Assessment Report

Religious Studies

2020

**Assessment Criteria**

Our assessment review calls for how effective the Religious Studies major is in the student’s capacity to:

-- (a) Critically engage an argument;

-- (b) make and support an effective written argument;

--(c) interpret social theory in relationship to the study of religion.

These criteria fit the categories listed in our department's "major map" in facilitating students' capacity to build skills in writing and critical reading; engage with important texts and ideas; understand one of the most powerful social and cultural forces in human history.

Our pedagogic goals focus on a student's capacity to be able to critically analyze and produce written arguments pertaining to religion in social context. As ours is an analytic and writerly field, our approach to assessment is to analyze the final papers of several majors in our *REL 411, Making Sense of Religion* seminar in the above three categories on a 1-5 point scale (with 5 representing "exceeds expectations" and 1 indicating "clearly below meeting expectations.")

**Assessment Activity**

Direct Measures

The assessment coordinator took at random 3 papers of majors from REL 411 for the 2018 and 2019 academic years and did an assessment independent of the grades the student received for the papers or the course. Based on his independent reading of the papers he found the following.

2018

Student 1: a 4 b4 c3.5

Student 2: a5 b5 c5

Student 3: a4 b3.5 c4

2019

Student 1: a 4 b. 3.5 c. 4

Student 2: a 5 b 5 c. 5

Student 3: a 4 b 3.5 c. 4

Overall, based on our assessment, senior religion majors meet or exceed expectations in all three categories. They have effectively learned to formulate critical arguments and apply social theory in the study of religion. On the whole, the students were strongest in their capacity to engage an argument and formulate an independent thesis, and weakest in consistent execution of the paper.

Indirect Measures

The course evaluations for the course in 2019—which surpassed department and university mean for course and instructor quality, reflect a high level of satisfaction among students. The one criteria which was lower than the mean was "guidelines for evaluating students".

**Plans for next year**

We have two suggestions for next year:

1. we will re-examine how faculty communicate guidelines for evaluating students in general, and in REL 411.
2. We will discuss at our retreat adding two additional aspects of Global Connections Major map to our assessment criteria: becoming an informed and engaged global citizen; equip yourself with a wide variety of opportunities for employment or further study. Our aim should to be determine a mechanism for assessing these goals.