**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:** NAS 280 Storytelling by Native American Women

**Home Department:** Center for Native American Studies

**Department Chair Name and Contact Information** (phone, email): April Lindala, x1397, [alindala@nmu.edu](mailto:alindala@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)*

1. Overview of the course content

This class is introductory in nature. By using the writings of Native American women the course examines a myriad of historic and contemporary aspects of Native life through the eyes and stories of Native American women. Subjects covered include customs, culture, family, generations, mothers, daughters, grandmothers, art, education, fiction, poetry, political activism and spirituality. Currently the class focuses on the works of Louise Erdrich, the most prolific Native American female author. Students are exposed to fiction which is based on historical events. In addition to texts, they see films, examine handouts, and hear oral presentation from other class members and occasionally from guest presenters.

By the end of the course students will *increase their knowledge* of indigenous women’s traditions within appropriate cultural contexts, *demonstrate knowledge* of an indigenous woman author and her culture through comparison/contrast papers, and *articulate their understanding* of indigenous oral traditions through their presentation of a relevant creative story.

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

Critical Thinking Rubric

*Evidence:* Students will be required to write discussion questions for their assigned section of a book, so that they can lead the discussion for the class. All students must write two papers where they compare/contrast what they are learning about Native women’s roles with other contemporary women authors such as Laura Ingalls Wilder and Willa Cather; one paper where they assess the connections between the portrayals in a Native movie, *Naturally Native*, and one of Erdrich’s novels; and a fourth paper comparing/contrasting two of the female characters from the books they have read. There are five unannounced reading quizzes, where the questions not only ask for basic recall of a plot, but also illicit critical thinking about the cause/effect of actions taken in the novels. Their final exam is to tell a story, beginning with some scene from a novel and employing the concepts they have learned throughout the semester about Native traditions, cultures, education, political activism, spirituality, etc.

*Integrate:* Each class begins with a sharing of stories. Within a few weeks I demonstrate how their stories relate to concepts they are learning about, such as the importance of family and family traditions, and how they compare/contrast with Native traditional values. Soon students are applying that knowledge themselves to the stories they relate.

*Evaluate:* Written discussion questions, comparison/contrast papers, reading quizzes and the final oral exam must demonstrate the ability to understand how the US treats Native women, Native grandmothers, Native culture, Native arts, Native political issues, Native education, Native women’s ways of knowing, and Native spirituality, etc.

Perspectives on Society Rubric

*Analysis of society:*  In this course we discuss social issues like the value and worth of women’s work, especially Native women’s work. Students examine the use of traditional herbal knowledge, the importance of resilience, women in sexual relationships, the effects of internalized racism, Native/white relationships, the influence of the Catholic church on Native American women, the importance of family, the importance of intergenerational relationships, and exploring the meaning behind “Cultural mysticism.”

*Ethical Issues:* There are many ethical issues which arise in Erdrich’s work including revenge, treatment by white society, social justice, jurisdiction on tribal lands, reclaiming Native-made objects, love-triangles, loss of traditional languages, personal responsibilities, and much, much more. These issues will be discussed and analyzed during class and applied to future readings and video presentations.

*Development and Context of Society:*  Each week students are exposed to stories about a culture that is generally not their own. They have to learn how to read and understand stories in a non-lineal presentation. (Our stories don’t usually start in the past and go straight into the present, but are more fluid, intertwining many different speakers and weaving in various tribal members’ perspectives.) Students will be exposed to many issues that continue in society today, such as protecting the environment and taking care of the land, the importance of elders, the intergenerational trauma cause by boarding schools, cultural appropriation of artifacts and religious items, the effects of stereotyping, the effects of the Catholic church, and the perpetuation of micro-aggressions in modern films like *Pocahontas* and *Avatar*. After this class they should be better prepared to realize and address these issues and many more.

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

The general audience, although mostly female, also attracts males and transgender undergraduate students. Many have already taken another NAS course, usually NAS 204, and some are simultaneously taking the Boarding School Experience and/or the Beading class. There have been a few community members who have audited the class.

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

NAS 280 is part of the major and minor in Native American Studies. It is also a part of the minor in Gender and Sexuality Studies.

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

NAS 280 was the first course created in the Native American Studies minor that hadn’t been in existence prior to the designation of the minor program. It is only taught in the Winter semester to honor the Native tradition of having snow on the ground when stories are told. There is a cap of 25 students for the course.

**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:** Students write discussion questions and provide their answers for the section of book they are assigned to.  **Frequency:** Once per semester  **Overall grading weight**: 50 points out of 400 or 12.5%  **Expected proficiency rate**: 73% as this is an introductory course, with no pre-requisites.  **Example**s: Sample questions include:  How is it that Omakayas can talk to the bear cubs?  When Faye Travers decides to keep the painted drum, is she stealing it or is she simply returning it to its rightful owners? |
| **Integrate** | Integrates insight and or reasoning with existing understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding | **Task:** Students take five (5) unannounced reading quizzes  **Frequency:** Five (5) times per semester  **Overall grading weight**: 50 points out of 400 or 12.5% (3.125% each)  **Expected proficiency rate**: 73% as this is an introductory course, with no pre-requisites.  **Example**s: Sample questions include:  Even though Jack is Native American, describe how he sees the land, versus how a traditionally raised Native American might see it.  After the fire that destroys her home, what are some of the things that Shawnee wants from her mother?  Who is the child that Governor Yeltow is trying to adopt and why is that important? |
| **Evaluate** | Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines | **Task:** Students write papers specifically on two books, one movie and then a comparison/contrast of characters.  **Frequency:** Four (4) time per semester  **Overall grading weight**: 200/400 points for 50% (each paper is 50 points or 12.5%)  **Expected proficiency rate**: 73% as this is an introductory course, with no pre-requisites.  **Example**s:  They are asked to compare/contrast *The Birchbark House* with a chapter handout from *Little House in the Big Woods* by Laura Ingalls Wilder.  A second comparison/ contrast paper is between the movie *Naturally Native* and the book *Tracks*.  For the third paper they compare and contrast the wolf scene from *The Painted Drum* with the one from a handout of the wolf scene in Willa Cather’s *My Antonia*.  The final comparison contrast is between their favorite two (2) female characters from any of the books and must include specific examples*.*  **Task:** For the final exam**, s**tudents tell a story, starting from a scene in one of the books or movies.  **Frequency:** Once.  **Overall grading weight**: 100/400 points for 25%  **Expected proficiency rate**: 73% as this is an introductory course, with no pre-requisites.  This story ties in all they have learned in life and through this class and covers all issues discusses, such as Native American customs, cultures, family, generations, mothers, daughters, grandmothers, art, education, fiction, poetry, political activism and spirituality. |

**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:** Students write discussion questions and provide their answers for the section of book they are assigned to.  **Frequency:** Once per semester  **Overall grading weight**: 50 points out of 400 or 12.5%  **Expected proficiency rate**: 73% as this is an introductory course, with no pre-requisites.  **Example**s: Sample questions include:  What are three examples that show how Omakayas is becoming assimilated.  What is the connection between the ravens that keep reappearing in *The Painted Drum* and Faye Travers, the main character?  **Task:** For the final exam**, s**tudents tell a story, starting from a scene in one of the books or movies.  **Frequency:** Once.  **Overall grading weight**: 100/400 points for 25%  **Expected proficiency rate**: 73% as this is an introductory course, with no pre-requisites.  This story ties in all they have learned in life and through this class and covers all issues discusses, such as Native American customs, cultures, family, generations, mothers, daughters, grandmothers, art, education, fiction, poetry, political activism and spirituality. |
| **Ethical Issues** | Addressing ethical issues in society | **Task:** Students take five (5) unannounced reading quizzes  **Frequency:** Five (5) times per semester  **Overall grading weight**: 50 points out of 400 or 12.5% (3.125% each)  **Expected proficiency rate**: 73% as this is an introductory course, with no pre-requisites.  **Example**s: Sample questions include:  Explain why Joe feels he must take revenge for his mother’s rape in *The Round House.*  Faye Tavers says she is returning the stolen drum to its rightful owners. Do you believe this? Why or why not?  What is the cultural significance of Governor Yeltow’s attempted adoption of the baby girl in *The Round House*?  **Task:** One specific comparison/contrast paper on the “wolf scene.”  **Frequency**: Once  **Overall grading weight**: 12.5%  **Expected proficiency rate**: 73% as this is an introductory course, with no pre-requisites.  **Example**s:  For one paper they compare and contrast the wolf scene from *The Painted Drum* with the one from a handout of the wolf scene in Willa Cather’s *My Antonia*. Were the deaths necessary, or were they only self-serving? |
| **Development and context of society** | Explore themes in the development of human society | **Task:** Students write discussion questions and provide their answers for the section of book they are assigned to.  **Frequency:** Once per semester  **Overall grading weight**: 50 points out of 400 or 12.5%  **Expected proficiency rate**: 73% as this is an introductory course, with no pre-requisites.  **Example**s: Sample questions include:  There are several games of chance played in *Tracks.*  How does this shape your view of Anishinaabe life?  Explain how the spread of TB affected the lives of the reservation in *Tracks*.  How did the Dawes Act of 1934 affect the reservation community in *Tracks?*  **Tasks:** Students write papers specifically on two books, one movie and then a comparison/contrast of characters.  **Frequency:** Four (4) time per semester  **Overall grading weight**: 200/400 points for 50% (each paper is 50 points or 12.5%)  **Expected proficiency rate**: 73% as this is an introductory course, with no pre-requisites.  **Example**s:  They are asked to compare/contrast *The Birchbark House* with a chapter handout from *Little House in the Big Woods* by Laura Ingalls Wilder.  A second comparison/ contrast paper is between the movie *Naturally Native* and the book *Tracks*.  For the third paper they compare and contrast the wolf scene from *The Painted Drum* with the one from a handout of the wolf scene in Willa Cather’s *My Antonia*.  The final comparison contrast is between their favorite two (2) female characters from any of the books and must include specific examples*.*  **Task:** For the final exam**, s**tudents tell a story, starting from a scene in one of the books or movies.  **Frequency:** Once.  **Overall grading weight**: 100/400 points for 25%  **Expected proficiency rate**: 73% as this is an introductory course, with no pre-requisites.  This story ties in all they have learned in life and through this class and covers all issues discusses, such as Native American customs, cultures, family, generations, mothers, daughters, grandmothers, art, education, fiction, poetry, political activism and spirituality. |