



Academic Program Assessment Report for AY 2022-2023

(Due: June 1, 2023)

Program: Philosophy and Religious Studies

Date report completed: 5/30/2023

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: 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

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?
SLO3: Students will be able to recognize and assess the relevance of philosophical and religious ideas in the historical interplay of philosophy, religion, and culture.	For 2018-2019 academic year	Direct Measure: Rubric used to evaluate graduating student papers (see attached rubric; full essays available upon request); Indirect Measures: Class observation for PHIL 201 (see included notes), discussion with instructors, and syllabi analysis (syllabi	We had five graduating minor students who had recent papers evaluated. Observations from class visit, discussions with instructors, 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

		available upon request)					
SLO4: Students will be able to apply philosophical methods to conduct ethical, metaphysical, and epistemological analyses.	For 2018-2019 academic year	Direct Measure: Rubric used to evaluate graduating student papers (see attached rubric; full essays available upon request); Indirect Measures: Class observation for PHIL 201 (see included notes), discussion with instructors, and syllabi analysis (syllabi available upon request)	We had five graduating minor students who had recent papers evaluated. Observations from class visit, discussions with instructors, 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: See attached sheet for plans on adding to the PHRS curriculum, as well as plans to revise our assessment process.

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?
<p>SLO #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</p> <p>SLO #2: Students will be able to construct and present clear, well-reasoned defenses of theses both</p>	<p>These SLOs were analysed in the last cycle, for the 2022-2023 school year.</p>	<p>Generally, the students' performance with these two SLO's was strong last year. In particular, fostering strong writing (SLO #2) is a strength of our faculty and courses. One issue that was identified last year (that connects to the SLO's analysed this year as well) was finding the right 'balance' between covering substantive philosophy and religious studies concepts and fostering critical and logical thinking. To wit, last year's assessment states: "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</p>	<p>This was a topic of discussion with instructors throughout the semester. In addition, a plan was made to expand the curriculum, to expose our minors to a larger substantive base of material. In 2022-2023, we added a new course to our curriculum – PHIL 107, "Intro to Religious Studies". As the attached sheet here indicates, we are further expanding and diversifying our curriculum this year. While there is a limit to how many different courses we can offer, given our relatively small enrollment, we are successfully working to provide students exposure to a broader array of</p>	<p>Expanding student exposure to 'the canon' of philosophical and religious ideas is (and always will be, really) an ongoing process. As this assessment has indicated, we will be offering more courses, and proposing additional courses, this upcoming academic year.</p> <p>In addition, the finding that our courses do better with 'critique' than 'substance' may be an artifact of the specific student essays that are analysed with assessment. For instance, in the past two years there has not been a writing sample from our Philosophical Literature (PHIL 102) courses, which covers everything from Plato to 20th century philosophy. The revision of our assessment process that I will develop and introduce next year will incorporate additional direct measures of student learning outcomes. While I stand by this and last year's assessment, I think a revised assessment process can do even better in providing a</p>

verbally and in writing.		'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."	philosophical and religious ideas.	holistic view of how our students are meeting each of our expected outcomes.

Comments on part II: NA

Conclusions for both SLO #3 and SLO #4

F. What were the results of the assessment?

Student writing (direct evidence): Based on the writing rubric, all students were “proficient” or “exemplary” in nearly all measures of student learning outcomes. Across the board, the classes do well in encouraging critical and original thinking, and all students pay close attention to the logical structure and analytical strength of the claims they are making. Students’ engagement with historical and philosophical/religious concepts is overall strong, but perhaps a bit more mixed. In fact, it is on this point where there is the one ‘emerging’ score for one of the essays. This is, though, at least in part due to the nature of the writing assignments and the courses the essays are drawing from. Three of the five essays come from PHIL 491, “Death and Dying” – the last philosophy course these graduates took. It is a writing assignment that, while it asks for engagement with the material from the course, is somewhat personal in nature. In addition to the essays analyzed for this assessment, I took an auxiliary look at essays from our other courses, from students that have yet to graduate. With these essays, the prompts focus much more closely on specific philosophical concepts (for example, “virtue ethics”), and they rigorously engage with research and work related to those concepts.

Class observation, instructor discussion, and syllabi review (indirect evidence): Across the board, syllabi deeply engage with important philosophical and religious theories and concepts, often drawing on primary source texts. They also require application of said concepts to modern political, social, and cultural issues. While I was able to only observe one class this past academic year, this observation in addition to discussions with our instructors highlight that our classes provide a detailed overview of key philosophical and religious ideas and works (in line with SLO #3). The classes also prioritize doing philosophy, with a heavy emphasis on discussion, student-led assignments and learning, and writing that applies philosophical/religious ideas to both modern issues and personal reflection (in line with SLO #4)

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

The direct and indirect evidence indicates that our courses foster in depth and reflective engagement with key philosophical ideas as well as major religious ideals and practices across cultures. They also evince critical thinking concerning key questions philosophies and religions seeks to answer, such as the ‘what is the value of life?’, ‘what is right and wrong?’, “how should society be ordered?” and ‘what do we owe each other?’ Students also are evincing strong writing and logically sound argumentation. The minor is preparing our students well for civic life, and they are preparing students to be flexible, open-minded, and critical thinkers in whatever vocation they choose.

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

Based on the writing and indirect evidence, I think the program would benefit from an expansion of curriculum. Courses on a broader array of traditions in Western and non-Western philosophy, and courses on a more diverse array of religious tenets and histories, would allow students to leave the minor with a more expansive base of knowledge in philosophy and religious studies (thus better satisfying SLO #3). We are planning for this next year by bringing back a course focused on ancient philosophy (PHIL 280), which we have not taught in a number of years. We will also offer a new special topics course (PHIL 491) on “the problem of evil” and how it relates to major religious and philosophical

traditions. In addition, we will propose two new courses to CAP board this fall – an “Eastern Religions” and a “Western Religions” course.

Further, I plan to revise our program assessment process for next year. As of now, the major focus is on writing samples. Each individual course, though, focuses on each of the program’s learning outcomes to a greater or lesser degree. For example, our courses rooted in argumentative logic (PHIL 204 and 205) do not really engage with historical philosophical or religious ideas, which is the focus of SLO #3. And the advent of AI as a writing tool requires a rethinking of how writing samples should figure into program assessment (in addition to requiring a rethinking of how writing figures into our courses). The indirect evidence I gather is a good supplement, but it is imperfect. A revision of our program assessment won’t abandon examining student writing, but we will be incorporating student surveys, results from course evaluations, and/or other metrics that can assess how ALL of our classes are promoting our expected outcomes.

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)

Philosophy and Religious Studies Minor
Colorado State University-Pueblo
Writing Assessment Rubric: SLO3 and SLO4

Intended learning outcomes assessed with this instrument:

SLO3: Students will be able to recognize and assess the relevance of philosophical and religious ideas in the historical interplay of philosophy, religion, and culture.

SLO4: Students will be able to apply philosophical methods to conduct ethical, metaphysical, and epistemological analyses.

	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Not Present
<i>Presence of ideas, arguments, and/or constructs from the history of philosophy, religion, and/or religious studies (SLO #3)</i>	Philosophical and/or religious ideas, arguments, and/or constructs are explicit; their relevance and context in relation to the claim being made is clear.	Philosophical and/or religious ideas, arguments, and/or constructs are explicit.	Philosophical and/or religious ideas, arguments, and/or constructs are Implied, or their relevance to the claim being made is unclear	
<i>Discussion of philosophical or religious ideas, arguments, and/or constructs (SLO #3 & #4)</i>	Ideas, constructs, and/or arguments are relevant & accurately explained in context.	Usually accurate explanations of relevant ideas, constructs, and/or arguments.	Explanations are not usually clear or accurate, or the ideas, constructs, and/or arguments employed are not usually relevant	
<i>Application of philosophical methods and quality of reasoning (SLO #4)</i>	Reasoning is generally good (i.e. strong or valid) and well-explained. Methods are philosophically well suited to topic.	Reasoning is generally good. Methods are appropriate.	Reasoning is not generally good (i.e. work is characterized by weak reasoning), or the methods are not philosophically appropriate.	

Student Writing Assessment, based on rubric

	Essay 1 (PHIL 204)	Essay 2 (PHIL 491)	Essay 3 (PHIL 491)	Essay 4 (PHIL 120)	Essay 5 (PHIL 491)	% proficient or higher
<i>Presence of ideas, arguments, and/or constructs from the history of philosophy, religion, and/or religious studies (SLO #3)</i>	Not Present	Proficient	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	75.00%
<i>Discussion of philosophical or religious ideas, arguments, and/or constructs (SLO #3 and #4)</i>	Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary	Proficient	Proficient	100.00%
<i>Application of philosophical methods and quality of reasoning (SLO #4)</i>	Exemplary	Exemplary	Exemplary	Proficient	Exemplary	100.00%

Notes for Essay 1: This essay uses analytical philosophy to break down an argument made in an opinion piece concern the actions of House Speaker Kevin McCarthy. The logical reasoning is sound and quite thorough, although some of the concepts/constructs employed are a little 'inside baseball' and could be explained better to an outside reader.

Notes for Essay 2: This essay is the capstone from a "Death and Dying" course, and it is personal in nature. Thus, there is not depth on specific theories or philosophical/religious ideas concerning life and death. But it presents a coherent theory regarding the meaning of (our limited) life, and it applies it in a robust and compelling way to a variety of contemporary political and social issues.

Notes for Essay 3: This is another "Death and Dying" essay, where the student applies Islamic theology and scholarship to understanding the value of life (as well as other concepts, such as immortality and subjectivity). It engages deeply with Islamic thought, draws on tons of research, and explains said research in a cogent way. It adroitly weaves together personal reflection and intellectual inquiry

Notes from Essay 4: This is an essay focusing on the misuse of Norse Paganism by hateful and right wing groups, through history and to this day in the United States. It engages with the history of this practices with adequate research and analysis. The author connects it to a broader point concerning the appropriation of cultural symbols for hateful and polarizing ends more generally. The author pays close attention to the logic of the argument she provides in supporting her claim. Some parts, though, are repetitive

Notes from Essay 5: This essay analyzes and critiques the extent personal responsibility should be felt for suffering that is communal, global, and/or systemic in nature. It offers a thoughtful, nuanced critique of popular notions regarding 'what we owe each other'. It engages with utilitarianism, although it could do so in a robust way. The essay, though, presents thoughtful, critical, and at times humorous analysis

Dr. Horrel's PHIL 201, "Classics in Ethics" 4/24/2023 class observation

- Liked how you get students to discuss the concepts initially in groups. It gets their minds going to start class, gets some original and creative thinking, and ensure that most/all students are engaged in discussion
- When you transitioned to lecture, I thought the visuals were great (in particular the drawing from the original print of *Leviathan*). You also provided good background on Hobbes and the historical context. I think that's important context that could, potentially, get glossed over with a class focused on ethical ideas and theories. Certainly, the latter is primary, but the context is important (and helps explain Hobbes' theorizing). You displayed an expertise and commanded the room with your lecture
- I also liked how you highlighted and dissecting in depth specific quotes (there were two quotes you did this with). Centuries-old English writing can be challenging, so I think that helps students grasp, and critically reflect on, main ideas
- Your students are clearly engaged, interested, and participative. You've developed a good vibe in the class
- Again, getting students to discuss in groups is an effective way to ensure class-wide participation
- From a political scientist perspective, I would have focused more on modern politics. Drawing a connection to international relations, for example, or policies like COVID or the war on terror. That's just a personal preference (and, honestly, that may be something in a 100-level class that turns off as many students as it draws in, ha).
 - o I wonder if there is a way to draw in modern legal examples, too. Maybe cases involving the 5th amendment? Again, that's a personal preference
 - o I do like how you connected to students interests, that emerged through discussion. The connection to football for the football player in class, for example

**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

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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.