**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:** American Political Thought **-** PS 411

**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 fall

**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 411 surveys changing understandings of the meanings of citizenship and liberty in American political thought from the prerevolutionary era to the present. The aim is first, to identify four different languages or vocabularies of citizenship and liberty: Puritanism/Protestantism; Lockean liberalism; civic republicanism; an “ascriptive tradtion’ (racist, hierarchical, appealing to ‘natural’ differences of race, gender, class). The emphasis on these four different languages is intended to criticize and supplement the excessive emphasis of Alexis de Tocqueville on the influence of Puritanism and of Louis Hartz on Lockean liberalism as the core languages of American political thought. PS 411 also examines the interactions and overlaps that occur over time among these four languages of citizenship and liberty. The aim is to first, understand the ways in which debates in prerevolutionary, revolutionary times and during the first half of the nineteenth century concerning citizenship and liberty differ substantially from contemporary debates but continue to influence them in ways that are often misunderstood. Second, the course aims to identify the variety of theoretical and ideological resources concerning citizenship available in the tradition of American political thought – resources that are far richer than our current political concerns, and which could usefully be retrieved.

Chronologically, the material of PS 411 is organized as follows:

* Prerevolutionary communities (John Winthrop, John Wise, Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson, etc.)
* Revolutionary experiment (Samuel Adams, Thomas Paine, Federalist Papers, Antifederalist writings, etc.)
* Development and democracy (Alexis de Tocqueville, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Orestes Brownson, henry david Thoreau)
* The Peculiar Institution (Slavery) (Pro-slavery authors, abolitionists, slave narratives, etc.)
* Lincoln
* Labor, Socialism, and Industrialization (Sumner, Bellamy)
* The Rise of the Positive State (W.E.B. Du Bois, Emma Goldman, Eugene Debs, Herbert Croly, Frederick Taylor, Walter Lippmann, John Dewey, etc.)
* New Left and New Right: Legacies (Port Huron Statement, Martin Luther King Jr., C. Wright Mills, Irving Kristol, neoconservatism, Sheldon Wolin, Andrew Bacevich, etc.)

PS 411 provides substantial historical background to the variety of texts (theoretical treatises, pamphlets, speeches, sermons, etc.) that we read. However, this is a course on political *thought*, and so the focus is always on the ways in which citizenship and liberty have been understood at different times of America’s history, and how this has shaped people’s sense of political possibility.

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

* Critical Thinking
* As a course in political theory, PS 411 concentrates on understanding normative/ethical arguments concerning citizenship and liberty in America over the past 300-400 years. Different approaches to the interpretation of speeches, sermons, pamphlets, general theoretical treatises, etc., have to be learned and utilized.
* After the first stage of comprehension/interpretation, students must engage critically with the assigned material, using their own insights as well as standards of internal consistency, logical coherence and consistency, etc, to evaluate it.
* Students must discuss and sometimes opt to write about the contemporary relevance and applicability of past views concerning citizenship and liberty.
* Thus, in PS 411, students identify and assess information, learn to integrate this information and their own critical perspectives into sustained arguments, and do so according to accepted standards of logic and consistency.
* Perspectives on Society
  + PS 411 is designed to familiarize students with core normative theories concerning citizenship and liberty in American political thought.
  + Students must acquire knowledge concerning the historical and political contexts of these ideas, and must relate the ideas to the contexts. In doing so, they must assess the internal content of texts but must also determine their political influence, and the extent to which they offered credible analyses of the politics and social changes of their own time.
  + Students must demonstrate how their knowledge of these ideas (e.g., Tocqueville’s account of ‘democratic’ or ‘soft’ despotism) allows them to analyze contemporary political challenges and ideologies.

PS 411 promotes both critical thinking and perspectives on society by emphasizing the importance of coherent, sustained, argumentative and interpretive essays concerning the major views on citizenship and liberty in American political thought. With the exception of the group presentation requirement, all of the course requirements strongly emphasize clear argumentative writing. In addition to the Final Essay, Midterm and Final Exams are made up entirely of longer essay questions, and online forum/discussion postings are expected to be clear and well-reasoned. Students must demonstrate familiarity with a range of the theories discussed, and must be able to compare, contrast, apply, and assess them.

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

This class is intended to be of interest to Political Science majors, as well as to majors in History, Criminal Justice, and Sociology/Social Work. No prior 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.)

This class is a Political Science elective. It is not a requirement for any other major or minor.

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:** Midterm and Final Exam  **Frequency:** 2 exams  **Overall Grading Weight:** 20% + 20%  **Expected Proficiency Rate:** 75%  **Rationale:** Student proficiency in both critical thinking and perspectives on society will be assessed using essay exams. Two exams will assess critical thinking. Both exams are made up of longer essay questions, which require students to: demonstrate command of key information; show comprehension of ideas and textual arguments; express a reasoned point of view concerning these ideas. |
| **Integrate** | Integrates insight and or reasoning with existing understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding | **Task Type:** Midterm and Final Exam  **Frequency:** 2 exams  **Overall Grading Weight:** 20% + 20%  **Expected Proficiency Rate:** 75%  **Rationale:** Both exams are made up of longer essay questions, which require students to: demonstrate command of key information; show comprehension of ideas and textual arguments; express a reasoned point of view concerning these ideas. |
| **Evaluate** | Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines | **Task Type:** Final Essay/Term Paper  **Frequency:** 1 (0ne) 6-7 page essay  **Overall Grading Weight:** 30%  **Expected Proficiency Rate:** 75%  **Rationale:** As in the written essay exams, original insight and clear reasoning are expected – though both to a higher standard. Students must demonstrate familiarity with secondary literature, and must develop and sustain an original perspective and argument throughout the essay. They must also show an ability to identify the implications of past views for contemporary political debates. |

**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:** Group Presentations  **Frequency:** 1 per semester  **Overall Grading Weight:** 10%  **Expected Proficiency Rate:** 75 %  **Rationale:** Students must explain specified theories of citizenship and liberty to their peers, and must provide and demonstrate knowledge of the historical background necessary to understand these ideas. |
| **Ethical Issues** | Addressing ethical issues in society | **Task Type:** Online Discussion Assignments/Forum Postings  **Frequency:** 5 per semester  **Overall Grading Weight:** 20%  **Expected Proficiency Rate:** 75%  **Rationale:** Students must respond to questions relating past normative/ethical theories of citizenship and liberty to contemporary political issues. They must respond to comments and criticisms from their peers, and must defend an ethical point of view logically and clearly. |
| **Development and context of society** | Explore themes in the development of human society | **Task Type:** Final Essay/Term Paper  **Frequency:** 1 per semester  **Overall Grading Weight:** 30%  **Expected Proficiency Rate:** 75%  **Rationale:** In their final essays, students must not only demonstrate the critical thinking skills necessary to any argumentative essay, but must also present and defend an ethical perspective on topics related to citizenship and liberty, drawing on the themes and theoretical resources studied in the class. This perspective must be original, cogent, and sustained for 6-7 pages. Familiarity with secondary literature and competing perspectives must be demonstrated. |