Boise State University
Foundational Studies Program Course Application Form
Due to the Foundational Studies Program by August 19, 2011

After the Foundational Studies Program has approved a course, departments will continue through the regular department and college procedures. The approved course should be submitted to the University Curriculum Committee by October 1, 2011.

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Instructions:
1. Complete one form per course.
2. Attach this Foundational Studies Course Application Form to the back of the University Curriculum Committee “Request for Curriculum Action” form. Both forms should be submitted to the Foundational Studies Program Office by August 19, 2011.

Part I. Course Information:

Course Number and Title: PHIL 103 Moral Problems

Type of Foundational Studies Course – (Choose One):
[ ] DLS (Disciplinary Lens – Social Science)
[x] DLL (Disciplinary Lens – Literature and Humanities)
[ ] DLV (Disciplinary Lens – Visual and Performing Arts)
[ ] DLM (Disciplinary Lens – Mathematics)
[ ] DLN (Disciplinary Lens – Natural, Physical, and Applied Sciences)
   Includes Lab: [ ] Yes [ ] No
[ ] CID (Communication in the Discipline)
[ ] FF (Finishing Foundations)

Delivery Format(s) – (Check all that apply):
[x] Face to Face
[x] Fully Online
[x] Hybrid
[ ] Concurrent Enrollment
[ ] Other (briefly describe):
Part II. Syllabus Statement:

In the space below, include the syllabus statement for this course which will appear on the first page of the syllabus for each section of this course. (Template and examples are appended to this application form.)

Boise State's Foundational Studies Program provides undergraduates with a broad-based education that spans the entire university experience. PHIL 103: Moral Problems satisfies three credits of the Foundational Studies Program's Disciplinary Lens – Literature and Humanities (DL–L) requirement. It supports the following University Learning Outcome, along with a variety of other course-specific goals:

10. Apply knowledge and the methods of inquiry characteristic of literature and other humanities disciplines to interpret and produce texts expressive of the human condition.

PHIL 103: Moral Problems is designed to introduce some standard problems and methods in applied moral philosophy. This course helps to achieve the goals of the Foundational Studies Program by focusing on the following course learning outcomes. After successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Accurately comprehend and charitably interpret philosophical texts.
- Express yourself in well-organized prose which meets the discipline’s standards of clarity and precision.
- Identify, reconstruct, evaluate and give arguments, with attention to their internal structure (premises vs. the conclusions they support) and what distinguishes them from claims.
- Approach positions—especially those with which one disagrees—fairly, patiently and imaginatively.
- Be familiar with some major moral problems, such as famine, abortion, euthanasia, the moral status of animals and whether killing is worse than letting-die.

Part III. Design for Accessibility:

In the space below, briefly describe plans for providing access to course materials and activities (or equivalent alternatives) to all students in adherence with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Although these plans may vary from instructor to instructor, the descriptions provided below should be representative of intended departmental and instructor practices. (See example statements appended to this form.)

The department will continue its current successful practice of dealing with accessibility issues by working with students and the Disability Resource Center on a case-by-case basis. Depending on the nature of the case, means to accessibility might include (but is not restricted to): a scribe, text-to-voice software (i.e., screen readers), extra time on exams and in-class assignments, and individual meetings to give needed oral explanations (say, of written comments on an assignment).

Part IV. Evidence of Quality Course Design:

Please use the table below (column headings for this table should not be changed) to provide evidence that the course has been carefully designed and is clearly aligned with Foundational Studies
Program desired ULOs. All sections of the course should share similar student learning outcomes. Teaching and Learning Activities and Assessment Methods may vary from instructor to instructor. Please use the table to report representative strategies that may be used. Assessment activities used for reporting to the Foundational Studies Program should be consistent across different sections of the course.

Please see below.

**Part V. Additional Justification (Optional):**

If the brief justification provided to the University Curriculum Committee in the proposal to accompany the “Request for Curriculum Action” is not sufficient to make the case for including the course in the Foundational Studies Program, additional (optional) narrative can be added here.

We have not included a course learning outcome for the following component of ULO 10:

* Cultural, historical, conceptual, and linguistic awareness
  * exhibits awareness of and sensitivity to human values by demonstrating knowledge and appreciation of cultural, historical, conceptual or linguistic differences
  * explain one’s own cultural perspectives
  * make meaningful comparisons with the cultural perspectives of others

It would warp the nature of the course to include such a learning objective. The course is concerned with, for a possible example, J. J. Thomson’s argument for the permissibility of abortion in cases of rape. The right verdict might be that this is a bad argument. That doesn’t seem to be the kind of thing the framers of this ULO 10 component had in mind by including, e.g., “exhibits awareness of and sensitivity to human values”. While everyone in the philosophy department approves of the goals in this ULO 10 component, we don’t feel that it is the job of every DL-L class to pursue these goals.

We are adopting the following Departmental Internal Guideline: “The sustained piece of writing, used for the assessment reported to the Foundational Studies Program, will typically be around 750 words. It may be produced outside of class or in exam conditions. It may take the form of an essay, or paragraph-long answers to a succession of questions.”

**Review Committee Checklist:**

- [X] Syllabus Statement - statement introduces the student to the purpose and role of the course in the Foundational Studies Program curriculum.
- [X] An appropriate number of Course Learning Outcomes are specified for the course and are clearly designed to support the Foundational Studies Program ULOs. **One ULO is missing.**
- [X] Course Learning Outcomes are appropriately designed for level of the course and address both content mastery and skill-based outcomes.
- [X] The types and numbers of assessments planned for the course are appropriate for measuring the content or skills being assessed
- [X] Course learning activities are likely to promote the achievement of the stated outcomes
- [X] Course design and materials have considered best practices for accessibility to course materials and ideas by all students (e.g., alternatives to auditory and visual content)
Feedback from Review Committee:

This looks like a very interesting course, especially in the ways it teaches students to think like philosophers. The learning outcomes appear to be mostly skills-based, with only the last one addressing content mastery in an almost tentative way. Will students be expected to come away from the course with any significant understanding of specific theories or texts? If so, “be familiar” seems to lack the strength to communicate this expectation. The explanation of why there are no CLOs to discuss “cultural, historical, conceptual, and linguistic awareness” makes some good points, but seems to take a pretty limited view of how this awareness might be addressed in a course like this one. Even if Thomson’s argument is deemed ineffective, shouldn’t students be able to make this judgment in a way that demonstrates awareness of their own cultural context and the ways that it differs from the context in which Thomson was writing? So excluding this element of the rubric doesn’t seem justified, especially since many students will only be taking one DL-L course. Aside from this, the course appears to include a broad range of activities and assessments to help students achieve the objectives and learn the methods of philosophy. The Departmental Internal Guidelines for the course seem especially valuable in ensuring that all sections of the course are similar enough to ensure that students get an equivalent experience regardless of the section’s specific focus, although it would be helpful to have some guidelines about the number of issues and/or texts each section is required to cover and the level of depth to which students should be expected to explore philosophical treatment of these issues.

That is to say, PHIL 102 could serve as a model for Departmental Guidelines as they apply to PHIL 103 and the range of moral problems to be addressed (e.g. at least a certain number...)

In the category of CLOs, what does it mean to “charitably interpret” a philosophical text? Does this mean students need to be proficient at interpretation, to capably interpret a philosophical? Does it mean they are required to agree with the text? Or does it merely mean they are required not to dismiss the text out of hand?

I perceive the idea of ULO Cultural, historical, conceptual, and linguistic awareness as merely the obligation to make students aware that these moral problems have been perceived differently in different cultures and in different historical time periods. Should students not be made aware of the fact that J.J. Thomson is a 20th century American female moral philosopher (and not an ancient Greek male moral philosopher)? A course about moral problems “exhibits awareness of and sensitivity to human values” a priori. If it didn’t, why would it bother choosing to discuss the validity of philosophical argumentation about these issues? Are students not encouraged to set aside their own cultural perspective (I am pro-life or I am pro-choice) in order to examine the reasoning put forth by moral philosophers? Choosing to discuss famine is precisely a statement of human values; it’s deemed a worthy topic of exploration. I see absolutely no incompatibility with this ULO and the course as presented. If an instructor were to neglect these fundamental, background issues would s/he be considered competent to teach this course? Inclusion of this ULO does not mean it is the primary focus of the course, but I believe it is essential.

Aside from this one ULO omission, the CLOs, assessment methods and pedagogy seem rigorous, engaging, and well thought out.
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<tr>
<th>Foundational Studies Program Director Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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CERTIFIED FOR APPROVAL 9-8-2011.

Electronically signed by Vicki Stieha,
Director, Foundational Studies Program
Boise State University
**Boise State University**  
**Foundational Studies Course**

Course Number and Title: PHIL 103 Moral Problems

## Course Design Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation ULO 10 Criteria</th>
<th>Foundation ULO 10 Notions of Exemplary Work</th>
<th>Course Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, each student should be able to…</th>
<th>Assessment Method: Evidence of Student Learning</th>
<th>Planned Teaching &amp; Learning Activities / Pedagogy</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| ULO 10: Critical reading skills within the discipline | • Skillfully uses disciplinary tools and vocabulary appropriate for the course  
• Accurately comprehends appropriate texts  
• Convincingly interprets appropriate texts  
• Insightfully analyzes assigned texts | Accurately comprehend and charitably interpret appropriate philosophical texts (e.g. by reconstructing the argument). | Basis for the report to the Foundations Program:  
• a piece of sustained writing, in which an argument is stated, an objection put forward and evaluated.  
Other forms of assessment may include:  
• other sustained pieces of writing  
• short essay exams  
• multiple-choice and fill-in-the blank exam questions  
• quizzes  
• participation in blackboard discussions  
• participation in classroom discussions | May include:  
• Homework reading responses  
• Discussion groups  
• Blackboard discussions  
• Each one teach one  
• In-class debates  
• Whole-class discussion about how to reconstruct the argument  
• ‘muddiest point’ papers  
• one-minute papers  
• Faculty feedback on written work  
• Peer assessment of written work  
• Individual student/teacher conferences |
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| ULO 10: Writing and/or speaking within the discipline | • Articulates complex ideas in clear and coherent language appropriate to the discipline  
• Demonstrates exemplary skill with grammar and style appropriate for the course | • Express themselves in well-organized prose which meets the discipline’s standards of clarity and precision. | Basis for the report to the Foundations Program:  
• a piece of sustained writing, in which an argument is stated, an objection put forward and evaluated.  
Other forms of assessment may include:  
• other sustained pieces of writing  
• short essay exams  
• in-class oral presentations  
• participation in blackboard discussions  
• participation in classroom discussions | May include:  
• Homework reading responses  
• Discussion groups  
• Blackboard discussions  
• Each one teach one  
• In-class debates  
• Whole-class lecture and discussion about how to the reconstruct the argument  
• Tutorial videos on how to write argumentative essays  
• Faculty feedback on written work  
• Peer assessment of written work  
• Students mark a sample essay in class using a rubric  
• Oral presentations  
• Individual student/teacher conferences |
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| ULO 10: Reasoning within the discipline | • Demonstrate a high level of skill in logical reasoning in written and oral work appropriate for the course  
• Identify important underlying assumptions  
• Distinguishes pertinent facts from opinions  
• Differentiates claims from reasons  
• Arranges relevant evidence in concise and clear language appropriate for the course | • Identify, reconstruct, evaluate and give arguments, with attention to their internal structure (premises vs. the conclusions they support) and what distinguishes them from claims. | Basis for the report to the Foundations Program:  
• a piece of sustained writing, in which an argument is stated, an objection put forward and evaluated.  
Other forms of assessment may include:  
• other sustained pieces of writing  
• short essay exams  
• multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank exam questions  
• quizzes  
• participation in blackboard discussions  
• participation in classroom discussions  
• in-class oral presentations | May include:  
• Whole-class lecture and discussion about how to the reconstruct the argument  
• Tutorial videos on what constitutes a good argument  
• Discussion groups  
• Blackboard discussions  
• Each one teach one  
• In-class debates  
• one-minute papers  
• Homework reading responses  
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<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Notions of Exemplary Work</td>
<td>• Exhibits awareness of and sensitivity to human values by demonstrating knowledge and appreciation of cultural, historical, conceptual or linguistic differences • Explain one’s own cultural perspectives make meaningful comparisons with the cultural perspectives of others</td>
<td>Basis for the report to the Foundations Program: • a piece of sustained writing, in which an argument is stated, an objection put forward and evaluated. Other forms of assessment may include: • other sustained pieces of writing • participation in blackboard discussions • participation in classroom discussions • discussion in individual student/teacher conferences</td>
<td>May include: • Discussion groups • Blackboard discussions • Each one teach one • In-class debates • Faculty feedback on written work • Peer assessment of written work • Individual student/teacher conferences • Writing a reflection paper, about what parts of the course have changed them, and how.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ULO 10: Cultural, historical, conceptual, and linguistic awareness</td>
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<td>ULO 10: Personal development</td>
<td>• Responsibly entertain and evaluate views that differ from one’s own • Actively explore and navigate ambiguity and difference • Ask probing questions relevant to the discipline • Approach problems imaginative and creatively</td>
<td>Approach positions—especially those with which one disagrees—fairly, patiently, and imaginatively.</td>
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<td>NON ULO Class LO’s</td>
<td>Be familiar with some major moral problems, such as famine, abortion, euthanasia, the moral status of animals and whether killing is worse than letting-die.</td>
<td>Assessment may include: • a sustained piece of writing • short essay exams • multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank exam questions • quizzes • participation in blackboard discussions • participation in classroom discussions</td>
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