



(Due: June 1, 2022)

Date report completed: 5/23/2022

Completed by: Ryan Strickler

Assessment contributors (other faculty involved): NA

Please describe the 2021-2022 assessment activities and follow-up for your program below. Please complete this form for each undergraduate major, minor, certificate, and graduate program (e.g., B.A., B.S., B.A.S, M.S.) in your department. Please copy any addenda (e.g., rubrics) and paste them in this document, save and submit it to both the Dean of your college/school and to the Executive Director for Assessment as an email attachment by June 1, 2022. You'll also find this form on the assessment website at <https://www.csupueblo.edu/assessment-and-student-learning/resources.html>. Thank you.

Brief statement of Program mission and goals:

I. Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) in this cycle. Including processes, results, and recommendations for improved student learning. Use Column H to describe improvements planned for 2019-2020 based on the assessment process.

A. Which of the program SLOs were assessed during this cycle? Please include the outcome(s) verbatim from the assessment plan.	B. When was this SLO <u>last</u> reported on prior to this cycle? (semester and year)	C. What method was used for assessing the SLO? Please include a copy of any rubrics used in the assessment process.	D. Who was assessed? Please fully describe the student group(s) and the number of students or artifacts involved (N).	E. What is the expected proficiency level and how many or what proportion of students should be at that level?	F. What were the results of the assessment? (Include the proportion of students meeting proficiency.)	G. What were the department's conclusions about student performance?	H. What changes/improvements to the <u>program</u> are planned based on this assessment?
SLO1: Students will be able to recognize, analyze, and logically evaluate arguments	For 2020-2021 academic year	Direct Measure: Rubric used to evaluate student papers (see attached rubric); Indirect	Our minor has only one graduating senior, so a writing sample from his most	Rating of 'proficient' or better in each SLO, according to rubric	See attached addendum (following page)	See attached	See attached

encountered in sources ranging from philosophical, academic, and religious texts to the popular media		Measures: Class observation of each faculty member (see included notes) and syllabi analysis (syllabi available upon request)	recent class (PHIL 491, spring 2022) is assessed. Observations from class visits and syllabi are also incorporated as indirect evidence				
SLO2: Students will be able to construct and present clear, well-reasoned defenses of theses both verbally and in writing.	For 2020-2021 academic year	Direct Measure: Rubric used to evaluate student papers (see attached rubric); Indirect Measures: Class observation of each faculty member (see included notes) and syllabi analysis (syllabi available upon request)	Our minor has only one graduating senior, so a writing sample from his most recent class (PHIL 491, spring 2022) is assessed. Observations from class visits and syllabi are also incorporated as indirect evidence	Rating of 'proficient' or better in each SLO, according to rubric	See attached addendum (following page)	See attached	See attached

Comments on part I: For the next academic year, I will formalize collection of student writing samples. For this cycle, I emailed requests for student papers after the end of the fall and spring semester. For next year and beyond, I will require that faculty select one assignment (ie – the final essay) that

will be used for writing portfolios and have the faculty send me the zip file will all students' submissions for that assignment. It will streamline the collection of essays for writing portfolios.

II. Closing the Loop. Describe at least one data-informed change to your curriculum during the 2021-2022 cycle. These are those that were based on, or implemented to address, the results of assessment from previous cycles.

A. What SLO(s) or other issues did you address in this cycle? Please include the outcome(s) verbatim from the assessment plan.	B. When was this SLO last assessed to generate the data which informed the change? Please indicate the semester and year.	C. What were the recommendations for change from the previous assessment column H and/or feedback?	D. How were the recommendations for change acted upon?	E. What were the results of the changes? If the changes were not effective, what are the next steps or the new recommendations?
As there had not been an assessment in the previous cycle, we used student writing to assess all four of our SLOs – the two listed above, as well as SLO3: Students will be able to recognize and assess the relevance of philosophical and religious ideas in the historical	Prior to last year, SLO's 1 and 2 were assessed in Spring 2018, and SLO's 3 and 4 were assessed in Spring 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have discussions with instructors regarding how to foster 'higher level' critical thinking and application of philosophical material 2. Expand curriculum, including a focus on additional 'topic' or 'issue-focused' courses 3. Participate in History department-wide discussions of how to improve student writing 	<p>Major changes after last year's assessment included: 1) running new courses in the 2021-2022 school year. This includes an Intro to Religious Studies course (which we plan to make a regular, gen-ed offering by going through CAP board this upcoming September) and 2) offering a new, special-topics course called "Death and Dying", which attracted 13 students.</p> <p>The PHRS coordinator had ongoing discussions with faculty as to how to</p>	<p>Student feedback suggests that the new courses and expanded curriculum were successful in getting students to think about philosophical and religious texts in new and different ways, as well as apply insights from these texts in new ways to relevant aspects of modern life. Contingent on boosting enrollment, we would like to continue to expand curriculum options in both the philosophy and religious studies concentrations.</p> <p>While we would always like to do more and better (as suggested by last year's assessment), critical thinking and novel application of philosophical ideas has been, and continues to be, a strong suit for our program. As such, the discussions I have had with faculty involve tweaking individual</p>

interplay of philosophy, religion, and culture; and SLO4: Students will be able to apply philosophical methods to conduct ethical, metaphysical, and epistemological analyses.			encourage greater critical thinking in courses. A prominent time this occurred was after he engaged in class observation for each faculty member, where he would share and discuss his notes and recommendations. In addition, our faculty has been active in ongoing department discussions around improving student writing.	readings, assignments, or classroom approaches, rather than wholesale change. Our faculty do not need to rethink their pedagogical approach wholesale; through regular class observations and continued discussions, though, I will continue to push our faculty to encourage even more critical thinking, application, and (in general) moving beyond 'mere summary' of the philosophical/religious material that they cover.

Comments on part II: We have revised our assessment plan going into this upcoming cycle. In addition to classroom writing, I will be incorporating information from my class visits as well as faculty syllabi into the program assessment. Giving the low enrollment for our program (and thus a lack of student writing to draw from), I think this will be helpful in providing additional data points.

F. What were the results of the assessment (include the proportion of students meeting efficiency)?

With one student graduating in the spring, the writing portion of the assessment was based on one sample from his PHIL 491, "Death and Dying" spring 2022 course. Here, the student demonstrated strong writing. His essay was thoughtful, personal, and at times funny. He articulated a thesis and defended it through generally sound argumentation, although there were a few points where his reasoning could have been further developed and defended. As the attached assessment summary indicates, the one area that was less than proficient ("emerging") regarded the presence of philosophical ideas and concepts. The essay did incorporate a discussion of utilitarianism, but for a 'final' essay more could have been done to weave in material from the course into his argument. While not part of the formal assessment, I also examined the essays from the same assignment from non-graduating PHRS minors. While generally all of these essays were quite good, they were inconsistent in the application of course material to the students' arguments. Some were stronger than others.

As indirect evidence of program effectiveness, I also observed one class for each of our three PHRS faculty members, as well as analyzed the syllabi used for each class. What strikes me from the visits is how consistently interactive each class session is. The faculty do quite well in eliciting thoughtful participation from all students (not just the energetic few). Our faculty also adroitly weave together philosophical/religious concepts, real world examples, and students' perspective through class discussion. Passive lecture, while necessary at times, was not a primary focus for any of the classes observed. To provide critique, at specific times the balance between the substance and its critique and application could be improved. For instance, Professor Douglas offered an engaging discussion of utilitarianism in the ethics (PHIL 201) class I visited, but it could have perhaps been improved by more 'ground work' covering basic tenets and variants of the theory. As another example, in Professor Horrell's Critical Reasoning (PHIL 204) class I visited, the discussion of argumentative logic could have been enlivened with real-world examples from modern politics and cultures (as opposed to the hypothetical and stylized examples he used).

With regard to the syllabi, and again thinking of finding the 'right' balance between substance and critique/application, all faculty generally have an effective mix of substantive assessments (exams and quizzes) as well as more reflective, critical, and applied writing assignments. And while all of our faculty have training and expertise in religious studies, they do a great job of covering a wide array of secular and religious, historical and modern concepts, theories, and frameworks. While all of the classes have significant in-class student engagement and discussion components, not all syllabi rewarded participation in in-class activities as part of the course grade. That is something that could potentially be done more consistently. Some faculty also had formal peer-to-peer engagement activities as part of the course grade (for example, group-based presentations, or responses to student writing). Certainly, student interaction is a critical part of the in-class experience, but perhaps there is room for more of these 'formal' peer engagement assignments in more of the syllabi.

G. What were the department's conclusions about student performance?

While, always, more can be done, I believe our courses uniformly have significant writing components and serve to develop sound argumentation and engaging prose in student writing. As the SLOs assessed in this cycle suggest, the ideal for our courses is to a) foster understanding of key philosophical and religious concepts, and b) encourage thoughtful critique of, argumentation based on, and application of said concepts. Getting that balance between 'substance' and 'critique/application' is tricky. One

conclusion I draw from this assessment is that, at times, our courses do better with the latter than the former. This is better than doing too much of the former (ie, merely memorizing philosophers, theories, and religious traditions). And it is certainly not to say that our courses are doing a 'bad job' teaching and assessing substance; in general, I give our faculty and the courses they teach quite high marks. We're talking about going from 'great' to 'excellent.' But are there ways to better assess deep substantive knowledge without sacrificing the great critical thinking and application our classes are doing well with?

H. What changes/improvements to the program are planned based on this assessment?

I have communicated these observations with our faculty, and at the beginning of the fall semester as they are finalizing their syllabi, I will encourage them to a) consider how they can more effectively assess for both substantive knowledge and critical thinking/application, b) consider consistently incorporating in-class student engagement as part of the final grade for their course, and c) consider incorporating more group work and other 'formal' peer-to-peer engagement in their course structure.

Another planned improvement, which the above assessment touches on less, is to expand and diversify the PHRS curriculum. There is a bit of a 'Catch-22', as a diverse array of courses could attract more students, but we need higher enrollment to offer more courses. In the fall, I will be submitting an application to count PHIL 107, "Intro to Religious Studies," as a general education course. This will allow it to be consistently offered in the course catalog. I also plan, in the longer term, to offer more and different special topics courses. Eventually, given higher enrollment, some of these courses can be introduced to the catalog as regular, upper-level curriculum offerings.

Student Writing Assessment, based on rubric

	Essay 1
<i>Presence of thesis (SLO2)</i>	Proficient
<i>Presence of philosophical ideas, methods or arguments (SLO1)</i>	Emerging
<i>Treatment of philosophical methods, ideas, or arguments (SLO1)</i>	Proficient
<i>Quality of reasoning (SLO1 and 2) [includes assessment of others' arguments as well as presentation of student's own]</i>	Proficient
<i>Writing style and execution (SLO2)</i>	Exemplary

Philosophy and Religious Studies Minor
Colorado State University-Pueblo
Writing Assessment Rubric: SLO1 and SLO2

Intended learning outcomes assessed with this instrument:

SLO1: Students will be able to recognize, analyze, and logically evaluate arguments encountered in sources ranging from philosophical, academic, and religious texts to the popular media

SLO2: Students will be able to construct and present clear, well-reasoned defenses of theses both verbally and in writing.

	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Not Present
<i>Presence of thesis (SLO2)</i>	Thesis is explicit, precise, and clear.	Thesis is explicit.	Thesis is implied or underdeveloped	
<i>Presence of philosophical ideas, methods or arguments (SLO1)</i>	Philosophical ideas, methods or arguments are explicit; their historical, cultural, and/or religious relevance is prominent.	Historical / cultural / philosophical ideas, methods or arguments are explicit.	Historical / cultural / philosophical ideas, methods or arguments are implied.	
<i>Treatment of philosophical ideas, methods or arguments (SLO1)</i>	Arguments are relevant & well- explained / analyzed.	Mostly accurate explanations or analyses of relevant arguments.	Explanations are not usually accurate, or the ideas, methods and arguments employed are not usually relevant	
<i>Quality of reasoning (SLO1, 2) [includes assessment of others' arguments as well as presentation of student's own].</i>	Reasoning is generally good (i.e. strong or valid) and well-explained.	Reasoning is generally good.	Reasoning is not generally good (i.e. work is characterized by weak reasoning).	
<i>Writing style & execution (SLO2)</i>	Clear, compelling, grammatically correct language; fluid, easy-to-follow organization of ideas	Consistently clear language; sequencing of ideas poses no barrier to communication	Sometimes vague, confusing or hard to follow. Significant grammar issues may be present	

Dr. Horrell class visit (PHIL 204, “Critical Reasoning”, 3/14/2022)

On 3/14/22, I sat in on Dr. Horrell’s class session on compound claims. What struck me throughout the class session is how engaged students were with the material and the instructor. Unlike most other PHIL classes, the material of the course does not immediately lend itself to robust class discussion. Despite this, Thad was able to elicit a great deal, really a surprising amount, of engagement. Thad did not spend much time with lecturing, and even in his short introductory lecture he asked students questions based on the reading that they did. Most of the class time, however, was spent with students actively going through and engaging with examples and problems re: compound claims (both individuals and in groups of two). Students did not have the option of passive class attendance, and as such they were all engaged with the material and the exercises. There seem to be a strong expectation/class norm of participation. Most students spoke as the problems were discussed as a class, and Thad made sure to class on a wide set of students. Students were also asking questions if they had them or needed clarification. In sum, Thad seems to have elicited significant buy in and interest in the course material and participating in class.

Thad took care to make sure each student adequately understood the material. While going through the exercises, Thad would consistently walk around, checking in with students and addressing any issues students had. In addition, there was one point in the class where a student said they understood the material, but in an unsure manner. Instead of letting it go, Thad pressed the student and asked (to paraphrase) what was the most troublesome or confusing aspect of the problem/exercise. By doing that, he evinced a commitment to elicit understanding and learning across the entire class, in an equitable manner.

The group discussion and critique of student writing at the end, moreover, seemed like a particularly productive exercise. It is a great way to build, as well as reinforce, the critical thinking skills that are the focus of the class. Students needed to defend the logical decisions that they make, respond to others’ critiques, and potentially revise their logic if there were better ways to make the claim they wanted to make.

To offer one critique, I wonder if there is more opportunity to pull out examples of arguments from “real life,” beyond the textbook. Politicians claims, bumper stickers, newspaper articles – it seems like current events and current politics would be a great source to mine for both strong and weak argumentation. Perhaps there could even be ways for students to bring in their own examples as homework assignments, so it is not the instructor having to take the additional time and effort to find examples. Thad is likely already doing something like this, but that’s something that struck me as a potential way to make the (what can be complex) logic of the course “come along” and perhaps be more relevant for the students.

Again, though, Thad is doing an excellent job with this course, as demonstrated by the clear buy-in and enthusiastic participation of his students!

Most students spoke at some point during the class time.

Dr. Sharp Class Visit (PHIL 120, "Islam and Non-Western Religions," 4/26/2022)

It was great to see a snippet of what the students have been working on through their presentations! It seems like an incredibly powerful class; I wish I had taken it as an undergraduate. It strikes me that the students are developing a level of cultural competency through your course that is rare amongst their peers. While students seemed to have varying levels of background knowledge on Islam and other religions, a couple of students mentioned that they came from backgrounds where they were not exposed to much of this material. So the learning and the breaking down of negative stereotypes that you are leading in the course (and students gave voice to today) is, again, extremely valuable.

I was also struck by how students were able to weave their personal perspectives, experiences, and beliefs with what they are learning in the course. This really came through with the student that was in the military, connecting his experience to the material on Islam the group covered. Other students were connecting their lived experience with the research they did in the presentation as well. That is fantastic, and I encourage you to keep that up with your courses. The learning, and the broader perspective they develop on different religions and cultures, is really going to stick with them through their lives.

Again, I really enjoyed the class. I think you are navigating the 'hybrid' approach you are taking as well. It seems like students have been able to establish a good connection with each other in the online environment, which they then carried over to the in-person environment as they gave their group presentation.

Dr. Douglas Class Visit (PHIL 201, "Classics in Ethics", 11/4/2021)

In this class, Mark introduced utilitarian ethics, gave history/background on it as ethical philosophy, and worked through a couple of examples where he contrasted it with a deontological (specifically, Christian) ethical perspective. It was a vibrant, very interactive, and very engaging class session. Mark's 'stage presence' is unfailingly confident and energetic. His delivery is lucid and enthusiastic, which draws students in. It is clear that, since the start of the semester, he has developed a strong rapport with the students. There were a few students that were consistently eager to engage, but he was also able to elicit participation beyond 'the energetic few' as well, which is not always easier to do. It was clearly an environment where students feel comfortable, and are encouraged, to speak out.

The most impact part of the lessons were the examples he provided, which applied utilitarianism to specific situations. The example Mark prepared was on euthanasia, which elicited good discussion. An example provided by a student - dropping a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima - produced even more engaged discussion. Mark deftly was able to take this 'on the fly' example and connect it to the day's lesson. Or, rather, he got students to do this through discussion and asking the right questions. This is not an easy skill.

My only critique would be with the video Mark showed at the beginning of the lesson. I'm a big Peter Singer fan, but if students are new to the concept of utilitarianism, jumping straight into a UC-Berkeley lecture where he is contrasting preference and 'hedonistic' utilitarianism may be a bit hard to follow. The question of how we measure utility (and the fact we all measure it in different ways) is certainly an important one. Mixing video and discussion, as a broad class strategy, is great as well. But I would have put that video at the end of class, or maybe done a little more 'ground work' with utilitarianism before starting the video. Students may have gotten a bit more out of it that way.

Again, it was a fantastic class, and Mark did a great job!

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**Academic Program Assessment Plan:
Philosophy and Religious Studies (minor)**

**Department of History, Political Science, and Philosophy
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Colorado State University-Pueblo**

Plan revised by Ryan Strickler, Assistant Professor & Philosophy Coordinator (December 2021)
Primary Contact for Assessment: Ryan Strickler

The Relation of the Philosophy and Religious Studies Program to College Mission and Departmental Expectations

The Philosophy and Religious Studies Program advances the mission of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences mission to offer “students opportunities to become ethical, socially responsible, engaged learners who are prepared to assume leadership in a dynamic global context”¹. Furthermore, the Philosophy and Religious Studies Program advances the expectations of the Department of History, Political Science, and Philosophy to develop “critical thinking, research skills, and oral and written communications, along with a deeper understanding and ability to operate within and between different cultures”¹. This is because the Philosophy and Religious Studies program, as quoted from the goals and outcomes below:

- “sharpen(s) students’ critical thinking skills;”
- helps students understand the “historical-cultural origins and contemporary applications” of major philosophical ideas and intellectual traditions;
- fosters “cross-cultural appreciation of the origins, practices, and societal impact” of major global religions, and;
- develops abilities to “recognize, analyze, and logically evaluate arguments” as well as “construct and present clear, well-reasoned defenses of theses both verbally and in writing.”

Philosophy and Religious Studies Program Description

Students in the Philosophy and Religious Studies program explore the methods, ideas, problems, and history of philosophy. They also interrogate beliefs, behaviors, structures, and historical impact of many of the world’s past and present religions through a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Further, the minor trains students to think and write with rigor, clarity, and precision. Since these qualities are valuable in virtually any discipline, the minor supports a wide range of majors or career tracks, including history, politics, law, literature, the arts, the sciences, business, healthcare, and technology.

Students can take one of two tracks. In the philosophy track, students study the great thinkers, from Plato to the present, across Western and non-Western intellectual traditions. The religion track has students understanding the tenets, history, and impact of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and other religions across cultures.

¹ 2021-2022 Academic Catalog

Philosophy and Religious Studies Program Goals

1. To provide general education and elective courses, as well as an academic minor in philosophy and religious studies;
2. To sharpen students' critical thinking skills and to develop the abilities to speak and write in a clear, analytical manner;
3. To develop students' understanding of philosophical methods and ideas, including their historical-cultural origins and contemporary applications;
4. To develop students' understanding and cross-cultural appreciation of the origins, practices, and societal impact of both religion as a construct and the world's many past and present religions;
5. To cultivate the habit of reflection that will allow students to apply their critical thinking skills in their personal and professional lives

Expected Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to recognize, analyze, and logically evaluate arguments encountered in sources ranging from philosophical, academic, and religious texts to the popular media (from goal 2, goal 3, goal 4, and goal 5);
2. Students will be able to construct and present clear, well-reasoned defenses of theses both verbally and in writing. (from goal 2, parts of goal 3, and goal 5)
3. Students will be able to recognize and assess the relevance of philosophical and religious ideas in the historical interplay of philosophy, religion, and culture. (from goals 3 and 4)
4. Students will be able to apply philosophical methods to conduct ethical, metaphysical, and epistemological analyses. (from goals 3 and 5)

Dissemination of Program Goals & Outcomes

To inform the public and the university community at large, written accounts of current program goals, expected student outcomes, and assessment activities are published in the Colorado State University-Pueblo Catalog.

The Philosophy and Religious Studies coordinator will provide program faculty with written copies of the goals, outcomes, and curriculum map.

Outcomes Assessment Activities

1. The coordinator of the Philosophy and Religious Studies Program maintains a writing portfolio for each student with a declared minor. Portfolios include at least one major paper from each student's course after the point they declare a minor. At the end of each academic year the portfolios of graduating students (or those completing the minor) are evaluated by the Philosophy and Religious Studies coordinator; other faculty from the Department of History, Political Science, Philosophy, and Geography may also be involved as necessary. These papers will be evaluated against the attached rubric, on the

cycle indicated by the attached Assessment Plan Summary. The most recent papers the students' produce will be given the most weight, but older papers may also be evaluated in order to assess all points of the rubric. At least 80% of students completing the minor should be proficient or better in each SLO, according to the rubric.

2. The program coordinator will observe at least one class session annually from each of the faculty in the Philosophy and Religious Studies program. In addition to providing feedback to the instructors, the coordinator will write a short report with each assessment detailing how observed instruction serves to achieve the student outcomes listed above, as well as where there are opportunities for improvement.
3. The program coordinator will review all syllabi utilized by instructors in the Philosophy and Religious Studies program. The coordinator will write a short report with each assessment discussing how material, activities, and evaluation detailed in the syllabi achieve expected student outcomes, as well as where there are areas for potential improvement.