**General Education Course Inclusion Proposal**

**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD**

*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:** Ancient and Medieval Political Thought **-** PS 207

**Home Department:** Political Science

**Department Chair Name and Contact Information** (phone, email): Carter Wilson: 227-1502 carwilso@nmu.edu

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

**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

* Ps 207 is a survey (lecture and discussion) of key texts of ancient and medieval political thought. The texts to be studied are drawn from at least five different historical periods and background cultures:

(i) ancient Greek political thought (including selections from Homer’s *Iliad*, selections from *Thucydides’ History of the Peloponnesian War*, Sophocles’ *Antigone*, Plato’s *Apology*, *Crito* and substantial selections from the *Republic*, and selections from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*)

(ii) Roman political thought (including selections from Polybius’ The Histories, selections from Cicero’s *The Republic* and *On Duties*, and Seneca’s *Letter on Slaves*)

(iii) Late Roman and medieval Christian political thought (selections from St. Augustine’s *City of God* and St. Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*).

(iv) Medieval Jewish and Islamic political thought (selections from Alfarabi’s *The Political Regime* and Moses Maimonides’ *Guide for the Perplexed*).

(v) a concluding section on Machiavelli’s The Prince, viewed as a bridge between ancient Roman and early modern political views, and a criticism of medieval Christian political thought).

* The course is arranged chronologically, so that students have an opportunity to understand the sequence of development of political ideas, and to see that the central ethical and conceptual concerns of past historical periods and different cultures are often very different from our own preoccupations, sometimes challenging contemporary views.
* Because the assigned texts are studied in detail, students become familiar with different understandings of a wide range of ethical and political concepts: justice, authority, power, citizenship, liberty, etc.
* As a general organizing device, the course distinguishes between “activist” theories of politics (Aristotle, Cicero, and Machiavelli) which consider political participation and active citizenship either to be the highest human activity or a very significant human good, and ‘tragic’ theories of politics (Sophocles, Plato, Seneca, Augustine, Alfarabi) which regard other activities and commitments as more important than political life, or see flaws in human nature that prevent the perfection of human nature through citizenship.
* In the final sessions of the course, key differences between ancient and medieval political thought and modern Western political thought are identified, and important ethical, political and ecological challenges of ancient political thought are discussed.

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

* Critical Thinking
* PS 207 requires students to become familiar with and to comprehend the main normative theories concerning politics presented in a wide range of texts; these are often complex texts, which sustain difficult and challenging arguments.
* In addition to familiarity and comprehension, students must use historical knowledge, conceptual analysis, and logical skills to assess the coherence and effectiveness of arguments
* Students must also develop their own critical perspectives on the political theories in question, and must relate them to their own experience and to contemporary political discourse and issues
* Social Responsibility in a Diverse World
  + - PS 207 promotes engagement with cultural and ethnic diversity, first, by familiarizing students with views expressed in texts from five different historical time periods and background cultures.
    - In order to understand those views, students must also learn about the political history of these periods, influential cultural understandings and controversies, etc.
    - PS 207 emphasizes both the differences (challenges) and similarities between various ancient and medieval views and contemporary beliefs concerning the normative dimensions of politics. Students learn to identify and assess their own assumptions concerning politics through the lenses of ancient and medieval thought, and vice versa.
    - The entire course is focused on ethical beliefs concerning politics. Students learn to identify and comprehend these views, then to assess them critically.

PS 207 is a survey of classic or great texts that have contributed to or that challenge the assumptions and preoccupations of contemporary Western political thought. All these texts have influenced the development of contemporary thought, but that influence is often neglected or misunderstood. As a result, the very diverse cultural influences that have shaped Western political thought itself are frequently neglected and a falsely monolithic view of Western modernity is encouraged. PS 207 aims to counter this culturally monolithic view of Western modernity by familiarizing students with the very different and often challenging views and debates of the ancient and medieval, “Western” and “non-Western’ history of political thought.

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

PS 207 is aimed not only at Political Science students but also at a more general audience. Consequently, no previous knowledge of political theory is required.

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

PS 207 is currently an elective in the Political Science Department. Its content renders it interesting to Philosophy and History majors, and sometimes to Anthropology and Criminal Justice majors. It is not a requirement for any other major.

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

**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**: regular quizzes on assigned texts, aimed at ensuring that key arguments and concepts have been identified and comprehended, and can be distinguished from other views or false presentations of these views.  **Frequency:** 8-10 per semester (I have varied the number over the past few years)  **Overall Grading Weight: 20%**  **Expected Proficiency Rate:** 75 %  **Rationale**: Political Theory may be understood as a form of political philosophy. As such, it requires students to read carefully and reflectively, and to comprehend complex ideas. One of the purposes of my quizzes is to make sure that students are making progress with these tasks as they read the assigned materials. |
| **Integrate** | Integrates insight and or reasoning with existing understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding | **Task Type**: Midterm and Final Exams (Multiple choice and essay questions)  **Frequency**: 2 exams per semester (Midterm and Final)  **Overall Grading Weight:** 20% + 25% = 45%  **Expected Proficiency Rate**: 75%  **Rationale**: In political theory, in addition to demonstrating knowledge and comprehension of core concepts and theories, students must also assess those concepts in terms of logical coherence, consistency, etc. Essay questions test these skills at a much higher level than other types of questions, and demonstrate the degree to which students can formulate, explain, and criticize ideas clearly in their own terms. |
| **Evaluate** | Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines | **Task Type**: Final Essay/Term Paper  **Frequency:** 1 (one) 5-6 page essay per semester  **Overall Grading Weight**: 25%  **Expected Proficiency Rate**: 75%  **Rationale**: Essays are the ultimate test of students’ ability to: comprehend material and reformulate clearly in their own language; present a clear, logically reasoned, sustained, and critical argument concerning the ideas in question. The 5-6 page requirement forces students to focus and present those arguments cogently. |

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD**

*Attainment of the SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD 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** |
| **Knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks** | Knowledge of elements important to members of another culture | **Task Type:** group presentations  **Frequency**: 1 per student per semester  **Overall Grading Weight:** 10%  **Expected Proficiency Rate:** 75%  **Rationale:** group presentations require students to discuss the assigned material, and explain material from other time periods and cultures that will initially be unfamiliar to the rest of the class. They must also be able to answer class question concerning this material and concerning historical and cultural background. |
| **Intercultural Awareness** | Awareness of multiple cultural perspectives | **Task Type 1**: Midterm and Final Exams (Multiple choice and essay questions) – short essay questions in particular will test awareness of multiple cultural perspectives  **Frequency**: 2 exams per semester (Midterm and Final)  **Overall Grading Weight:** 20% + 25% = 45%  **Expected Proficiency Rate**: 75%  **Rationale**: Essay questions in exams will require students to understand a variety of cultural perspectives from the ancient and medieval world, and to assess them in the light of their own experience and reasoning.  **Task Type 2**: Final Essays/Term Papers  **Frequency**: 1 (one) 5-6 page essay per semester  **Overall Grading Weight**: 25%  **Expected Proficiency Rate**: 75%  **Rationale:** In their essays, students must demonstrate comprehension of multiple cultural understandings concerning politics from the ancient and medieval world, and must also demonstrate a capacity to assess them in the light of their own experience and reasoning. Essays will test this at a higher level than exams. |
| **Intercultural Engagement** | Being willing to engage with cultures other than one’s own | **Task Type**: Final Essays/Term Papers  **Frequency**: 1 (one) 5-6 page essay per semester  **Overall Grading Weight**:  **Expected Proficiency Rate**: 75%  **Rationale:** In their essays, students must demonstrate comprehension of multiple cultural understandings concerning politics from the ancient and medieval world, and must also demonstrate a capacity to assess them in the light of their own experience and reasoning. Essays will test this at a higher level than exams. |
| **Ethical Issue Recognition** | Awareness of ethical issues as they relate to cultures | **Task Type**: Final Essays/Term Papers  **Frequency**: 1 (one) 5-6 page essay per semester  **Overall Grading Weight**:  **Expected Proficiency Rate**: 75%  **Rationale:** In their essays, students must demonstrate comprehension of multiple cultural understandings concerning the ethical dimensions of politics from the ancient and medieval world, and must also demonstrate a capacity to assess them in the light of their own experience and reasoning. Essays will test this at a higher level than exams. |