

Department of Theology & Religious Studies
Academic Program Annual Assessment Update
College of Arts & Sciences
June 2010

1. **Assessment Activity.** As stated in the departments original long-term assessment plan (dated, 1 February 2010), activities in academic year 2009-2010 were a "pilot project." These included:
 - a) In fall 2009, all THRS faculty practiced writing rubrics and applying the same to one of their classes with respect to the current General Education goals. The rubrics are available on the department assessment web page and hard copies, along with student evidence, have been archived by the department assessment coordinators.
 - b) Seven faculty participated or will participate in assessing THRS program learning outcomes six (writing) and seven (oral communication) through three student oral presentations and written papers in THRS 495-496W, Senior Seminar. Dr. Pascuzzi, the seminar leader, developed rubrics for both learning outcomes. Three additional faculty joined her in assessing the oral presentations (Drs. Doak, Pachence, Reimer-Barry) and written papers (Drs. Aquino, Colombo, Komjathy). The assessors for the oral presentations met on 20 April and the results are summarized in [2] below. Because the final papers were received on 10 May and because two of the four assessors were travelling in mid-May and the end of May, the assessors will meet on 13 September to complete their work.
 - c) Exit Surveys (survey form attached) were completed on 10 May by the three graduating seniors in the seminar.
 - d) As explained in section 6 of the original (and revised) long-term assessment plans, faculty not involved in the assessment of the senior seminar in spring 2010 were requested to develop rubrics collect evidence from majors with respect to the program learning outcomes to be banked for assessment in future years as set forth in section eight of the long-term assessment plan.

2. **Assessment Analysis.**

1. **Senior Seminar and Program Learning Outcome 7**

- a) Oral presentations for the Senior Seminar are demanding. Students make a half-hour presentation, followed by fifteen minutes for questions from the audience. The audience was composed of other members of the seminar, the four assessors, invited guests and 6-8 additional faculty members from THRS
 - b) The four assessors met for approximately two hours with Dr. Teel, THRS assessment coordinator. Each assessor used the rubric prepared by Dr. Pascuzzi and the meeting addressed three issues: evaluation of individual presentations, strengths and weaknesses of the group, and proposed changes to the rubric. Assessors also aligned the presentation *content* with PLOs 1-5 where the papers will be assessed once again according to the schedule in section seven of the long-term plan. These same three divisions will be used for the summary of the assessment of the written papers. Detailed minutes of the meeting were kept by Dr. Teel and reviewed and approved by the four assessors.
 - c) For the evaluation of individual students, the minutes of the meeting should be consulted. With respect to the group as a whole, as stated in the minutes, the assessors agreed:
 - Overall strengths included the fact that all three students took up substantive academic projects that were complex and "stretched them horizontally." They were also commended for their delivery, poise, and effective use of Powerpoint.

Summary Senior Exit Surveys, 2010 (JAC)

Total = 3

Faculty are invited and encouraged to read the originals.

- #12. Most beneficial courses. THRS 112, 114, 119, 360 (x2), 366, 388, 495-496W
- #13. Least beneficial courses. THRS 341 (x2), 367
- #14. Would require more world religions
 - See a class on the Trinity
 - Delete none, but redesign thesis course (see Student #3 in re THRS 495-496W)
 - Make the major have a religious studies path
 - A comparative religions (not just world religions) class would be interesting
 - Giving more direct focus to certain religions
- #15. Students uniformly noted with a high degree of enthusiasm, the accessibility and care and support from faculty both academically and otherwise.
- #16. THRS 341, THRS 495-496W
- #17. Difficult/Difficult but rewarding/ Neither easy nor difficult but challenging. Uniformly, students perceive there to have been a lot of writing. Students noted one needs to "connect ideas cumulatively" or the need "to think and form your own idea."
- #18. Two students noted that the THRS major engaged more than their intellectual abilities. One noted that THRS provided "more communication among students and faculty" than the individual's other major.
- #18. All students perceive themselves to have grown significantly over the last four years.

Regarding THRS 495-496W:

Student #1: "Senior Seminar was the most beneficial in terms of learning research and writing. It was definitely the most beneficial class in my college career" (Question #12).

Student #2: "The only negative thing was all the sweat and tears that went into the thesis writing--but it all paid off in the end" (emphasis student's) (Question #16).

Student #3: "I would redesign the thesis course. I'm not convinced that the thesis course shows or represents what I have learned or accomplished in the major" (Question #14). "My most negative experience was the thesis course. I struggled with it from the end of last semester to the midway point of spring. I could not grasp how this course was a necessity. That being said, every negative aspect of this course has benefitted me and made me a better writer and researcher." (Question #16).