. system of separation of powers and checks and balances; judiciary systems with and without judicial review. It reviews hybrid systems such as that of Russia and France, with both a president and a prime minister. It looks at government bureaucracies in comparative perspectives.

Part three will examine politics, political culture and political issues. It will underscore the role of culture and political parties in explaining the different levels of development of social welfare and criminal justice systems.

The first three parts of this course covers critical thinking, analysis of society and development and context of society. In this regards this course satisfies the learning components of “Perspectives on Society.”

Part three also covers ethical issues in public policy.

Part four examines global and international issues and problems.

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

PS101, Introduction to Political Science, satisfies the critical theory and perspectives on society learning outcomes as defined by the NMU General Education Committee.

Critical Theory

This course exposes students to the basic tools required for critical thinking in the social sciences: social science methodology and basic political theory.

Evidence

This course introduces students to elementary approaches to social science research. It exposes students to basic primary sources of data used in political science research such as public opinion surveys or census tract reports. It illustrates secondary sources such as news articles. It teaches students about valid, high quality data and evidence used in social science research. Students learn to use credible evidence in support of coherent political analysis.

Integrate

This course introduces students to various philosophical schools of political thought: political theories used to both analyze and assess political systems and issues; and normative theories of the best forms of governments and the meaning of justice, freedom and democracy. Students learn to synthesize ideas, data and other forms of information to analyze political systems or issues.

Evaluate

This course is designed to teach students how to combine conceptual political frameworks or models and data and other sources of evidence in logical well-reasoned evaluations of political issues. Students learn to assess political ideas and evidences and to apply ideas and evidence in an evaluation of social issues and political systems.

Perspectives on Society

This course satisfies the “Perspectives on Society” learning outcome. It gives students all of the tools they need to analyze society, to evaluate ethical issues and to understand historical trends and contemporary themes pertaining to human development, social organizations and their impact on society and the world. Indeed, human social organizations have evolved and moved from the small nomadic groups, from the small settled communities, and from the larger tribal arrangements. Today, an understanding of human organizations require the study of the nation state and international organizations. This course, PS101, Introduction to Political Science, focuses on the developed nation state. It exposes students to theories of the formation of government, models of different forms of government, normative theories of the best forms of government, theories used for the both the analysis and evaluation of political organizations and social issues. The specific goals of this course are:

Analysis of Society

Focuses on models used in analyzing and assessing different forms of governments, not just autocratic versus democratic, but also parliamentary, proportional representation versus presidential, geographical representation.

Examines the different forms of political participation: voting, campaigning, lobbying etc.

Examines both empirical and normative theories of government useful in the assessment of governmental institutions, the evaluation of social issues, and the understanding of the impacts of social issues on society.

Ethical Issues

Discuss contemporary social issues: immigration, abortion, police use of force etc.

Development and Context of Society

Reviews historical developments of national governments

Identifies different forms and systems of governments.

Investigates different stages in the development of national political and economic systems from under developed to developed, technologically advanced.

Summary

Students completing this course will be able to use accurate and high quality information and evidence in the formation of cogent, well integrated and coherent arguments. They will be able to integrate theory and evidence to reach informed and well thought-out conclusions about social issues and political systems. Students will be able to identify historical and contemporary themes in political development; to understand and analyze major political institutions, processes, and events; and to identify contemporary ethical issues and explain their impacts within society. They will be able to engage in ethical judgments over contemporary policy issues.

C. Describe the target audience (level, student groups, etc.): The target audience focuses on freshmen and sophomores, but includes all undergraduates.

D. Give information on other roles this course may serve (e.g. University Requirement, required for a major(s), etc.): This course also satisfies the Division IV Liberal Studies Component: “foundation of social science.”

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

All dimensions of critical thinking and perspectives on society will be integrated in weekly assignments. Students will be assigned to read a text chapter each week and be prepared to discuss the contents of the chapter and to relate major points and principles to current events.

As PS101 classes are large, assessment with occur in ~~class discussions and~~ multiple choice exams. Occasionally, faculty members will use essay questions or a short paper.

**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** | **DIMENSION GUIDANCE** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| **Evidence** | Assesses quality of information that may be integrated into an argument | The evidence criterion will be assessed both in discussions and with select multiple choice questions. Test questions are below. We anticipate that 75% of our students will demonstrate proficiency in this dimension, as this percentage is the expected mean and we expect the class to be average. |
| **Integrate** | Integrates insight and or reasoning with previous understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding | The integrate criterion will be assessed both in discussions and with select multiple choice questions. Test questions are below. We anticipate that 75% of our students will demonstrate proficiency in this dimension, as this percentage is the expected mean and we expect the class to be average. |
| **Evaluate** | Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines | The evaluate criterion will be assessed both in discussions and with select multiple choice questions. Test questions are below. We anticipate that 75% of our students will demonstrate proficient in this dimension, as this percentage is the expected mean and we expect the class to be average. |

**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** | **DIMENSION GUIDANCE** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| **Analysis of society** | Synthesis and analysis of social structures and processes or events | The analysis of society criterion will be assessed both in discussions and with select multiple choice questions. Test questions are below. We anticipate that 75% of our students will demonstrate proficiency in this dimension, as this percentage is the expected mean and we expect the class to be average. |
| **Ethical Issues** | Addressing ethical issues in society | The ethical issues criterion will be assessed both in discussions and with select multiple choice questions. Test questions are below. We anticipate that 75% of our students will demonstrate proficiency in this dimension, as this percentage is the expected mean and we expect the class to be average. |
| **Development and context of society** | Explore themes in the development of human society | The development and context of society criterion will be assessed both in discussions and with select multiple choice questions. Test questions are below. We anticipate that 75% of our students will demonstrate proficient in this dimension, as this percentage is the expected mean and we expect the class to be average. |

**General Education Program**

**Assessment Questions**

**PS101**

**Critical Thinking**

**Evidence** (Information is credible, appropriate to support a coherent analysis.)

In November 2015, United Nations Climate Conference in Paris, the Conference of the Parties 21 (COP21), set a target of zero net anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions for the second half of the 21st century, nevertheless, in the United States the debate over whether climate change is a hoax or a reality persists. What would be the best source of information to resolve this debate?

1. Statements from the American Meteorological Society, The Geological Society of America, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the National Academies of Science, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the National Research Council.
2. Statements from Radio talk show hosts, national news hosts, and local and national political leaders.
3. Statements from individual scientists and articles in the local newspaper.
4. Statements from the American Petroleum Institute.

Critical thinking involves the ability to use high quality, credible information directly related to a topic and selected in order to develop a comprehensive analysis. In the contemporary debate over climate change, nothing is more important than the ability to identify high quality, credible information directly related to this topic. This question tests this ability. This question is but one question in the universe of questions used to assess this ability.

**Integrate** (Synthesizes ideas and information appropriate for purpose.)

Ayn Rand believes that the government should never exercise its power to prohibit a woman from having an abortion and should never tax people in order to provide unemployment benefits, social security or aid for the disabled. Which ideological classification best describes her beliefs:

1. Conservative
2. Liberal
3. Populist
4. Libertarian

Critical theory entails the ability to integrate and synthesize ideas, information and insights to reach informed conclusions. This question involves the ability to understand the ideas and insights of Ayn Rand and principles of political ideology and to reach conclusions about Rand’s ideology. This is but one among many questions in the university of questions assessing the ability to integrate the ideas of political theorists a general ideological classification scheme.

**Evaluate** (conclusion and or/ opinion is logically tied to an appropriate range of information and insight. Conclusions are logical and reflect informed evaluation and ability to utilize evidence, perspective and/or insight.)

Which of the following statements best summarizes the vision of Plato and of Marx for the

perfect society:

1. Plato believed that all of the property, including the children, of the community of guardians should be owned in common. Marx believed that in a socialist society the workers should rule and be rewarded on the basis of their labor.
2. Marx believed that all of the property of the ruling class should be owned in common and each should be rewarded equally in a socialist society. Plato believed in justice and that each should be rewarded on the basis of hard work and merit.
3. Plato envisioned a democratic society. Marx envisioned an autocratic society.
4. Plato believed in free enterprise and capitalism. Marx believed in communism and an equal distribution of wealth.

This questions involves more than just a recollection of the ideas of Plato and Marx. It involves critical

thinking. A major aspect of this critical thinking is the ability to evaluate the ideas of Plato and Marx and to

reach conclusions that are logical and reflective of informed evaluation and the ability to utilize evidence. This

is but one question in the universe of questions that assess this aspect of critical thinking.

**Perspectives on Society**

**Analysis of Society** (Demonstrates ability to synthesize and analyze major social structures

and processes or events.)

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, socialism is “a way of organizing a society in which

major industries are owned and controlled by the government rather than by individual people or

companies.” Which of the following is the best example of a socialist system?

1. A system in which the government owns and operates all of the mines and manufacturing facilities in the nation.
2. A system in which all wealth and income is distributed equally.
3. A system in which the government provides health insurance to everyone.
4. A system in which governmental powers are concentrated in a single president or dictator.

This question is one among many in a universe of questions that assesses the ability to analyze society which is based on the ability to synthesize an awareness of standard societal classification schemes with an understanding of social structures, socioeconomic arrangements and the distribution of political power.

**Ethical Issues** (Identifies ethical issues and their origins within society. Explains the impact of ethical issues within society.)

In her 25th week of pregnancy, Angela Carder was diagnoses with a life-threatening lung cancer. Her medical

doctors recommended aggressive chemo-therapy to save her life. However, because the chemo would kill the

unborn baby, the hospital administrator ordered a Caesarean Section to save the baby. Both mother and baby

died. What does this case demonstrate?

1. Under every and all circumstances medical doctors should do everything possible to save unborn babies.
2. Under every and all circumstances, women must have the right to choose what is best for them.
3. The hospital administrator killed Angela Carder
4. An absolute prohibition of abortions under any and all circumstances can have disastrous consequences.

This case and question is designed to assess students’ awareness of the complexity of ethical issues and the

consequences of ethical absolutes on society. It is but one among many questions that access students’ ability to

explain the impact of ethical issues within society.

**Development &** (Identifies and examines historical and contemporary themes pertaining to

**context of society** human development and human organizations and their effect with the human society and the natural world.)

In what ways does the does the parliamentary system of Canada and the UK differ from the

political system of the United States?

1. There are no differences among these system. They all have chief executives and legislative bodies and that are all democracies.
2. The Canadian and UK systems give their chief executives more power that the U.S. system.
3. Canada and UK have both Prime Ministers and Presidents. In the United States, the chief executive is the president.
4. In Canada and the UK the chief executive, the Prime Minister, is both part of and elected by the legislative body. In the United States the chief executive, the president, is elected in a separate election and have powers separate from the legislative body.

Which of the following best defines a government:

1. A territory with natural boundaries of mountains and rivers and inhabited by a people with a common language and culture
2. A set of institutions with the sovereign power to make and implement laws and rules to govern society.
3. A group of individuals with the power over people
4. All of the above

A major aspect of the assessment of perspectives on society is the evaluation of students’ ability to explore and utilize knowledge of historical and contemporary themes pertaining to human development and human organizations in order to analyze their effects within human society and the natural world. One of the most important historical and contemporary theme pertaining to human development and human organizations is the organization and functions of governments in general and legislative bodies in particular.