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| **Assurance of Student Learning Report**  **2020-2021** | |
| Potter College of Arts & Letters | Philosophy & Religion |
| Religious Studies—769 | |
| James Barker | |

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| ***Use this page to list learning outcomes, measurements, and summarize results for your program. Detailed information must be completed in the subsequent pages.*** | | | |
| **Student Learning Outcome 1:** | | | |
| **Instrument 1** | **Direct: Senior Seminar final papers** | | |
| **Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.** | | **Met** | **Not Met** |
| **Student Learning Outcome 2:** | | | |
| **Instrument 1** | **Direct: Senior Seminar final papers** | | |
| **Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 2.** | | **Met** | **Not Met** |
| **Student Learning Outcome 3:** | | | |
| **Instrument 1** | **Direct: Senior Seminar final papers** | | |
| **Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 3.** | | **Met** | **Not Met** |
| **Program Summary (Briefly summarize the action and follow up items from your detailed responses on subsequent pages.)** | | | |
| Although the Religious Studies program met its goal of 80% proficiency for all three student learning outcomes in AY 2019–2020, the program narrowly missed one metric in AY 2020–2021. This year only 71% of students demonstrated proficiency in SLO 1, collecting and analyzing evidence. Our plan had been to incorporate peer-review to enhance student performance in this area. The logistics of offering Senior Seminar online due to the COVID pandemic frustrated these plans, but we should be able to implement this strategy next year, and we expect better outcomes as a result. For SLO 2 (i.e., written communication) and SLO 3 (i.e., global and/or intercultural learning), 86% of students demonstrated proficiency. Vis-à-vis SLO 2, for this year’s and next year’s assessments, we are paying close attention to students’ ability to identify and incorporate reputable online sources for research in religious studies. Last year we had contemplated revision of SLO 3, but we wisely withheld making any changes, and we may even skip its assessment for AY 2021–2022, since it has become our most consistent learning outcome. | | | |

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| **Student Learning Outcome 1** | | | | | |
| **Student Learning Outcome** | Students will be able to effectively collect and analyze evidence in the field of religious studies. | | | | |
| **Measurement Instrument 1** | **Direct: Senior Seminar final papers**  As the capstone course for the major, Senior Seminar (RELS 496) should be able to measure students’ ability to collect and analyze evidence. | | | | |
| **Criteria for Student Success** | Drawing from AAC&U VALUES rubric for Inquiry and analysis, successful students will have achieved capstone level (4/4) or upper milestone level (3/4) with respect to topic selection; existing knowledge, research, and/or views; analysis; and conclusion. | | | | |
| **Program Success Target for this Measurement** | | **80%** of students will have earned a 3/4 or 4/4 on the rubric for collecting and analyzing evidence. | **Percent of Program Achieving Target** | **71%** of students earned a 3/4 or 4/4 on the rubric for collecting and analyzing evidence. | |
| **Methods** | Artifacts from the Senior Seminar were collected. All seniors in the course who were majors were included in the sample (*N=*7). All papers were then anonymized and independently assessed by two full-time faculty members, whose figures were averaged. If there was a substantial difference between the two, then a third full-time faculty member assessed the paper, and all three assessments were averaged. The rubric is attached. | | | | |
| **Based on your results, highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.** | | | | **Met** | **Not Met** |
| **Actions** (Describe the decision-making process and actions for program improvement. The actions should include a timeline.) | | | | | |
| In AY 2020–2021, 71% of Religious Studies Senior Seminar students achieved a 3 or 4 in each subcategory of SLO 1, thereby narrowly failing to meet the program’s goal of 80%. The average for SLO 1 was 3.3 with a range of 2.63–3.88. Five of the seven students met the department’s goal. A sixth student evinced a weak conclusion, and the last student evinced weaknesses in both analysis and conclusion. Last year’s assessment highlighted the need to strengthen students’ conclusions, particularly that learners should avoid overstating or underappreciating their findings. We had intended to incorporate student-to-student peer-review to address this concern. The COVID pandemic interrupted those plans: the course was offered online; students were not always well acquainted with one another; and each student worked at a different pace. Next year’s scheduling should allow implementation of our peer-review strategy. | | | | | |
| **Follow-Up** (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.) | | | | | |
| Next year’s assessment will attempt to focus on the same artifact along with the feedback students received via peer-review. Faculty members will initially assess whether students achieved higher marks for collecting and analyzing evidence, particularly the strength of students’ conclusions. Then faculty will determine whether peer-review strengthened papers’ conclusions or if the conclusions were already adequate at the draft stage. | | | | | |
| **Next Assessment Cycle Plan** (Please describe your assessment plan timetable for this outcome) | | | | | |
| We plan to conduct assessment again at the end of the Spring 2022 semester. The program coordinator, James Barker, will be responsible for collecting and providing data and information. | | | | | |

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| **Student Learning Outcome 2** | | | | | |
| **Student Learning Outcome** | Students will be able to demonstrate effective written communication skills appropriate to religious studies. | | | | |
| **Measurement Instrument 1** | **Direct: Senior Seminar final papers**  As the capstone course for the major, Senior Seminar (RELS 496) should be able to measure students’ ability to communicate effectively in writing. | | | | |
| **Criteria for Student Success** | Drawing from AAC&U VALUES rubric for Written Communication, successful students will have achieved capstone level (4/4) or upper milestone level (3/4) with respect to content development; sources and evidence; and control of syntax and mechanics. | | | | |
| **Program Success Target for this Measurement** | | **80%** of students will have earned a 3/4 or 4/4 on the rubric for written communication. | **Percent of Program Achieving Target** | **86%** of students earned a 3/4 or 4/4 on the rubric for written communication. | |
| **Methods** | Artifacts from the Senior Seminar were collected. All seniors in the course who were majors were included in the sample (*N=*7). All papers were then anonymized and independently assessed by two full-time faculty members, whose figures were averaged. If there was a substantial difference between the two, then a third full-time faculty member assessed the paper, and all three assessments were averaged. The rubric is attached. | | | | |
| **Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 2.** | | | | **Met** | **Not Met** |
| **Actions** (Describe the decision-making process and actions planned for program improvement. The actions should include a timeline.) | | | | | |
| In AY 2020–2021, 86% of Religious Studies Senior Seminar students achieved a 3 or 4 in each subcategory of SLO 2, thereby meeting the program’s goal of 80%. The average for SLO 2 was 3.3 with a range of 2.17–3.83. Last year’s assessment highlighted the need to facilitate access to, and understanding of, high-quality, credible, and relevant online sources. Both sections of Senior Seminar were offered online during the COVID pandemic, and the program met its goal for written communication, particularly regarding sources and evidence. Students commendably accessed and assessed reputable online sources. Last year’s assessment also raised the question whether student perform better in Fall or Spring. While there was a wider range of outcomes in the Spring, there was no discernible difference in averages from one semester to the next. | | | | | |
| **Follow-Up** (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.) | | | | | |
| Next year’s assessment may use the same artifact, but we may widen the scope to include papers written in upper-level Religious Studies courses. In either case, we will maintain our focus on students’ use of reputable online sources. That is, even when courses return to normal after the COVID pandemic, students’ tendency toward online sources will continue, and misinformation regarding world religions will continue to abound on the internet. | | | | | |
| **Next Assessment Cycle Plan** (Please describe your assessment plan timetable for this outcome) | | | | | |
| We plan to conduct assessment again at the end of the Spring 2022 semester. The program coordinator, James Barker, will be responsible for collecting and providing data and information. | | | | | |

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| **Student Learning Outcome 3** | | | | | |
| **Student Learning Outcome** | Students will be able to demonstrate global and/or intercultural learning in thier written communication . | | | | |
| **Measurement Instrument 1** | **Direct: Senior Seminar final papers**  As the capstone course for the major, Senior Seminar (RELS 496) should be able to measure students’ global and/or intercultural knowledge as demonstrated by their written communication. | | | | |
| **Criteria for Student Success** | Drawing from AAC&U VALUES rubric for Global and Intercultural Learning, successful students will have achieved capstone level (4/4) or upper milestone level (3/4) with respect to perspective taking; knowledge of cultural frameworks; and curiosity. | | | | |
| **Program Success Target for this Measurement** | | **80%** of students will have earned a 3/4 or 4/4 on the rubric for global and/or intercultural learning. | **Percent of Program Achieving Target** | **86%** of students earned a 3/4 or 4/4 on the rubric for global and/or intercultural learning. | |
| **Methods** | Artifacts from the Senior Seminar were collected. All seniors in the course who were majors were included in the sample (*N=*7). All papers were then anonymized and independently assessed by two full-time faculty members, whose figures were averaged. If there was a substantial difference between the two, then a third full-time faculty member assessed the paper, and all three assessments were averaged. The rubric is attached. | | | | |
| **Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 3.** | | | | **Met** | **Not Met** |
| **Actions** (Describe the decision-making process and actions for program improvement. The actions should include a timeline.) | | | | | |
| In AY 2020–2021, 86% of Religious Studies Senior Seminar students achieved a 3 or 4 in each subcategory of SLO 3, thereby meeting the program’s goal of 80%. The average for SLO 3 was 3.5 with a range of 2.83–3.83. Last year’s assessment raised a question whether SLO 3’s ‘curiosity’ subcategory could be inversely related to SLO 1’s ‘conclusion’ subcategory. In other words, we asked whether students were overreaching in their conclusions because they were asking too complicated a question. This appeared to be the case in AY 2019–2020, and we contemplated rewriting the ‘curiosity’ rubric. Yet we decided to wait another year, and fortunately our concerns were not borne out by quantitative and qualitative assessment of this year’s data. | | | | | |
| **Follow-Up** (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.) | | | | | |
| Next year’s assessment may use the same artifact, but we may widen the scope to include papers written in upper-level Religious Studies courses. | | | | | |
| **Next Assessment Cycle Plan** (Please describe your assessment plan timetable for this outcome) | | | | | |
| SLO 3 has shown the most consistency year to year, so we may skip assessment of this outcome for AY 2021–2022. If so, then we will conduct assessment at the end of the Spring 2023 semester. The Religious Studies program coordinator will be responsible for collecting and providing data and information. | | | | | |

**Rubric for Student Learning Outcome 1:** Students will be able to effectively collect and analyze evidence in the field of religious studies.

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|  | Capstone (4) | Upper Milestone (3) | Lower Milestone (2) | Benchmark (1) |
| Topic Selection | Identifies a creative, focused, and manageable topic within the study of religion that addresses potentially significant aspects of the topic. | Identifies a focused and manageable/doable topic within the study of religion that appropriately addresses relevant aspects of the topic. | Identifies a topic within the study religion that while manageable/doable, is too narrowly focused and leaves out relevant aspects of the topic. | Identifies a topic within the study of religion that is far too general and wide-ranging as to be manageable and doable. |
| Existing Knowledge, Research, and/or Views | Synthesizes in-depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches. | Presents in-depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches. | Presents information from relevant sources representing limited points of view/approaches. | Presents information from irrelevant sources representing limited points of view/approaches. |
| Analysis | Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus. | Organizes evidence to reveal important patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus. | Organizes evidence, but the organization is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, or similarities. | Lists evidence, but it is not organized and/or is unrelated to focus. |
| Conclusion | States a conclusion that is a logical extrapolation from the inquiry findings. | The conclusion arises specifically from and responds specifically to the inquiry findings. | States a general conclusion that, because it is so general, also applies beyond the scope of the inquiry findings. | States an ambiguous, illogical, or unsupportable conclusion from inquiry findings. |

**Rubric for Student Learning Outcome 2:** Students will be able to demonstrate effective written communication skills appropriate to religious studies.

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|  | Capstone (4) | Upper Milestone (3) | Lower Milestone (2) | Benchmark (1) |
| Content Development | Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and this shapes the whole work. | Uses appropriate, relevent, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and this shapes the whole work. | Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work. | Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work. |
| Sources and Evidence | Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate to philosophy and genre of the writing. | Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within philosophy and genre of the writing. | Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for philosophy and genre of the writing. | Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing. |
| Control of Syntax and Mechanics | Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free. | Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The writing has few errors. | Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors. | Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage. |

**Rubric for Student Learning Outcome 3:** Students will demonstrate global and/or intercultural learning in thier written communication.

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|  | Capstone (4) | Upper Milestone (3) | Lower Milestone (2) | Benchmark (1) |
| Perspective Taking | Evaluates and applies diverse perspectives to complex subjects in the face of multiple and even conflicting positions. | Synthesizes other perspectives (such as cultural, disciplinary, and ethical). | Identifies and explains multiple perspectives (such as cultural, disciplinary, and ethical). | Identifies multiple perspectives while maintaining a value preference for own positioning (such as cultural, disciplinary, and ethical). |
| Knowledge of Cultural Frameworks | Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to other cultures and contexts in relation to history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices. | Demonstrates adequate understanding of the complexity of elements important to other cultures and contexts in relation to history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices. | Demonstrates partial understanding of the complexity of elements important to other cultures and contexts in relation to history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices. | Demonstrates surface understanding of the complexity of elements important to other cultures and contexts in relation to history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices. |
| Curiosity | Writing asks complex questions about other cultures, seeks out and articulates answers to these questions that reflect an understanding of different cultural or global perspectives. | Writing asks deeper questions about other cultures and contexts and seeks out answers to these questions. | Writing asks simple or surface questions about other cultures and contexts. | Writing reflects minimal interest in learning more about other cultures and contexts. |