

## **Purpose of Assessment**

The Department of Philosophy and Religion uses assessment to:

continuously improve student learning and faculty teaching

encourage faculty development

## **Audience**

Assessment data from the department of Philosophy and Religion will be used by:

1. The department to ensure it complies with its mission statement.
2. Students.
3. Accrediting bodies (such as North Central).
4. Illinois College administrators
5. The Assessment Committee.

## **Department of Philosophy and Religion**

### **Mission Statement**

The Department of Philosophy and Religion is an interdisciplinary department that shares the common mission of the college: to help students gain a reflective understanding of a variety of philosophical and religious traditions. These traditions have had a profound and decisive effect on human conceptions of the cosmos, destiny, and action, both historically and in the contemporary world. Faculty in the Department engage in their profession as teachers of these traditions, scholars analyzing their development, and mentors to students.

By providing courses to support majors and minors in Philosophy and Religion, the college's general education program, and programs in other departments, the department is committed to helping students acquire: the ability to read primary sources closely and analyze them critically; the ability to read secondary sources, to understand, and to evaluate their arguments; the ability to communicate ideas clearly, persuasively, and effectively in both written and oral forms

Beyond these common goals, each discipline has additional commitments. Religion classes help students acquire: fundamental knowledge about the ideas and histories of religious traditions; and an appreciation for and tolerance of differing religious ideas, practices, and cultural expressions.

Philosophy classes help students acquire: a fundamental grasp of western philosophical traditions; and a working acquaintance with and ability to participate in philosophical argumentation.

## **Goals of Department**

### **A. Provide courses for comprehensive majors and minors in religion.**

1. Students considering majoring or minoring in religion should be prepared to:
  - a) Engage the history, literature, and questions of different religious traditions.
  - b) Examine relevant primary and secondary documents from the different traditions and consider their implications.

The following courses will provide the content knowledge and skills expected at the introductory level of Religious studies: Introduction to the Bible (Rel 101), Questions of Christianity (Rel 104), Christian Tradition (Rel 203), Introduction to Hebrew Scriptures (Rel 205), Introduction to the New Testament (Rel 212), Religions of the World: Eastern (Rel 288), Religions of the World: Abrahamic Faiths (Rel 289), Religious Traditions of Japan (Rel 291).

2. By the midpoint of their studies in the department, they should be able to:
  - a) Demonstrate knowledge of eastern and western religions' breadth and diversity.
  - b) Recognize and evaluate different approaches to answering questions important to all religious traditions.

The following courses are intended to lead to the above outcomes at the intermediate level in Religious Studies: Intertestamental Literature (Rel 208), Contemporary Religious Issues (Rel 213), Religion and Film (Rel 216), Religion and Literature (Rel 260), God, Suffering and Evil (Rel 265), Religions of the World: Eastern (Rel 288), Religions of the World: Abrahamic Faiths (Rel 289), Religious Traditions of Japan (Rel 291), Religions of the Ancient Near East (Rel 313).

3. By the time they graduate, Religion majors and minors should be able:

- a) Demonstrate in written and oral form a broad and deep understanding of the history, literature, and questions of religious traditions.
- b) Engage in critical dialogue about religious questions in a scholarly manner.

The following courses are intended to lead to the above outcomes at the advanced level in Religious Studies: Philosophy of Religion (Rel 304), Art and Archaeology of the Ancient Mediterranean (Rel 320), Renaissance and Reformation (Hist 332), Age of Faith, Age of Reason (Rel 333), The Holocaust (Hist 358), Process Theology and Philosophy (Rel 370), Women, Race and Theology (Rel 371), Sociology of Religion (Rel 376).

**B. Provide courses for comprehensive majors and minors in philosophy.**

1. Students considering majoring or minoring in philosophy should be prepared to:

- a) Be intrigued by philosophical questions and puzzles.
- b) Engage the history, literature, and questions of philosophical traditions.
- c) Read and examine relevant primary and secondary documents from these traditions, and consider their implications.

The following courses will provide the content knowledge and skills expected at the introductory level of Philosophy: Introduction to Philosophy (Phil 191), Philosophy in the Ancient and Medieval World (Phil 271), Modern/Contemporary Philosophy (Phil 351).

2. By the midpoint of their studies in the department, philosophy majors and minors should be able to:

- a) Demonstrate their knowledge of the breadth and diversity of philosophical questions and schools of thought.

- b) Analyze and construct definitions and arguments and to determine the relations between ideas.

The following courses are intended to lead to the above outcomes at the intermediate level in Philosophy: Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking (Phil 211), Symbolic Logic (Phil 316), Survey of Political Philosophy (Phil 324), Process Theology and Philosophy (Phil 370).

- 3. By the time they graduate, philosophy majors and minors should be able to:
  - a) Explain historically important views in philosophy in both oral and written form.
  - b) State the philosophical questions implicit in other areas of inquiry.
  - C) Present reasons for their own positions in dialogue with others who hold contrary or contradictory views.

The following courses are intended to lead to the above outcomes at the advanced level in Philosophy: God Suffering and Evil (Phil 265), Business Ethics (Phil 315), Seminar (Phil 401, 402).

**C. Provide courses to support the college's general education program. The department seeks to help all students:**

- 1. Recognize and understand historically important figures and questions in religious and philosophical traditions
- 2. Read religious and philosophical texts and analyze their meanings, arguments and implications in their contexts.
- 3. Describe religious and philosophical beliefs and construct arguments of their own based on awareness of previous religious and philosophical works.

**D. Provide courses to support the programs in other departments, including pre-law,**

**education, computer science, medicine, the arts, and business.**

**E. Promote departmental faculty members' professional development. Departmental faculty members need to:**

1. Maintain the enthusiasm for their areas of expertise which led them to undertake a career of teaching.

2. Maintain breadth and depth in their field of study, since they teach a wide variety of courses in a small liberal arts college

3. Take all opportunities for sabbatical leaves

4. To further the above mentioned ends, departmental faculty members need to:

a. Seek support for off campus research

b. Actively participate in professional associations by attending meetings, chairing sessions, serving on committees, and delivering papers when possible

c. Take opportunities to write reviews of and review prospectuses in their areas of expertise

d. Engage in community outreach in their areas of interest in order to raise the profile of the College. Activities of this sort include public presentations, community service, and expert commentary on current news stories.

**F. Provide Effective Student Advising Faculty advisors will**

1. Meet with majors and minors to explain requirements and expectations and to ensure their successful completion of the major.

2. Provide advice and support to students contemplating graduate study in philosophy or religion.

3. Meet with students who have not declared a major to help them clarify their interests and strengths and to explain the college's requirements and expectations.

4. Arrange for tutors for students who seek assistance in their learning.

## Intermediate Religion Goals

### 2A: Demonstrate knowledge of eastern and western religions' breadth and diversity.

#### Criteria and Standards of Attainment

|                                               | Assessment Method                   | Month/Year Assessment to be Conducted | Sub-Minimum                                                       | Minimum                                                                                     | Target                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Historical Knowledge                          | Exam                                | End of the semester                   | Provide incorrect dates, misidentifications                       | State historical facts, define terms                                                        | Explain how different historical periods relate to one another                                                   |
| Literature                                    | Essay                               | End of the semester                   | Be unfamiliar with important documents from different traditions. | Be able to provide definitions or summaries of significant documents.                       | Compare and contrast different religions' significant documents.                                                 |
| Geography                                     | Exam                                | End of the semester                   | Misidentify important regions                                     | Be able to locate generally where significant sites are located.                            | Be able to locate significant sites precisely.                                                                   |
| Breadth and Diversity of Religious Traditions | Discussion and/or Exam and/or Essay | End of the semester                   | Does not participate in class discussions.                        | Comments occasionally, respects others' right to speak, responds to instructor's questions. | Makes clear and well-formed comments frequently, initiates discussions, engages in dialogue with other students. |

Table Rel-2a

**2B: Recognize and evaluate different approaches to answering questions important to all religions traditions.**

Criteria and Standards of Attainment

|                                                            | Assessment Method | Month/Year Assessment to be Conducted | Sub-Minimum                                                             | Minimum                                                                   | Target                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recognition of approaches to answering religious questions | Exam              | End of the semester                   | Provide incorrect answers about approaches to basic religious questions | Define basic terms involved in understanding religious questions          | Explain how basic concepts relate to questions and inform answers in religious traditions        |
| Evaluation of approaches to answering religious questions  | Essay             | End of the semester                   | Be unfamiliar with questions and issues from different traditions.      | Be able to summarize various approaches to answering religious questions. | Compare, contrast, and evaluate different religions' approaches to answering religious questions |

Table Rel-2b

## Advanced Religion Goals

**3A: Demonstrate in written and oral form a broad and deep understanding of the history, literature, and questions of religious traditions.**

### Criteria and Standards of Attainment

|                                   | Assessment Method                   | Month/Year Assessment to be Conducted | Sub-Minimum                                                     | Minimum                                                                                     | Target                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Historical Knowledge              | Exam                                | End of the semester                   | provide incorrect dates, misidentifications                     | Have firm command of significant period(s) of history.                                      | Explain how geographical proximity and different historical influences (i.e., empires) affected the development of different traditions. |
| Literature                        | Essay                               | End of the semester                   | Have only a passing familiarity with important religious texts. | Have some facility with religious texts from (two?) traditions or time periods.             | Have firm command of the significance, inter-relationship, and concepts of religious texts from several traditions AND time periods.     |
| Questions of Religious Traditions | Discussion and/or Exam and/or Essay | End of the semester                   | Does not participate in class discussions.                      | Comments occasionally, respects others' right to speak, responds to instructor's questions. | Makes clear and well-formed comments frequently, initiates discussions, engages in dialogue with other students.                         |

Table Rel-3a

**3B: Engage in critical dialogue about religious questions in a scholarly manner.**

Criteria and Standards of Attainment

|                                       | Assessment Method | Month/Year Assessment to be Conducted | Sub-Minimum                                                                     | Minimum                                                                                  | Target                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Critical Engagement                   | Essay             | End of the semester                   | Simple summary about various scholarly positions regarding religious questions. | State basic criticism of various scholarly positions regarding religious questions.      | Explain how relevant criticism of scholarly positions regarding religious questions have implications for the relevant field of study.                                                    |
| Constructive and Scholarly Engagement | Substantive Essay | End of the semester                   | State own opinions about religious questions.                                   | Integrate own positions in response to other scholarly responses to religious questions. | Thoroughly analyze other scholarly positions, using knowledge of literature, understanding of criticism, and personal scholarly conclusions to contribute to the relevant field of study. |

Table Rel-3b

## Intermediate Philosophy Goals

### 2A: Demonstrate knowledge of philosophical traditions' breadth and diversity.

#### Criteria and Standards of Attainment

|                                                   | Assessment Method                              | Month/Year Assessment to be Conducted | Sub-Minimum                                                       | Minimum                                                                                     | Target                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Historical Knowledge                              | Exam                                           | End of the semester                   | Provide incorrect dates, misidentifications                       | State historical facts, define terms                                                        | Explain how different historical periods relate to one another                                                   |
| Literature                                        | Essay                                          | End of the semester                   | Be unfamiliar with important documents from different traditions. | Be able to provide definitions or summaries of significant documents.                       | Compare and contrast different religions' significant documents.                                                 |
| Logic                                             | Exam                                           | End of the semester                   | Unable to identify premisses and conclusions of arguments.        | Is able to identify premisses and conclusions of arguments.                                 | Is able to determine validity and strength of arguments.                                                         |
| Breadth and Diversity of Philosophical Traditions | Discussion and/or Exam and/or Essay Discussion | End of the semester                   | Does not participate in class discussions.                        | Comments occasionally, respects others' right to speak, responds to instructor's questions. | Makes clear and well-formed comments frequently, initiates discussions, engages in dialogue with other students. |

Table Phil-2a

**2B: Recognize and evaluate different approaches to answering questions important to all philosophical traditions.**

Criteria and Standards of Attainment

|                                                                | Assessment Method | Month/Year Assessment to be Conducted | Sub-Minimum                                                                 | Minimum                                                                       | Target                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recognition of approaches to answering Philosophical questions | Exam              | End of the semester                   | Provide incorrect answers about approaches to basic philosophical questions | Define basic terms involved in understanding philosophical questions          | Explain how basic concepts relate to questions and inform answers in philosophical traditions           |
| Evaluation of approaches to answering Philosophical questions  | Essay             | End of the semester                   | Be unfamiliar with questions and issues from different traditions.          | Be able to summarize various approaches to answering philosophical questions. | Compare, contrast, and evaluate different philosophers' approaches to answering philosophical questions |

Table Phil-2b

## Advanced Philosophy Goals

**3A: Demonstrate in written and oral form a broad and deep understanding of the history, literature, and questions of Philosophical traditions.**

### Criteria and Standards of Attainment

|                                       | Assessment Method                   | Month/Year Assessment to be Conducted | Sub-Minimum                                                         | Minimum                                                                                     | Target                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Historical Knowledge                  | Exam                                | End of the semester                   | provide incorrect dates, misidentifications                         | Have firm command of significant period(s) of history.                                      | Explain how earlier philosophers and philosophical traditions influence later philosophers and traditions.                               |
| Literature                            | Essay                               | End of the semester                   | Have only a passing familiarity with important philosophical texts. | Have some facility with philosophical texts from (two?) traditions or time periods.         | Have firm command of the significance, inter-relationship, and concepts of philosophical texts from several traditions AND time periods. |
| Questions of Philosophical Traditions | Discussion and/or Exam and/or Essay | End of the semester                   | Does not participate in class discussions.                          | Comments occasionally, respects others' right to speak, responds to instructor's questions. | Makes clear and well-formed comments frequently, initiates discussions, engages in dialogue with other students.                         |

Table Phil-3a

**3B: Engage in critical dialogue about philosophical questions in a scholarly manner.**

Criteria and Standards of Attainment

|                                       | Assessment Method | Month/Year Assessment to be Conducted | Sub-Minimum                                                                         | Minimum                                                                                      | Target                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Critical Engagement                   | Essay             | End of the semester                   | Simple summary about various scholarly positions regarding philosophical questions. | State basic criticism of various scholarly positions regarding philosophical questions.      | Explain how relevant criticism of scholarly positions regarding scholarly questions have implications for the relevant field of study.                                                    |
| Constructive and Scholarly Engagement | Substantive Essay | End of the semester                   | State own opinions about philosophical questions.                                   | Integrate own positions in response to other scholarly responses to philosophical questions. | Thoroughly analyze other scholarly positions, using knowledge of literature, understanding of criticism, and personal scholarly conclusions to contribute to the relevant field of study. |

Table Phil-3b

**Anticipated Results Dissemination Approaches:**

The Department of Philosophy and Religion intends to make paper and/or electronic copies of the complete assessment plan and relevant results available to members of the Department, the accrediting bodies, to the administration of Illinois College, and to the assessment committee. The Department will provide a modified version of the assessment plan to students studying in the program, or interested in doing so.

**Assessment Calendar and Budget:**

Religion:

| Goal                                                                                         | Task:                                                                                                                          | Costs of task                                                             | Month/Year to perform task |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
|                                                                                              | Instructor will evaluate student performance and enter data into the Access database for one or more of the following courses: | Negligible; approximately one hour of faculty coordinator or advisor time | End of Semester            |
| Outcome goal 2A: knowledge of E&W                                                            | Rel 208, 213, 216, 260, 265, 288, 289, 291                                                                                     |                                                                           |                            |
| Outcome goal 2B: different approaches to answering questions in various traditions           | Rel 208, 213, 216, 260, 265, 288, 289, 291                                                                                     |                                                                           |                            |
| Outcome goal 3A: understanding of history, literature, and questions of religious traditions | Rel 204, 320, 333, 370, 371, 376; Hist 332, 358                                                                                |                                                                           |                            |
| Outcome goal 3B: engage in critical dialogue in a scholarly manner                           | Rel 204, 320, 333, 370, 371, 376; Hist 332, 358                                                                                |                                                                           |                            |

Table Rel-4

Philosophy:

| Goal                                                                                                              | Assessment related tasks                                                                                                    | Costs of task                                                             | Month/Year to perform task |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Outcome goal<br>Philosophy 2A:<br>philosophical traditions                                                        | Compilation and evaluation of the final grades in one or more of the following: Phil 191, 211, 212, 214, 216, 265, 316      | Negligible; approximately one hour of faculty coordinator or advisor time | May/Annually               |
| Outcome goal<br>Philosophy 2B:<br>different approaches to answering questions in various traditions               | Compilation and evaluation of the final grades in one or more of the following: Phil 191, 211, 212, 214, 216, 265, 316      | Negligible; approximately one hour of faculty coordinator or advisor time | May/Annually               |
| Outcome goal<br>philosophy 3A:<br>understanding of history, literature, and questions of philosophical traditions | Compilation and evaluation of the final grades in one or more of the following: Phil 271, 351, 304, 315, 324, 370, 401, 402 | Negligible; approximately one hour of faculty coordinator or advisor time | May/Annually               |
| Outcome goal<br>Philosophy 3B:<br>engage in critical dialogue in a scholarly manner                               | Compilation and evaluation of the final grades in one or more of the following: Phil 271, 351, 304, 315, 324, 370, 401, 402 | Negligible; approximately one hour of faculty coordinator or advisor time | May/Annually               |

Table Phil-4

Addendum – added 1 Sept 2004

The Religion program has developed an Access database to facilitate assessing student achievement. Each member of the department enters the classes their major advisees have taken into the database at the end of each semester. The professor who taught the student then records how the student performed in their class on the various metrics that are examined in the classes (listed in Table Rel-4).

The database can be used to generate reports to track how well students are meeting achievement targets, either by examining specific metrics or by examining specific classes. These reports are generated in the spring and their analysis is reported to the academic dean as soon as possible after graduation.

Because there are fewer Philosophy majors, the Philosophy program has decided to analyze student performance in one particular class (last year, this was Phil 191) to assess how well students are meeting achievement targets. This is reported to the academic dean shortly after graduation.

## Fall 2005 Update

Our spring 2005 assessment report specified that the religion “department needs to revise . . . its assessment plan to ensure consistent entry of data by faculty members and to clarify what some metrics mean.” At our October department meeting, these topics were discussed and the following system was devised for data entry.

- I. Religion majors will be assessed on various metrics and their performance entered into the Access database using the following numbers:

|    |    |
|----|----|
| A+ | 10 |
| A  | 9  |
| A- | 8  |
| B  | 7  |
| B- | 6  |

|    |   |
|----|---|
| C  | 5 |
| C- | 4 |
| D  | 3 |
| D- | 2 |
| F  | 1 |

- II. The following definitions were created for the metrics:

BD – Breadth and Diversity – familiarity with beliefs and practices outside the Western Christian tradition.

CSE – Constructive Scholarly Engagement – Demonstrated ability to research and integrate scholarly secondary sources into a research project.

GEOG – Geographical knowledge – Familiarity with significant regions, land forms, and political entities.

HK – Historical Knowledge – Attention to the chronological progression of a tradition or an idea.

LIT – Literature – Familiarity with primary and secondary texts

METH – Methodology – knowledge of scholarly approaches to the study of religion

QRT – Questions of Religious Traditions – The study of how religious traditions answer existential questions.

III. In light of these revised definitions, the department has updated its Course Assessment chart to read as follows:

| Course  | HK | LIT | GEOG | BD | METH | QRT | CSE |
|---------|----|-----|------|----|------|-----|-----|
| 101     | x  | x   | x    |    | X    |     |     |
| 104     |    |     |      |    |      |     |     |
| 203     |    |     |      |    |      |     |     |
| 205     | x  | x   | x    |    | X    |     |     |
| 212     | x  | x   | x    |    | X    |     |     |
| 213     |    |     |      |    |      |     |     |
| 260     |    |     |      |    |      |     |     |
| 265     |    |     |      |    |      |     |     |
| 288     |    |     |      |    |      |     |     |
| 289     | x  | x   |      | X  |      | X   |     |
| 304     |    |     |      |    |      |     |     |
| 312     |    |     |      |    |      |     |     |
| 313     | x  | x   | X    |    |      | x   | X   |
| 320     | x  | x   |      |    | x    |     | X   |
| 332     |    |     |      |    |      |     |     |
| 333     |    |     |      |    |      |     |     |
| 340/341 |    | X   |      |    |      |     |     |
| 350/351 |    | X   |      |    |      |     |     |
| 370     |    |     |      |    |      |     |     |
| 371     |    |     |      |    |      |     |     |
| 376     |    |     |      |    |      |     |     |
| 401     |    |     |      |    | x    | x   | X   |

Finally, the department discussed assessing student learning by contacting alumni five and ten years after graduation. Our questionnaire will ask the following: