Statement of Rationale for POL-030 Political Theory and Ideology—JRD GE

This course reasonably fulfills The *Common Skills and Emphases: Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity on Biblical and Theological Grounds* requirement in the GE curriculum. Courses in this area seek to "…equip students to recognize personal, interpersonal, communal, institutional, and systemic expressions of sin, rebellion, brokenness, and injustice…", to interpret these in light of scriptural truth, and will "…will help students to see their responsibility to promote justice and reconciliation in their own communities…."[1]

- The General Education Certification Criteria for this area (adopted May 2024) stipulates that students in such courses will:
  - *1. develop biblically and theologically grounded understandings of justice, reconciliation, and diversity. These will enable students to understand justice and reconciliation in terms of the gospel and appropriate disciplinary frameworks, recognize sin, rebellion, and brokenness as such, and discern their responsibility in the work of justice and reconciliation within their own local context;*
    - Per certification criterion #1, this course devotes significant attention in readings and class discussions to biblical and theological approaches that inform how to understand justice, injustice, redemptive work, and diversity. The doctrines of Creation, Fall, and Redemption provide the foundation for the Christian liberal arts and the central interpretive framework for these categories.
    - Readings include general frameworks like Albert Wolters' book *Creation Regained* and David Koyzis' *Political Visions and Illusions*. Each ideology has a range of specific readings.
    - Class discussions and exams engage both the general theoretical frameworks and specific applications / manifestations.

  - *2. examine personal actions, social norms, and systemic practices involving race and racism in the United States as they relate to historic and contemporary patterns of belonging and exclusion, attending to how historical particularities and differences in power shape the responsibilities different parties have in the work of justice and reconciliation in light of God's kingdom;*
    - Per certification criterion #2, specific ideologies addressing racism, sexism, sexual identity, religious identity, and multiculturalism are key components of the course. These include, though are not limited to, the context of the United States.
    - Readings like those from Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, Malcolm X, and Vince Bacote address social structures and systems that relate to race-based injustice and exclusion in the United States.

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[1] Westmont College General Education Combined Document, May 2024.
https://www.westmont.edu/sites/default/files/users/user2641/GE%20Combined%20Document%20UPDATED_May_2024-3.pdf

- I regularly address these in class lecture and discussion—including how they might manifest in the context of a Christian liberal arts context like Westmont.
- The final exam regularly addresses these, and students often have the opportunity to write a short paper related to these readings.

- *3. model Christlike dialogue reflecting God's desire for justice and reconciled relationships among all image-bearers, especially when confronting challenging or sensitive issues.*
  - Per certification criterion #3, a primary theological model for discerning what even erroneous ideologies correctly perceive equips students to look for goodness and truth even in the context of ideas and actions corrupted by sin and that need significant redirection for redemptive purposes. This approach opens doors for constructively exploring even very controversial topics, and for thinking critically about apparently less controversial ones.
  - The philosophical framework from Glenn Tinder's *Political Thinking* is very important for setting the stage for this, developed by the theoretical and theological readings like Wolters and especially Koyzis. The shorter readings like those of Bacote and Keller and also important for students' understanding.
  - The exams and class discussion are important for addressing this.