**2019-2020 Annual Program Assessment Report**

Please submit report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean of your College, and to [james.solomon@csun.edu](mailto:james.solomon@csun.edu), Director of the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review, by September 30, 2020. 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: Yountae An**

1. **Please check off whichever is applicable:**

**A. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Measured student work within program major/options.**

**B. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Analyzed results of measurement within program major/options.**

**C. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Applied results of analysis to program review/curriculum/review/revision major/options.**

**D. \_\_\_\_\_X\_\_\_ Focused exclusively on the direct assessment measurement of General Education Social Sciences learning outcomes**

1. **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, application, or GE assessment) 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 analyses 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
* if your program implemented **option D**, exclusively or simultaneously with **options** **A, B, and/or C**, identify the basic skill(s) assessed and the precise learning outcomes assessed, the assessment instruments and methodology employed, and the resulting scores
* 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 2019-20.** Include a brief description as reflective of a continuous program of ongoing assessment.

**2. Overview of Annual Assessment project**

In 2019-2020, in compliance with CSUN’s direct measurement of General Education assessment in the category of Social Sciences and U.S. History and Government (Section D), the Religious Studies Department assessed Social Sciences SLOs in RS 256: American Religious History and Ideals. We chose RS 256 as it was the only RS course offered during the academic year that fell under section D. The three Social Sciences SLOs (D-2) selected for assessment were:

1. Describe and analyze the histories of the United States and California over significant time periods

2. Explain the principles and major provisions of the Constitution of the United States

and California

4. Describe and examine the histories and development of political institutions as related to diverse peoples in the United States and California

The assessment was done in the Spring semester in three Online sections of RS 256. It was completed by 96 students in the final three weeks of the semester. Students were given time to complete the multiple-choice test designed to assess their ability to reflect critically upon the history regarding the Constitution and the political institutions of the United States. In this assignment, students were instructed to read a news article and then answer a series of 6 multiple-choice questions designed to test their competence in accordance with the three SLOs (See Appendix A for the assessment tool). The questions were created with the contributions of the assessment liaison, the RS 256 Instructor, and the Chair.

**Summary of Results**

The average overall score was **5.29**/6 = **88.25**%

Average score based on SLOs

Questions #2, #6 (SLO 1): **84.1%**

Questions #4, #5 (SLO 2): **93.8%**

Questions #1, #3 (SLO 4): **86.6%**

**Analysis of Results**

Of the 6 total questions, 6 (all) of them show a correct response rate above 80%. This is significantly higher than the benchmark (70%) set by the Program Assessment Plan. It is also much higher than the average correct response rate we have recorded for the past four years (64%). This is even more outstanding when considering the severe challenge students and faculty experienced this year due to COVID-19, and that the Director of the Office of the Academic Assessment had predicted an unusually low performance rate this year.

The exceptional result might be indicative of several different factors, first one being that current RS 256 classes demonstrate a solid curriculum, meeting the learning objectives set by the University. The other reason might be attributed to the fact that all three sections assessed this year were taught by the same instructor and that her active involvement in the designing of the assessment activity from early on facilitated the creation of an assessment activity that reflects the curriculum more efficiently. It should also be noted that the course assessed this year falls under Gen Ed Section D2 which has very specific and narrowly focused Learning Objectives. Both the course and the Learning Objectives had specific and clear orientation, potentially contributing to the successful performance.

The results will be shared with the faculty and discussed at the faculty meeting in Fall 2020. The department’s assessment activities reflect the university’s commitment to diversity because diversity is built into the very core of our courses including RS 256. In RS 256 classes, students gain knowledge of modern American history and its troubled history with race by learning about ways in which race and racial politics played out in the constitution of American political institutions.

**3. Preview of Planned Assessment Activities for 2020-2021**

With the recent changes caused by the pandemic, the College of Humanities has decided to develop a College-wide assessment plan for 2020-2021 with a focus on critical thinking/reading. In compliance with the College’s new plan, next year we will proceed according to the joint-assessment plan laid out by the College.

**APPENDIX A: ASSESSMENT TOOL**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** The goal of this assignment is to assess student learning in Religious Studies course. First, please read the following excerpt from an article published in *National Catholic Reporter*. After reading the excerpt, answer the 6 multiple-choice questions by circling the correct answer

\* You are welcome to write on this paper as needed. Please do not write your name.

**National Catholic Reporter**

Breaking down Trump's religion-heavy State of the Union

Feb 6, 2020

**by**[**Jack Jenkins**](https://www.ncronline.org/authors/jack-jenkins)**,**[**Religion News Service**](https://www.ncronline.org/authors/religion-news-service)

[**Politics**](https://www.ncronline.org/channel/politics)

**WASHINGTON —**President Donald Trump delivered a State of the Union address peppered with religious references and ideas on Feb. 4 evening, laying out a sweeping vision for the United States that evoked old (and contested) religious ideas and catered directly to conservative Christians who make up his base of support.

The president made several appeals to faith throughout his [annual speech](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/05/us/politics/state-of-union-transcript.html) to the nation and the U.S. Congress, some of which appear to be targeted at specific demographics. Here are a few.

Trump made a direct appeal to religious conservatives on abortion.

Roughly halfway through his speech, Trump outlined his opposition to abortion through a mixture of story and theology. He pointed out the presence of Ellie Schneider and her mother, Robin, in the crowd, explaining that the 2-year-old Ellie was born premature at just 21 weeks in 2017 — but was saved "through the skill of her doctors and the prayers of her parents."

Her story was framed in two ways: as an argument for granting additional government funding for neonatal research, and against abortion.

"Ellie reminds us that every child is a miracle of life," Trump said, adding that he is asking Congress to pass legislation "finally banning the late-term abortion of babies."

He then invoked the Almighty as a potentially unifying force for lawmakers: "Whether we are Republican, Democrat or independent, surely we must all agree that every human life is a sacred gift from God."

The lines echo his rhetoric in other recent speeches when he referenced abortion, particularly when addressing conservative Christians. In January, he [spoke at an evangelical church](https://religionnews.com/2020/01/04/in-speech-to-evangelicals-trump-says-god-is-on-our-side/) in Miami to kick off his "Evangelicals for Trump" campaign initiative, repeating his opposition to abortion and declaring to the group of Christian conservatives that he believes "we have God on our side."

A few weeks later, Trump [delivered a speech](https://religionnews.com/2020/01/24/trump-addresses-march-for-life-where-religion-and-politics-mix/) at the March for Life, an annual anti-abortion gathering in Washington, where he told the crowd of thousands, "When we see the image of a baby in the womb, we glimpse the majesty of God's creation."

The president also lifted up what he described as his administration's dedication to religious freedom, including the right to pray in schools.

"My administration is also defending religious liberty, and that includes the constitutional right to pray in public schools," he said. "In America, we don't punish prayer. We don't tear down crosses. We don't ban symbols of faith. We don't muzzle preachers and pastors. In America, we celebrate faith, we cherish religion, we lift our voices in prayer, and we raise our sights to the glory of God."

Advocating for prayer in public schools has long been a hallmark of the religious right, which has spent decades insisting that teachers and administrators should be allowed to lead students in prayer. Despite a series of Supreme Court decisions generally outlawing the practice — including a 2000 decision that banned school districts from sponsoring student-led prayers at football games — a [2019 Pew Research survey](https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/03/for-a-lot-of-american-teens-religion-is-a-regular-part-of-the-public-school-day/) found that while orisons in public schools are rare, they still occur: 8% of teenage public school students said they have ever had a teacher lead their class in prayer, a number that rises to 12% in the South.

The issue of religious liberty has become a rallying cry among Christian conservatives in recent years as well, particularly surrounding issues of same-sex marriage, abortion and contraception, which many religious conservatives oppose. The concept has also been invoked by conservative activists who argue that barring faith leaders and groups from formally endorsing candidates — a move that would violate their tax-exempt status — impinges on their religious freedom (or as Trump put it, "muzzles" them). Hence [Trump's 2017 executive order](https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/05/religious-freedom-executive-order/525354/) "promoting free speech and religious liberty" that curtailed the enforcement of such laws.

That said, Trump's appeal to religious liberty is deeply contested. Many liberals still characterize his travel ban — which was [expanded](https://www.politico.com/news/2020/01/31/trump-administration-expands-travel-ban-110005) to include six additional countries just last week — as a de facto "Muslim ban," which is exactly what Trump initially proposed during his 2016 campaign for president.

Other critics point to his efforts to limit refugee resettlement, a process that is enacted by a group of mostly faith-based organizations: At least three of those organizations are  [suing](http://religionnews.com/2019/11/22/faith-groups-sue-trump-administration-over-refugee-resettlement-order/) the Trump administration over a recent executive order granting state and local officials the authority to block refugee resettlement, arguing it violates federal law and "inhibits our ability to freely practice our religion."

Recently, opponents of the administration's crackdown on immigrants say it has violated the religious freedom of many religious activists who fight for immigrant rights — a position that is beginning to pick up traction in the courts.

In November, an Arizona man [was acquitted](https://apnews.com/1c894dedcb744e4f82ad925dbbc8042f) of a misdemeanor charge for leaving water for migrants crossing through a desert wilderness area along the U.S.-Mexico border, insisting he was simply acting on his faith. On Tuesday, four faith-based activists who took similar actions had their [convictions overturned](https://religionnews.com/2020/02/04/federal-judge-accepts-religious-liberty-defense-of-immigrant-rights-activists/) by a federal judge who argued that prosecuting them amounted to a violation of their "sincerely held religious beliefs." Meanwhile, a New York City pastor is also  [suing](http://religionnews.com/2020/02/04/federal-judge-accepts-religious-liberty-defense-of-immigrant-rights-activists/) the federal government, contending it surveilled and investigated her for doing religious work with immigrants along the U.S.-Mexico border.

**Manifest Destiny and the American myth**

Near the end of his speech, Trump began to weave an almost mythical version of the United States, interspersing it with religious references in ways that may appeal to a certain subset of voters in an election year.

When making the pitch for increasing funding for space shots to the moon and Mars, Trump insisted that "America has always been a frontier nation," adding, "Now we must embrace the next frontier, America's Manifest Destiny in the stars."

Manifest Destiny is a belief popular in the 19th century that contended it was the "destiny" of the overwhelmingly white, European settlers to expand westward across the United States. It was often framed in religious terms and sometimes included the spread of Christianity, and was widely seen as the theological justification for the systematic subjugation of Native Americans and their lands.

The concept echoes the Doctrine of Discovery, [an idea](https://religionnews.com/2018/08/22/denominations-repent-for-native-american-land-grabs/) based on papal edicts that [offered a justification](http://ili.nativeweb.org/sdrm_art.html) for the discovery and colonization by European Christians of lands already inhabited by indigenous people.

Trump later recounted a version of American history that frames settlers as religiously inspired "pathfinders," saying, "We settled the New World, we built the modern world, and we changed history forever by embracing the eternal truth that everyone is made equal by the hand of Almighty God."

As he closed out his remarks, the president appealed to the link between God and country.

"The American adventure has only just begun," he said. "Our spirit is still young. The sun is still rising. God's grace is still shining. And my fellow Americans, the best is yet to come."

Although not new, [some scholars](https://twitter.com/ndrewwhitehead/status/1225046174408695809?s=20) now describe such rhetoric — as well as his appeals to religious liberty — as a version of "Christian nationalism," an ideology where American identity and Christianity are treated as inextricably knitted together.

The ideologies and theologies surrounding Christian nationalism have been condemned by religious progressives and even some Christian conservatives. But with the president up for reelection, mixing faith and national identity may prove to be a deft political move: Scholars also credit Trump's appeal to Christian nationalism as one of the core reasons for his 2016 election victory, as it proved to be a [powerful form of identity politics](https://thinkprogress.org/christian-nationalism-religion-research-b8f9cdc16239/) among many conservative voters.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Which one of the following does NOT describe the key topics/issues covered in the news article?

a. The Religious Right

b. Separation of church and state

c. The Second Amendment (U.S. Constitution)

d. Religious Liberty

1. What is the root of the Religious Right in America?

a. Religious Fundamentalism

b. Communism

c. The Civil Rights movement

d. The Republican party

1. The president’s frequent appeal to religious language (God) in his discussion of the law regarding abortion can be regarded as problematic because it potentially violates the principle of:

a. Religious freedom

b. Civil rights

c. Separation of church and state

d. Gender equality

1. The issue of praying in public schools is controversial because it touches on both the constitutional mandate of separation of church and state, and the constitutional right of:

a. Right to education

b. Freedom to assemble

c. Racial equality

d. Religious freedom

1. Which section of the constitution addresses separation of church and state?

a. Article one, section two

b. The first amendment

c. The second amendment

d. The constitution does not mention separation of church and state

1. The article is critical about president Trump’s use of “Manifest Destiny” because:

a. It misrepresents the true Christian moral value

b. It overrepresents the Protestant values while erasing Catholics

c. It reflects an atheist worldview

d. It reflects the white, Euro-American (Christian) view of American history