
Please submit report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean of your College, and to james.solomon@csun.edu, director of assessment and program review, by September 30, 2015. You may, but are not required to, submit a separate report for each program, including graduate degree programs, which conducted assessment activities, or you may combine programs in a single report. Please identify your department/program in the file name for your report.

College: Humanities

Department: Religious Studies

Program:

Assessment liaison: Amanda Baugh

1. Please check off whichever is applicable:
   A. X Measured student work.
   B. Analyzed results of measurement.
   C. Applied results of analysis to program review/curriculum/revision.

2. Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s). On a separate sheet, provide a brief overview of this year’s assessment activities, including:
   • an explanation for why your department chose the assessment activities (measurement, analysis, and/or application) that it enacted
   • if your department implemented assessment option A, identify which program SLOs were assessed (please identify the SLOs in full), in which classes and/or contexts, what assessment instruments were used and the methodology employed, the resulting scores, and the relation between this year’s measure of student work and that of past years: (include as an appendix any and all relevant materials that you wish to include)
   • if your department implemented assessment option B, identify what conclusions were drawn from the analysis of measured results, what changes to the program were planned in response, and the relation between this year’s analyzes and past and future assessment activities
   • if your department implemented option C, identify the program modifications that were adopted, and the relation between program modifications and past and future assessment activities
   • in what way(s) your assessment activities may reflect the university’s commitment to diversity in all its dimensions but especially with respect to underrepresented groups
   • any other assessment-related information you wish to include, including SLO revision (especially to ensure continuing alignment between program course offerings and both program and university student learning outcomes), and/or the creation and modification of new assessment instruments

3. Preview of planned assessment activities for next year. Include a brief description and explanation of how next year’s assessment will contribute to a continuous program of ongoing assessment.
2. OVERVIEW OF ANNUAL ASSESSMENT PROJECT

The Religious Studies Department chose to assess our students this year using a multiple-choice test given to both lower and upper division students. We selected these comparison groups because we wanted to understand (a) the extent to which students mastered this skill in an individual introductory course and (b) compare those results with students’ mastery of the skill across the course of completing a Religious Studies major.


For each class, students were instructed to read a one-page passage and then answer a series of questions designed to assess their competency in utilizing cross-cultural methods in the study of religion. (See Appendix A for the assessment tool.) Five of the six questions consisted of four options with one correct answer. One question was true/false. The questions were created with the contributions of the assessment liaison, assessment committee members, and the chair. For each class, students were given twenty minutes to read the passage and answer the questions.

Summary of Results
(See Appendix B for results on individual questions by upper vs. lower division. See Appendix C for results by class section.)

All 17 courses:
Total number of students: 489
Average score: 4.4/6 = 73%

Lower Division General Education Courses (17 sections of RS 100)
Total number of students: 460
Average score: 4.3/6 = 72%

Upper Division Courses Required for Majors (RS 395 and RS 497)
Total number of students: 29
Average score: 5.1/6 = 85%
Contrast between Lower and Upper Division
There is a 13% increase in correct answers from lower to upper division courses.

Analysis:
The overall results demonstrate that our department succeeds in implementing SLO #4. With an average score of 73%, students exceeded the 70% benchmark established in the Program Assessment Plan.

Cross-sectional analysis comparing lower division general education courses (15 sections of RS 100) with upper division courses required for Religious Studies majors (one section of RS 395 and one section of RS 497) indicates that our departmental majors have achieved greater competency in utilizing intercultural methods in the study of religion than lower division General Education students. This positive result suggests that students increase their proficiency with this skill after taking multiple Religious Studies courses.

Comparison with Past Assessment
This year’s assessment outcomes differ from last year’s because upper division students demonstrated greater proficiency in meeting the SLO than lower division students. In last year’s assessment, lower division students demonstrated greater proficiency in meeting the SLO, probably because the upper division courses assessed were not appropriate for the assessment method. The upper division courses assessed last year did not necessarily address SLO #3, and because they were General Education courses it is likely that most of the students had not taken other Religious Studies courses.

This year’s assessment included upper division students in the two course required for our majors. For that reason it offered a better indication of indicated skills students had acquired accumulatively through multiple courses in the department rather than skills acquired in a single class.

Commitment to Diversity

Our assessment activities reflect the university’s commitment to diversity because diversity is built into the very core of what we teach in Religious Studies. Through our courses, students gain appreciation for diverse cultures by learning about them in historical and contemporary contexts. SLO #4 particularly addresses issues of culture, because it aims at understanding different religions using intercultural methods.
Additional Information

As part of our Departmental Program Review in 2012-2013, our department revised the language of SLO #4 from “Utilize intercultural methods in the study of religion” to “Ability to use cross-cultural methods of religious inquiry and analysis.” We revised the language in order to clarify the meaning of the SLO. The assessment tool for 2014-2015 was designed based on this revised SLO.

3. PREVIEW OF PLANNED ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT YEAR

In compliance with our “Program Assessment Plan, 2011-2016,” next year we will assess SLO #5: “Articulate a perception of one’s role in local and global society through both career and public service options.” We will assess this SLO through a questionnaire given to our RS 497 students. This will contribute to a continuous program of ongoing assessment because it will complete our process of assessing every SLO over the last 5 years.
APPENDIX A: Assessment Tool
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
Assessment of SLO #4

The goal of this assignment is to assess student learning in Religious Studies courses. Please read the excerpt from the textbook *The Sacred Quest* (2013) and then answer the multiple choice questions on the back of this page. Do not write your name on this paper or the scantron.

THE PASSOVER

Every spring (the date varies from year to year, based on the lunar calendar), Jews all over the world gather in their homes to share a formal meal involving the eating of symbolic foods, various readings and prayers, and a number of blessings. The meal is orchestrated by the head of the household, who conducts it according to well-established traditions. In fact, the *Passover* meal is also called the seder, a Hebrew word that means “order” or “arrangement.”

Passover commemorates the meal eaten by the Jews the evening before they left Egypt and the enslavement of their people in order to journey toward, and eventually reach, the Promised Land. Central to the Passover meal, then, are those great events described in the Bible in the book of Exodus. One of the high points of the meal comes when the youngest person present at the table asks why the meal is eaten. The response comes in the form of a reading from the haggadah (from the Hebrew meaning “narrative”) about the great events recounted in Exodus.

We should underscore what is being played out at the Passover meal. Jews celebrate an ancient story in their tradition by reenacting the story in a highly ritualized fashion. The purpose is basically to affirm that there is a continuity between past and present; that God did singular things for the ancient Jews; and that there is solidarity between contemporary Jews and those ancestors who were called out of slavery into freedom: “And you shall tell your son on that day, ‘It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt’” (Exodus 13:8). Such a celebration is not merely a historical remembrance. For Jews participating in the Passover meal, there is a deep admixture of memory, worship, and hope. To celebrate the Passover is to become ritually one with those who first observed it before leaving Egypt.

HOLY COMMUNION (THE EUCHARIST)

Holy Communion in Christianity functions in ways that are analogous to Passover in Judaism. In fact, Holy Communion has its roots in the Passover meal. The various Christian communities give diverse interpretations of the significance of communion, and they celebrate it with varying frequency (e.g. Baptists may celebrate the “ordination” of the “Lord’s Supper” a few times a year, while Catholics may celebrate the Eucharist or “thanksgiving” every day). Yet all Christian groups agree that when they celebrate the communion meal, they are reenacting events connected with Jesus of Nazareth. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as well as the letter of Paul known as First Corinthians, describe a ceremony involving the use of bread and wine, which are given significance through words attributed to Jesus.

As in the Passover celebration, a religious story (the mythos) is reenacted long after the event it narrates, not because it tells a particular moment in history, but because it carries a meaning that the community of believers, long after the event itself, wishes to restate. The reenactment puts believers in touch with the origins of their community, while at the same time it expresses certain religious convictions that are viewed as having enduring significance.
MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS:

Please answer the following questions on the provided scantron sheet. Note there is only ONE correct answer per question.

1. Passover and Holy Communion are examples of which of the following components of religion?
   a. Myth
   b. Ritual
   c. The Problem of Evil
   d. Morality

2. Which of the following statements is true about the historical connection between Passover and Holy Communion?
   a. Passover developed from the tradition of Holy Communion
   b. Holy Communion developed from the tradition of Passover
   c. Both traditions developed from the Easter holiday
   d. Passover and Holy Communion have no historical connection

3. Passover and Holy Communion are similar because both:
   a. are Buddhist practices
   b. draw from the Bible
   c. are examples of pilgrimage
   d. rely on the Quran

4. Passover and Holy Communion are different because:
   a. Passover draws from the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) whereas Communion draws from the New Testament
   b. Passover is a ritual for women whereas Holy Communion is a ritual for men
   c. Passover involves fasting whereas Holy Communion involves feasting
   d. They are not different. Passover and Holy Communion are two terms that describe the same thing.

5. Which of the following is NOT true for both of these religious practices?
   a. They offer ways of connecting with the sacred
   b. They offer opportunities for a community of believers to connect with each other and with God
   c. They involve religious symbols
   d. They mark the transition from childhood to adulthood

6. Passover and Holy Communion are purely religious practices which have no social or cultural ramifications.
   a. True
   b. False
Appendix B: Results for Individual Questions

Lower division courses assessed: RS 100 (15 sections)
Upper division courses assessed: RS 395 and RS 497

Q1:
Lower division: 85\% correct
Upper division: 99\% correct
Contrast: 14\% improvement for upper division students

Q2:
Lower division: 73\% correct
Upper division: 83\% correct
Contrast: 10\% improvement for upper division students

Q3:
Lower division: 77\% correct
Upper division: 93\% correct
Contrast: 16\% improvement for upper division students

Q4:
Lower division: 65\% correct
Upper division: 86\% correct
Contrast: 21\% improvement for upper division students

Q5:
Lower division: 71\% correct
Upper division: 86\% correct
Contrast: 21\% improvement for upper division students

Q6:
Lower division: 75\% correct
Upper division: 91\% correct
Contrast: 16\% improvement for upper division students
### Appendix C: Overall Results by Section

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