PROPOSAL FOR A MINOR IN PHILOSOPHY

Submitted by: The Department of Philosophy

Executive Summary

Philosophy has been a mainstay of Catholic education since its inception, especially in Jesuit universities. Philosophy is distinctive in its manner of integrating the intellectual, spiritual, social, and ethical aspects of the human condition, because it asks the most fundamental questions that can be asked about each of these elements of the person. Philosophical texts provide ideal opportunities for building skills in critical reading, writing and thinking, all of which are central to “educating the whole person.” Furthermore, philosophy’s foundational role in most of the academic disciplines in the modern university curriculum enables us to suggest sets of elective courses in a philosophy minor that would complement a variety of specific majors at UDM. The purpose of the philosophy minor at UDM is therefore twofold. First, it allows all UDM students the opportunity to further immerse themselves in this tradition, and pursue the philosophical impulse that is distinctive of human beings. And second, it allows UDM the possibility of engaging in a guided and structured exploration of the ultimate questions underlying their academic interests. This exploration must itself rest on a common foundation of courses in philosophy that provide students with both the concepts and skills for more advanced study. Our proposed minor therefore consists of two parts: (1) a set of lower division courses required of all minors; and (2) a set of upper division courses that can be tailored to a student’s specific interests.

A further virtue of our proposed minor is that, at present, most students take six of its required hours as part of the Core Curriculum: PHL 100 (Introduction to Philosophy) and PHL 201 (Ethics). Thus, the additional twelve hours required in the minor represent an achievable goal for nearly all of our students. The majority of inquiries we have had from students regarding a minor in philosophy – a considerable number – have originated in our many sections of PHL 100. We are delighted that we now have the opportunity for a more positive response to the enthusiastic interest in philosophy expressed by these students. What could be more ‘student-centered’ than to create a minor in philosophy requested by the students themselves?

Finally, approving a philosophy minor would fulfill the missions of both the College of Liberal Arts & Education and University by providing courses that give students a broader (liberal and catholic) perspective on the relationships between different areas of inquiry.

B. Description of the Minor

Summary of the proposed minor:

We propose the following requirements for a minor in philosophy:

- PHL 100: Introduction to Philosophy (3 hours)
- PHL 150 (Introduction to Logic) or PHL 250 (Symbolic Logic) (3 hours)
- PHL 201: Ethics (3 hours)
- Any 3 upper division (300-400 level) philosophy electives (9 hours)
  (3 of these 9 hours may be ETH 358: Health Care Ethics)
- Total hours in proposed minor: (18 hours)
B1: Narrative description (at it would appear in the UDM catalog):
The 18 credit hour minor in philosophy is comprised of 9 credit hours (or 3 courses) that provide the necessary foundation for advanced study in philosophy, and are therefore required of all students who choose the minor. The remaining 9 hours in the minor allow the student to choose 3 upper division (300 or 400-level) courses that explore those philosophical issues in which the student has the greatest interest.

Although all students may choose any combination of upper division elective courses in philosophy, students may configure this part of their minor in such a way that complements their major area of study. The Department of Philosophy suggests the following possible minor “tracks”:

Pre-Law Students or Political Science Majors:
- PHL 301: Social and Political Philosophy
- PHL 312: Contemporary Moral Issues
- PHL 356: Peace and Social Justice
- PHL 424: Philosophy of Law

Business Majors:
- PHL 301: Social and Political Philosophy
- PHL 312: Contemporary Moral Issues
- PHL 320: Contemporary Ethical Theory
- PHL 356: Peace and Social Justice

Nursing, Dental, and Health Professions Majors:
- PHL 312: Contemporary Moral Issues
- PHL 320: Contemporary Ethical Theory
- ETH 358: Health Care Ethics (see note under course description below)

Science Majors:
- PHL 312: Contemporary Moral Issues
- ETH 358: Health Care Ethics
- PHL 406: Metaphysics
- PHL 407: Epistemology

History Majors:
- PHL 306: Greek Philosophy
- PHL 307: Medieval Philosophy
- PHL 308: Early Modern Philosophy
- PHL 365: African Philosophy and Culture
- PHL 440: Contemporary Philosophy
Architecture Majors:
PHL 305: Aesthetics
PHL 312: Contemporary Moral Issues
PHL 356: Peace and Social Justice

Criminal Justice Majors:
PHL 301: Social and Political Philosophy
PHL 312: Contemporary Moral Issues
PHL 356: Peace and Social Justice
PHL 424: Philosophy of Law

Psychology Majors:
PHL 308: Early Modern Philosophy
ETH 358: Health Care Ethics
PHL 406: Metaphysics
PHL 407: Epistemology
PHL 440: Contemporary Philosophy

Religious Studies Majors:
Religion track:
PHL 302: Philosophy of Religion
PHL 303: Philosophy of God
PHL 304: Aquinas and Recent Scholarship
PHL 307: Medieval Philosophy
PHL 365: African Philosophy and Culture
Ethics track:
PHL 312: Contemporary Moral Issues
PHL 320: Contemporary Ethical Theory
PHL 356: Peace and Social Justice

B2: All courses in the curriculum:
All courses are currently offered as part of the philosophy major, with the exception of ETH 358, required for all Nursing students. Fully developed syllabi for selected courses are attached in the appendix.

PHL 100 Introduction to Philosophy (3 credits)
An introduction to philosophy through a consideration of such topics as the person, human values, freedom, morality, knowledge, death, the meaning of life, God, and the nature and destiny of human existence. Students come to understand that philosophy asks the most fundamental questions about ourselves, the world, and the relationship between the two. The method of philosophical thinking and critical reflection will be stressed.

PHL 150 Introduction to Logic (3 credits)
A basic course in logic concerned with the improvement of reasoning in everyday life, this course stresses elementary argument forms, deductive and inductive reasoning, the analysis and
assessment of arguments, the relationship between truth and validity, informal fallacies, and the recognition of good arguments. Although this course may include some elements of formal symbolic logic, the emphasis is on the study of arguments as expressed in a natural language such as English.

**PHL 201 Ethics (3 credits)**
An introductory course in moral theory, focusing on answers to the questions, “what makes an action right or wrong?” and “what makes someone a good person?” Topics covered include: whether right and wrong are matters of individual opinion, cultural opinion, or the commands of God; utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, and Aristotle’s theory of the virtues. Additional topics that could be covered include the Natural Law Theory of morality and feminist ethics. This is NOT a course in moral problems such as abortion, animal rights, and the death penalty. Particular moral issues will be discussed only insofar as they illuminate some aspect of a moral theory.

**PHL 250 Symbolic Logic (3 credits)**
An introduction to the artificial language of sentential and predicate logic, which is designed to facilitate the symbolic representation of natural language (English) arguments. In addition to learning how to construct formal proofs for valid arguments, students learn the different logical properties that statements and sets of statements may have. The concepts of truth-functionality, validity, consistency, implication, and equivalence will be explored. Students will have a heightened appreciation of the logical functions of language.

**PHL 301 Social and Political Philosophy (3 credits)**
An examination of the issues surrounding the state and the political agents who live in such states. The course may be oriented either historically or topically and may cover: ancient Greek political theory as articulated by Aristotle and Plato, the social contract tradition of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marxism, communitarianism, the nature of political obligation, justice, law, human rights, the nature and value of political liberty and equality, and the nature and value of patriotism.

**PHL 302 Philosophy of Religion (3 credits)**
A study of the philosophical issues raised by religious practice and religious belief. In addition to arguments for the existence of God, the course will include the following topics: the problem of evil and attempted solutions, the epistemological significance of religious belief, the relationship between religious belief and practice, and the role of religion in contemporary society.

**PHL 303 Philosophy of God (3 credits)**
A study of God’s existence and nature, of the ways God may be known, and of God’s significance for human life. Some of the traditional arguments will be examined, as well as reasons for belief, the meaning of faith, and the meaning of religious language.

**PHL 304 Aquinas and Recent Scholarship (3 credits)**
The past several decades have witnessed an amazing growth of interest in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. While there has been a continuity of scholarship from within the tradition of Thomism, much of the recent scholarly work has been outside traditional Catholic thought. This course has two goals: first, by means of primary sources, to investigate some of the chief
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ccontributions of Aquinas to the study of major questions in metaphysics and epistemology; second, to become acquainted with some of the major contemporary reexaminations of Aquinas’ philosophical writings. (**No syllabus provided for this course, which has not been offered in several years. This is a new name for our old Aquinas course.)

PHL 305 Aesthetics (3 credits)
An examination of theories regarding the valuable/beautiful in our perceptual experience of both nature and works of fine art: the nature of the aesthetic, the different aesthetics which are characteristic of different cultures, societies, and individuals; the nature of art; the importance of anything’s being classified as art; the functions of the arts in society; the nature of artistic creation; the non-artist’s understandings of, response to, and evaluation of works of art.

PHL 306 Greek Philosophy (3 credits)
An examination of the views of the three major ancient Western philosophers: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Pre-Socratic thinkers such as Parmenides, Anaxagoras, and Anaximenes may also be considered. Students should be prepared to extract and consider the philosophical arguments in the texts of these thinkers. The course may also include reading and consideration of some of the secondary literature in this area.

PHL 307 Medieval Philosophy (3 credits)
An examination of the various syntheses of Greek philosophy and religious faith between the fourth and fourteenth centuries. Neo-Platonism and the philosophical thought of Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena, and Anselm. Aristotle’s philosophy and the philosophical thought of Christian thinkers such as Boethius, Abelard, Bonaventure, Aquinas, Scotus, and Ockham; Jewish thinkers such as Maimonides; and Islamic thinkers such as Avicenna, Al-Ghazali, and Averroes. Emphasis is given to questions of logic and metaphysics.

PHL 308 Early Modern Philosophy (3 credits)
An examination of the period in philosophy from the publication of Descartes’ Meditations in 1641, to the publication of the second edition of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason in 1787. Philosophers in this period were examining the epistemological implications of the "new science" as formulated by such figures as Galileo, Newton, and Kepler. The work of this period paved the way for the Western analytic tradition in the 20th century, and continues to influence philosophers today.

PHL 312 Contemporary Moral Issues (3 credits)
This course requires a rigorous consideration of contemporary moral problems from a philosophical perspective. Some of the topics covered include: abortion, euthanasia, animal rights, capital punishment, drug legalization, same-sex marriage, and affirmative action. The best philosophical literature on these topics is complex and theoretical; thus, this is not an appropriate first or second course in philosophy. **Pre-requisites: PHL 100 and PHL 201.

PHL 320 Contemporary Ethical Theory (3 credits)
A more philosophically advanced, sophisticated, and in-depth treatment of moral theory and specific ethical questions. Possible topics include: contemporary utilitarianism, contemporary Kantian ethics, virtue theory, the social contract theory of morality, recent feminist critiques of
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traditional moral theory, the nature of moral or practical reasons and their relation to motivation, the justification of morality, and moral psychology. Students are strongly encouraged to take PHL 201 prior to PHL 320.

PHL 356 Peace and Social Justice (3 credits)
An introduction to the world dilemmas of peace and social justice, human dignity, racism, world hunger, economic power, war and the nuclear threat, and social change in Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa through films, reading, and discussion.

ETH 358 Health Care Ethics (3 credits)
An examination of moral issues in health care delivery, health care policy, and biomedical research. Discussion will focus on moral theories, principles and values and their application to such issues as professional-patient relationships, euthanasia, abortion, human experimentation, and access to health care. (*This course is taught by PHL or RS full-time and adjunct faculty and is accepted as a PHL elective in the philosophy major.)

PHL 365 African Philosophy and Culture (3 credits)
Investigates African philosophy as the communal world views of African peoples (ethnophiilosophy), as the views of traditional Africans regarded as wise (sage philosophy), as the though of key African political leaders (liberation philosophy), and as the work of contemporary professional African philosophers who see African philosophy as "counter-colonial practice" seeking to examine, question, and contest identities imposed by the West.

PHL 406 Metaphysics (3 credits)
An investigation of the nature of reality in general; the issues of materialism and idealism, change and permanence, the origin of the universe, etc. This course examines conceptual systems about reality though a study of classical examples of metaphysical systems, as well as the modern refutation of metaphysics stemming from Hume and Kant.

PHL 407 Epistemology (3 credits)
An investigation of the nature, sources, and limits of human knowledge. Topics may include: the traditional philosophical conception of knowledge as justified true belief, the nature and objectivity of truth, skepticism about the external world, and the role and limits of science as a means of obtaining knowledge. In addition to considering classical and contemporary Western philosophical views on these topics, the course may also include criticism of the Western tradition itself.

PHL 415 Advanced Topics in Philosophy (3 credits)
The content of the course will vary with the instructor and the semester in which it is offered, but in all cases it will involve a more sophisticated and in-depth treatment of a major figure in philosophy, and/or a major theme or issue.

PHL 424 Philosophy of Law (3 credits)
This course introduces the student to one of the central questions in analytic jurisprudence: what is law? How is law distinct from and/or related to morality? What makes a set of rules or commands a legal system instead of some other kind of system? The three main answers to this
question have been the natural law theory, legal positivism, and the ‘third theory’ of law proposed by Ronald Dworkin. The course will also focus on the related question in legal philosophy regarding the objectivity and distinctiveness of legal reasoning; in this context, we will consider the American Legal Realists, the Critical Legal Studies movement, and feminist jurisprudence. The material for this course is highly abstract and theoretical. **Pre-requisites:**

**PHL 100 and PHL 201.**

**PHL 440 Contemporary Philosophy** (3 credits)
An investigation of some of the major 20th century developments within Continental and Anglo-American philosophy, with special attention paid to questions or issues within epistemology and metaphysics/ontology. Particular movements studied include phenomenology, existentialism, postmodernism, and deconstruction within the Continental tradition, and pragmatism, naturalism, process philosophy, and analytic philosophy within the Anglo-American tradition.

**PHL 495 Directed Readings** (1-3 credits)
Independent and directed readings may be arranged whenever there is no regular course being offered that covers the student's special interests. **NOTE:** Only one (1) directed reading can count towards credit in the philosophy minor.

**B3: Delivery Format:**
At this time, the delivery format for the minor will be traditional daytime classes. We do offer PHL 100, 150, and 201 in the evening, but most of our 300 and 400 level courses run during the day. The largest cohort of students served by the proposed minor would be students who attend courses during the day.

**Online and distance learning:** ETH 358 is currently the only course provided online. We are willing to consider further exploration of this issue.

**B4: Academic Integrity and Intellectual Merit**
The proposed philosophy minor reflects both academic integrity and intellectual merit. At the lower division level it requires students to master a common set of skills and concepts. In PHL 150/250, students will learn the logical skills that represent a non-arbitrary method for answering philosophical questions through sound argumentation, which renders philosophy as being more than simply “a matter of opinion.”. In PHL 100, students will learn what philosophy is, and how philosophical issues differ from non-philosophical issues. They will become accustomed to taking a perspective on an issue that is wider and more theoretical than that required in other disciplines. They are introduced to the major areas of philosophy, such as metaphysics, epistemology and ethics, and become acquainted with some of the more seminal philosophical thinkers of the tradition, including Plato and Descartes. In PHL 201 students will delve more deeply into ethics. Here students must consider what it is that makes an action right or wrong in the first place, and they will do this through various ethical theories such as virtue ethics, utilitarianism and deontology (among others). This cohesive body of basic coursework imparts foundational skills and concepts which demonstrates the intellectual merit of the minor.
The upper division courses that we suggest are also indicative of the intellectual merit of the proposed minor. Although all of our upper division courses technically satisfy this requirement of the minor, the fact that we have put considerable thought into the recommendation of specific courses to various majors demonstrates our long-standing commitments to the intellectual development of our students and to excellence in undergraduate education. The upper division courses in the minor will not only require the student to confront, in an intellectually honest fashion, the most fundamental questions that can be asked about some aspect of the human condition; they can also, if a student so chooses, lead that student to examine the most foundational questions of his or her chosen major. The philosophy minor is therefore highly likely to substantially enhance the students’ overall intellectual experience at UDM.

Academic integrity is assured by the standardization of PHL100, PHL150, PHL201 and PHL250 at the department level. Syllabi from both full-time and adjunct faculty are collected by the chair every term to assure compliance with these standards.

Structural changes to the minor, as well as changes in assessment of the minor, will occur by the same process that is used to change the philosophy major. Proposed changes to the major are voted on in the department, and then submitted for approval to the College of Liberal Arts and Education Curriculum Committee.

B5: Unusual or Unique Characteristics of the Proposed Minor
As indicated in the executive summary above, there are several unique features of our minor:
- Students are already required to take PHL100; many also take PHL201 as part of the Core; these courses represent 6 of the 18 hours in the minor.
- Upper division electives can be chosen on the basis of the student’s specific interest (see the suggested “tracks” above).
- All PHL courses satisfy Objective 4c of the Core Curriculum by default, generating an even greater overlap between a philosophy minor and the Core Curriculum.
- We already know that there is a considerable amount of student interest in a philosophy minor, based on the numbers of students who have asked various department faculty about it.

B6: Effects on related departments or fields of concentration
Based on the tracks for specific majors outlined above, the effect of a philosophy minor on other programs or departments is obviously substantial. The minor is designed to enable students to more fully explore their chosen area by examining its philosophical questions. Thus, the fit between a philosophy minor and a student’s major is not an accidental one. Instead, it reflects departmental thought and discussion of how our minor can complement a student’s major course of study.
C: Mission

The Mission Statement of the University of Detroit Mercy:
The University of Detroit Mercy, a Catholic university in the Jesuit and Mercy traditions, exists to provide excellent student-centered undergraduate and graduate education in an urban context. A UDM education seeks to integrate the intellectual, spiritual, ethical and social development of our students.

The Mission Statement of the College of Liberal Arts and Education:
The College of Liberal Arts and Education prepares students to participate in a diverse and changing world in the Jesuit and Mercy traditions as "men and women for others." The College provides a student-centered education in an urban context which stimulates a desire for the lifelong exploration of the intellectual, spiritual and ethical dimensions of what it means to be human.

The proposed philosophy minor contributes to both of these projects: it offers a path to the integration of the intellectual, ethical, spiritual and social development of our students by examining what it means to be human from a philosophical perspective.

D: Objectives, Outcomes, and Assessment

Objectives and Outcomes:

Students completing the minor in philosophy will:

- Understand the distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical issues.
- Grasp the fundamentals of sound philosophical argumentation.
- Become acquainted with some of the more seminal philosophical thinkers of the tradition.
- Understand the distinction between metaphysics, epistemology and ethics, and appreciate the concepts and issues central to each.
- Develop a literacy in ethical theory through reflection on and the application of virtue ethics, utilitarianism and/or deontology (among other ethical theories) to concrete issues and problems.

Assessment of the Minor:

Student mastery of these skills will be assessed via a non-credit terminal capstone project which will consist of three parts:

- A Portfolio consisting of at least three essays written for the student’s upper-division philosophy minor courses.
• **An Objective Essay.** Under the supervision of a department faculty member, students will choose a morally significant issue in their major field of study which is (or has been) a matter of public debate. Students will collect an article or editorial that has appeared on their chosen topic, and author a 5-10 page typed and double-spaced critical ethical analysis of this topic. If needed, faculty with specialized knowledge of the topic from outside the philosophy department will be asked to serve as an advisor on this project.

This essay and the student’s portfolio will be assessed by department faculty using a rubric to measure whether they:

- Make the necessary distinctions between philosophical and non-philosophical issues.
- Grasp the fundamentals of sound philosophical argumentation by reconstructing arguments, diagnosing fallacies, developing arguments in defense of a thesis, anticipating counterarguments, etc.
- Demonstrate an acquaintance with the major thinkers relevant to the topics addressed.
- Where relevant, an understanding of the distinction between metaphysics, epistemology and ethics, and an appreciation of the concepts and issues central to each.
- Display a literacy in ethical theory through reflection on and the application of virtue ethics, utilitarianism and/or deontology (among other ethical theories) to concrete issues and problems.

• **A Subjective Essay.** A 5 page, typed and double-spaced essay that would partly consist of the student’s subjective reflection on how the study of philosophy has impacted the student’s understanding of life and deepened his or her understanding of their major field of study. Students would also be asked to comment on how the minor met their intellectual and professional needs by pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of the minor, which courses they found most beneficial and which courses they found least beneficial, and offering criticisms and advice for the purpose of improving the minor.

Students will not be allowed to graduate with a philosophy minor unless they have completed all three parts of this project. This non-credit terminal capstone project will therefore be added to the CLAE degree audit sheet.

E: **New resources**

Since all UDM students take PHL100 and many (if not most) also take PHL201 as part of their Core requirements, the philosophy department runs multiple sections of both every semester (typically, eight sections of 100 and five sections of 201). All of the sections of both courses typically have healthy enrollments and are already included in the budget. Therefore, this element of the major does not require new resources.

The required upper division hours in the minor also do not require new resources. As the attached Excel spreadsheet shows, all of our upper division courses have available seats.
The logic requirement would require us to offer more sections of PHL150 (in addition to PHL250, which at present runs every other year in the winter term). The department proposes to meet this need by running PHL150 every year in the fall term. This would not only make it possible for the department to meet its obligation to its minors with its present full-time or adjunct staff; it would also meet an increased demand for this course, based on enrollments since Term 2, 2003-04.

In summary, the proposed minor requires no additional university resources.