

Hendrix Religious Studies 2020 Departmental Assessment Report

*Submitted by
Robert Williamson Jr, chair
May 21, 2020*

Student Learning Goal for Assessment

For 2019-20, the department decided to assess Learning Goal 6, which has been a focus of our revised capstone experience over the past 4 years. That goal reads:

“Students completing a major in Religious Studies will be able to articulate their academic interests and abilities in terms of career competencies valued by potential employers.”

Assessment Data

The department assessed the learning goal both directly and indirectly following our assessment plan.

Direct assessment data included both assessment of the student senior projects and faculty assessments of overall student performance, collected during our departmental assessment meeting on May 19, 2020 via Zoom. The department was not able to collect exit interview data this year due to COVID-19. Direct assessment data is presented in Appendix A.

Indirect assessment data was collected through a student survey administered via SurveyMonkey. We received 3 responses to the survey out of 4 graduating seniors, a response rate of 75%. That data is presented in Appendix B.

Interpretation of Data

Direct assessment of Learning Goal 6 shows all graduates at a High Achieving level. Indirect assessment of Learning Goal 6 shows 2 students strongly agreeing and 1 agreeing that they have achieved the learning goal.

As a result, the department concludes that our current efforts are achieving the learning goal.

Future Directions

Assessment data show that both the department and our students believe that our students are accomplishing this learning goal through the major. At present, this success is largely being accomplished through assignments in the capstone course, RELI 497 Senior Colloquium (in the future LBST 497). The integration of career competencies into this course is the result of 5 years of efforts by the department, beginning with a \$30,000 Wabash grant in 2016, predating the

College's career competencies initiative by several years. In subsequent years, the lead instructor for that course, John Sanders, has refined the assignments, achieving significant student learning related to career competencies.

That said, the department nonetheless observes that most of our efforts toward this learning goal occur in the context of RELI 497, which is taken during the fall semester of the senior year. While individual professors do make efforts to introduce these concepts at earlier stages in the curriculum, we as a department have not made this a particular focus in our lower-level courses.

As a result, in the future, the department commits to introducing students to thinking about career competencies and the connections of particular courses to broader competencies beginning at the lower levels. Individual professors will incorporate this goal into our courses through one or more of the following:

- introducing the vocabulary of career competencies using materials from Hendrix Career Services
- increasing transparency about how particular assignments in our courses relate to career competencies
- assigning reflective papers asking students to connect their learning in particular courses to career competencies
- other approaches at the discretion of the instructor

Because the data suggests that our students are already accomplishing this goal, we do not feel the need as a department to create a specific additional structure to accomplish these goals at the lower levels but leave it to each professor how to accomplish these tasks in the future.

Appendix A.
RELI Direct Assessment Rubric 2019-2020

LG #	Learning Goal	Artifact	High Achieving	Competent	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
1.1	expresses an empathetic understanding of a diversity of religious traditions	Exit Interview (Q3)	In responding to the question, the student speaks of diverse traditions in exceptionally thoughtful and respectful ways.	In responding to the question, the student speaks of other traditions thoughtfully and respectfully.	In responding to the question, the student struggles to speak of diverse traditions thoughtfully and respectfully.	In responding to the question, the student speaks of diverse traditions in negative or insulting ways.
Students in Category			DATA NOT COLLECTED DUE TO COVID-19			
1.1	expresses an empathetic understanding of a diversity of religious traditions	Faculty Assessment	Through coursework, the student has demonstrated an exceptional capacity to engage diverse traditions in thoughtful and respectful ways	Through coursework, the student has generally been thoughtful and respectful in their engagement with diverse religious traditions	Through coursework, the student has struggled to be thoughtful and respectful in their engagement with diverse religious traditions	Through coursework, the student has been unable to engage diverse religious traditions in thoughtful and respectful ways.
Students in Category			0	4	0	0
1.2	expresses an empathetic understanding of a diversity of religious traditions	Exit Interview (Q3)	Without prompting, the student identifies insightful points about a tradition outside their concentration.	Without prompting, the student identifies relevant points about a tradition outside their concentration.	With prompting, the student identifies relevant points about a tradition outside their concentration.	Even with prompting, the student is unable to identify relevant points about a tradition outside their concentration
Students in Category			DATA NOT COLLECTED DUE TO COVID-19			
1.2	expresses an empathetic understanding of a diversity of religious traditions	Faculty Assessment	Through coursework, the student has demonstrated an exceptional understanding of a diversity of religious traditions	Through coursework, the student has demonstrated understanding of a diversity of religious traditions	Through coursework, the student has struggled to understand diverse religious traditions or has had minimal coursework related to diversity.	Through coursework, the student has not developed an understanding of diverse religious traditions
Students in Category			0	2	2	0
2.1	thinks critically and constructively about religion through engagement with appropriate cultural resources	Senior Project	The project engages in a sophisticated critical analysis of the chosen topic.	The project engages in critical analysis of the chosen topic but lacks sophistication.	The project engages in analysis but lacks critical discernment.	The project lacks critical analysis or asserts points without support.
Students in Category			1	2	0	1
2.2	thinks critically and constructively about religion through engagement with appropriate cultural resources	Senior Project	The project makes an original contribution to the field of religion, whether intellectual or practical.	The project makes a contribution to the field of religion, whether intellectual or practical, resembling similar contributions of others.	The project makes a contribution, whether intellectual or practical, merely by replicating the work of others	The project makes no discernible contribution to the field of religion, whether intellectual or practical.
Students in Category			2	1	0	1
2.3	thinks critically and constructively about religion through engagement with appropriate cultural resources	Senior Project	The project draws on well-selected cultural artifacts going beyond the most obvious.	The project draws on appropriate cultural artifacts but only the most obvious.	The project engages cultural artifacts but omits relevant artifacts or includes irrelevant artifacts.	The project fails to address relevant cultural artifacts.
Students in Category			2	1	1	0
3	demonstrates proficiency in a chosen tradition, method, or sub-discipline within the academic study of religion	Senior Project	The project demonstrates exceptional understanding of a particular tradition, method, or subdiscipline in the study of religion.	The project demonstrates a competent understanding of a particular tradition, method, or subdiscipline in the study of religion but lacks sophistication.	The project demonstrates a general awareness of a particular tradition, method, or subdiscipline in the study of religion but lacks depth and clarity.	The project fails to engage a chosen tradition, method, or subdiscipline within the study of religion, or demonstrates significant misunderstanding or misrepresentation.
Students in Category			2	1	1	0

Appendix A.
RELI Direct Assessment Rubric 2019-2020

4	reflects with critical self-awareness on their own orientation to religion	Exit Interview (Q4)	Without prompting, the student identifies insightful developments in their understanding of their own orientation to religion.	Without prompting, the student identifies one or more developments in their understanding of their own orientation to religion	With prompting, the student identifies one or more developments in their understanding of their own orientation to religion.	Even with prompting, the student is unable to identify developments in their understanding of their own orientation to religion.
Students in Category			DATA NOT COLLECTED DUE TO COVID-19			
4	reflects with critical self-awareness on their own orientation to religion	Faculty Assessment	In coursework and conversation, the student demonstrates exceptional self-awareness and the ability to be critical of their own orientation to religion	In coursework and conversation, the student demonstrates the capacity to reflect critically on their own orientation to religion	In coursework and conversation, the student often lacks self-awareness about their own orientation to religion	In coursework and conversation, the student refuses to engage in critical self-reflection about their own orientation to religion
Students in Category			4	0	0	0
5.1	communicates effectively orally and in writing in keeping with the standards of religious studies discourse	Senior Oral Presentation	The oral presentation communicates the details of the project with exceptional clarity. The use of visuals enhances the presentation. The student responds insightfully to questions.	The oral presentation communicates the essentials of the project clearly and appropriately. The use of visuals complements the presentation. The student gives informed responses to questions.	The oral presentation communicates some aspects of the project but lacks clarity or completeness. Visuals are lacking or confusing. The student gives vague or evasive answers to questions.	The oral presentation fails to communicate the basic ideas of the project. Visuals are missing or detract from the presentation. The student is unable to respond or gives ill-informed responses to questions.
Students in Category			2	1	1	0
5.2	communicates effectively orally and in writing in keeping with the standards of religious studies discourse	Senior Project	The written project is exemplary in its clarity, organization, expression, and documentation.	The written project communicates its ideas clearly but lacks in terms of clarity, organization, expression, and/or documentation.	The written project can be understood by the reader but its effectiveness is hindered by issues with clarity, organization, expression, and/or documentation.	The written project cannot be understood by the reader because of issues with clarity, organization, expression, and/or documentation.
Students in Category			2	0	2	0
6	articulates their academic interests and abilities in terms of career competencies valued by potential employers	RELI 497 Competencies Assgt.	Clearly and thoughtfully connects the finer points of their academic experience with career competencies.	Connects the most significant aspects of their academic interests and abilities with career competencies but overlooks others.	Connects only the most obvious aspects of their academic interests and abilities with career competencies.	Unable to connect even the most obvious aspects of their academic interests and abilities with career competencies.
Students in Category			4	0	0	0

Appendix B.
RELI Senior Survey 2020

	As a result of my major in Religious Studies I have...	# Respond	AVG	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strong Disagree	Comments
1.	gained factual knowledge of a diversity of religious traditions	3	4.67	2	1	0	0	0	
2.	learned to express my knowledge of those traditions in ways their adherents would recognize as true	3	4.67	2	1	0	0	0	
3.	developed the capacity to think critically and constructively about religion through engagement with appropriate cultural resources	3	5.00	3	0	0	0	0	
4.	gained proficiency in a particular tradition, method, or sub-discipline within the academic study of religion.	3	5.00	3	0	0	0	0	
5.	developed a critical self-awareness about my own orientation to religion	3	5.00	3	0	0	0	0	
6.	learned to communicate effectively in writing	3	4.67	2	1	0	0	0	
7.	learned to communicate effectively orally	3	5.00	3	0	0	0	0	
8.	learned to articulate my academic interests and abilities in terms of career competencies valued by potential employers.	3	4.67	2	1	0	0	0	