

Seaver College General Education (GE) Assessment – Christianity & Culture Academic Year 2011-2012

I. Program Learning Outcome

Students will be able to analyze the religious aspects of culture and use Christian scripture and tradition to assess ethical and religious issues.

II. Institutional Educational Outcomes (IEOs)

The GE Program Learning Outcome aligns with the following IEOs.

Knowledge & Scholarship

Service

Apply knowledge to real-world challenges.

Faith & Heritage

Purpose

Appreciate the complex relationship between faith, learning, and practice.

Service

Respond to the call to serve others.

Leadership

Practice responsible conduct and allow decisions and directions to be informed by a value-centered life.

Community & Global Understanding

Service

Demonstrate commitment to service and civic engagement.

Leadership

Use global and local leadership opportunities in pursuit of justice.

III. Student Learning Outcome(s)

The Student Learning Outcomes for the Christianity and Culture component of the General Education program are as follows:

1. Students will be able to explain the theological ideas of the Old and New Testament writings in view of their respective contents, historical and social contexts, and literary features.
2. Students will be able to recognize and analyze the religious dimensions of culture.
3. Students will be able to use Christian scripture and tradition to assess ethical and religious dimensions of contemporary society.

IV. Curriculum Map

For each Student Learning Outcome listed under III above, the following chart shows the Religion GE course(s) where the SLO is **I**ntroduced (= I), where students **D**evelop their skills, knowledge, abilities, etc. related to the SLO (= D), and where students demonstrate **M**astery of the SLO (= M)

	SLO #1	SLO #2	SLO #3
REL 101	I, D	I	I
REL 102	I, D	D	D
REL 301		M	M

V. Assessment Plan

The plan for assembling and analyzing both direct and indirect evidence is described in “Appendix A: Assessment Plan.”

VI. Rubrics

Attached as Appendix B.

VII. Criteria for Student Achievement / Success

The Committee agreed that the Student Learning Outcomes could be considered to have been met at an appropriate level if seventy percent of the papers collected from REL 301 classes scored 3.5 or higher on the one-to-five scoring rubric. This number represents a reasonable benchmark between the “adequate” or “sufficient” performance represented by a score of 3 and the ideal represented by a score of 5.

VIII. Evidence / Data

Of the 77 papers collected from the 9 sections of REL 301, 57 (74%) scored 3.5 or higher. The mean score was 3.66. 43 of the 77 (55.8%) scored 3.7 or higher; and 24 of the 77 (31.2%) scored 4.0 or higher. Only 6 of the 77 (7.8%) scored lower than 3.0. See Appendix C1 for a full report of the raw numerical data.

As to the indirect data from the survey of graduating seniors, 41.7% of the respondents indicated that the GE curriculum contributed “sufficiently” to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in the area of ethical reasoning. 19.6% marked “considerably,” 26.9% marked “somewhat,” and 11.8% marked “very little.” In terms of how students perceived the GE curriculum to have contributed to their knowledge, skill, and personal development in using Christian scripture to evaluate the ethical and religious dimensions of

contemporary society and culture, 38.6% marked “sufficiently” and 27.9% marked “considerably.” 19.9% marked “somewhat,” and 13.6% marked “very little.” Appendix C2 provides a full report of the raw data from this survey.

IX. Summary

As the benchmark for the REL 301 papers reviewed was set at 70% of the students scoring 3.5 or higher, and the result was that 74% scored 3.5 or higher, the Committee concluded that the learning outcomes are being successfully achieved. Fewer papers scored in the range of 4.0 or higher than we would like to see (31.2%), but there were also fewer than might be expected in the less-than-adequate range, i.e., below 3.0 (7.8%). The data suggest that students are achieving the desired outcomes at an appropriate level but that there is room for improvement.

A strength perceived from the study is that most students showed a good grasp of the ethical and religious dimensions of the various aspects of contemporary society discussed in the papers. On the whole students recognized the complexity of the issues, resisted simplistic solutions, engaged the topics philosophically and theologically, and attempted to bring Christian principles to bear on the issues. A recurring weakness is that many cited Christian scripture and tradition somewhat simplistically and uncritically, failing to take fully into account the historical, religious, and literary complexity of those sources. “I think” or “I feel” sometimes trumped sustained theological and philosophical argumentation and critical engagement with the canonical texts and the great theological minds who have addressed the respective topics.

The indirect data provided less specific information but nevertheless confirmed that (at least in student perception) the GE curriculum has enhanced students’ ability to draw on Christian scripture in assessing the ethical and religious dimensions of contemporary society. Two-thirds of the respondents (66.5%) indicated that the GE curriculum contributed “sufficiently” or “considerably” to this end, while one third (33.5%) indicated that it did so “somewhat” or “very little.” 61.3% indicated that the GE curriculum contributed to their knowledge, skills, and development in ethical reasoning “sufficiently” or “considerably,” while 38.7% indicated that it did so “somewhat” or “very little.” What these data do not indicate is whether the students’ *perception* of their ability to make informed use of Christian scripture and theological perspectives in evaluating societal problems and issues squares with the reality of their knowledge and skills. However, it is significant that the numbers from the indirect data correspond roughly to those from the direct data: both suggest that the stated Student Learning Outcomes are being achieved to a satisfactory degree but that there is room for improvement.

The goals growing out of this study are as follows:

- ◆ One-year: Report the findings to the Religion faculty. Encourage those who teach GE Religion courses to continue laying the biblical and theological foundations that undergird the positive findings from the study. Discuss and implement better ways of modeling the use of Christian scripture and tradition in analyzing contemporary

issues so that students are better equipped to draw on these resources in an informed and critical way.

- ◆ Three-year: Design and implement a more comprehensive assessment tool to provide better data on how well the intended Student Learning Outcomes are being achieved.
- ◆ Five-year: Pending the results of a follow-up study, develop resources to help faculty help students further improve their ability to use Christian scripture and tradition in a more informed way in discussing ethical and religious aspects of contemporary society. Some possible resources would include faculty workshops on best practices led by some of our most effective teachers and/or outside experts.

X. Recommendations (Closing the Loop)

Two action items emerge from the foregoing analysis:

- (1) Report the positive findings of the study to the Religion faculty and encourage persistence in the laying of the solid the biblical and theological foundations evidenced in the study (Fall 2012).
- (2) Report to the Religion faculty the areas of needed improvement that surfaced in the study and begin formulating plans for improving in these areas (Fall 2012). Such plans should include at least the following:
 - ◆ the design and implementation of a follow-up assessment tool to provide further data on how we are doing in achieving the intended Student Learning Outcomes of this component of the GE curriculum (2013-14).
 - ◆ based on the findings of a follow-up assessment, the arrangement of faculty workshops on best practices led by some of our own most effective teachers and periodically by outside experts (2014-15 and beyond).

Inviting outside resource people to our campus would entail some expense, but not a huge amount. There are funds in the existing Religion Division budget for faculty development that would enable us to bring in at least some outside help.

XI. Contributors

Assessment of this area of the General Education program was performed by the following individual(s).

Committee Chairperson	Position Title	Academic Division
Randall D. Chesnutt	Professor of Religion	Religion

Committee Members	Position Title	Academic Division
Timothy M. Willis	Professor of Religion, Chairman, Religion Division	Religion
Dyron B. Daugherty	Associate Professor of Religion	Religion

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Assessment Details

“Appendix A: Assessment Plan” describes the method and process of collecting and analyzing data for the “Christianity and Culture” component of the General Education program.

Appendix B – Rubrics

“Appendix B: Scoring Rubric” provides the scoring rubric used to assess the data assembled from the REL 301 classes in the Spring semester of 2012. See the Assessment Plan described in Appendix A.

Appendix C - Evidence /Data

“Appendix C1: Scores for GE Assessment” provides the raw numerical data compiled after scoring the papers gathered from REL 301 classes in the Spring semester of 2012.

“Appendix C2: GE Assessment Spring 2012 (Survey of Graduating Seniors)” contains the survey (and the data it generated) employed as indirect evidence in this study.

Appendix D - Chronology

“Appendix D: Chronology” details the sequence of the Committee’s work in assessing Student Learning Outcomes for the Christianity and Culture component of the General Education Program.

Appendix A: Assessment Plan

Direct Evidence

In the Spring semester of 2012, the Committee gathered data from assignments embedded in all nine sections of the required upper-division course, REL 301: Christianity and Culture. Some were from final exams; others were from essays written outside of class or major research projects. Most were questions or assignments already being used in REL 301 classes; in a few cases the Committee worked with individual faculty in advance to design assignments, or refine existing ones, that would provide data for the Committee's assessment. The assignments were not standardized but varied widely according to the diverse topics covered in the various sections. The assignments were appropriate to the individual sections but also provide ample data for assessing whether the Student Learning Outcomes for the "Christianity and Culture" component of the GE curriculum are being achieved.

The REL 301 faculty supplied the Committee a random sampling of seventy-seven papers. At the end of the Spring semester, the Committee members worked independently to score the papers according to the Scoring Rubric supplied in Appendix B. In May 2012 the Committee compiled and assessed the data, identified strengths and weaknesses, made recommendations regarding needed improvements, and established goals (one-year, three-year, and five-year) for this component of the GE program in light of its findings.

Indirect Evidence

For indirect evidence, the Committee drew upon a survey of graduating seniors administered from March 13 to April 12, 2012. The response rate from the graduating class was 42% (35% for the questions considered in this study). Students were asked, "How has the General Education curriculum contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas?" Of the twenty-two areas listed, two are pertinent to this study:

#11: Ethical reasoning: Recognizing ethical issues, examining different ethical perspectives, and considering the ramification of alternative actions.

#17: Christianity: Christian Scripture and the use of Scripture to evaluate the ethical and religious dimensions of contemporary society and culture.

Students were asked to rate the contribution of the GE curriculum in these areas as "very little," "somewhat," "sufficiently," or "considerably." The survey and the raw data it generated are included as Appendix C2.

Scoring Rubric

5

4

3

2

1

-
- Topic or thesis is clearly defined.
 - Demonstrates good grasp of the issue(s).
 - Consistently perceives the religious assumptions and implications of social and cultural phenomena.
 - Synthesizes various resources adeptly.
 - Makes informed use of Scripture and tradition with careful attention to the nature of the sources.
 - Thoughtfully considers major alternative viewpoints.
 - Maintains focus, connecting ideas in a logical and sophisticated manner.
 - Supports statements consistently with substantial evidence.

- Topic or thesis is fairly well-defined.
- Demonstrates some grasp of the issue(s).
- Sometimes perceives the religious assumptions and implications of social and cultural phenomena.
- Synthesizes various resources adequately.
- Uses Scripture and tradition with some attention to the nature of the sources.
- Gives some consideration to alternative viewpoints.
- Usually maintains focus and connects ideas logically.
- Supports most statements with relevant evidence.

- Topic or thesis is ill-defined or vague.
- Reflects inadequate grasp of the issue(s).
- Rarely perceives the religious assumptions and implications of social and cultural phenomena.
- Fails to consider or synthesize appropriate resources.
- Cites Scripture and tradition simplistically without adequate attention to the nature of the sources.
- Ignores or superficially considers alternative viewpoints.
- Often fails to maintain focus and connect ideas logically.
- Supports statements insufficiently or with irrelevant evidence.

Appendix C1: Scores for GE Assessment (Christianity and Culture) May 2012

Below are the scores on the 77 papers collected from the 9 sections of REL 301 in the Spring semester of 2012 (see the Scoring Rubric in Appendix B). For each paper the first number listed is the evaluation by Dr. Tim Willis, the second is that by Dr. Randy Chesnutt, and the third is that by Dr. Dyron Daugherty. The average of the three scores is given in parentheses.

1	4.0/4.0/4.0 (4.0)
2	3.0/3.5/4.0 (3.5)
3	5.0/4.2/4.0 (4.4)
4	3.5/4.0/4.0 (3.8)
5	3.5/4.0/5.0 (4.2)
6	3.0/3.5/4.0 (3.5)
7	2.5/3.5/4.0 (3.3)
8	2.5/3.0/4.0 (3.2)
9	3.5/4.2/5.0 (4.2)
10	3.0/3.0/3.0 (3.0)
11	4.0/4.2/4.0 (4.1)
12	2.5/2.0/4.0 (2.8)
13	3.0/4.0/5.0 (4.0)
14	3.0/3.8/4.0 (3.6)
15	5.0/4.0/3.0 (4.0)
16	2.5/3.2/4.0 (3.2)
17	2.5/4.0/2.0 (2.8)
18	2.5/4.2/3.0 (3.2)
19	??/3.2/4.0 (3.6)
20	4.0/3.5/3.0 (3.5)
21	4.0/3.5/4.0 (3.8)
22	3.5/3.5/4.0 (3.7)
23	2.5/1.5/3.0 (2.3)
24	4.0/3.0/4.0 (3.7)
25	3.0/3.0/3.0 (3.0)
26	2.5/3.5/4.0 (3.3)
27	3.5/3.5/4.0 (3.7)
28	3.5/3.0/3.0 (3.2)
29	4.5/3.0/4.0 (3.8)
30	5.0/4.0/4.0 (4.3)
31	4.0/3.2/4.0 (3.7)
32	5.0/4.0/4.0 (4.3)
33	3.5/3.8/5.0 (4.1)
34	5.0/4.0/4.0 (4.3)
35	4.0/4.0/4.0 (4.0)

36	3.0/2.8/3.0 (2.9)
37	3.5/4.0/4.0 (3.8)
38	3.0/3.7/4.0 (3.6)
39	3.5/4.0/3.0 (3.5)
40	3.0/3.5/3.0 (3.2)
41	2.5/3.5/3.0 (3.0)
42	2.5/4.0/4.0 (3.5)
43	4.5/2.8/3.5 (3.6)
44	3.0/3.5/4.0 (3.5)
45	5.0/3.5/3.5 (4.0)
46	4.5/4.0/4.0 (4.2)
47	4.5/4.0/3.5 (4.0)
48	4.5/4.0/4.0 (4.2)
49	4.5/4.0/4.0 (4.2)
50	5.0/4.2/4.0 (4.4)
51	4.0/3.5/4.0 (3.8)
52	3.0/3.6/4.0 (3.5)
53	4.5/4.0/4.0 (4.2)
54	4.5/3.7/3.5 (3.9)
55	4.5/3.5/3.5 (3.8)
56	4.0/4.0/3.0 (3.7)
57	4.0/3.0/3.5 (3.5)
58	4.0/4.0/4.0 (4.0)
59	4.5/4.0/3.5 (4.0)
60	3.5/4.0/4.0 (3.8)
61	3.5/2.5/4.0 (3.3)
62	4.5/4.0/4.0 (4.2)
63	3.5/3.5/3.5 (3.5)
64	3.0/3.2/3.0 (3.1)
65	5.0/3.0/4.0 (4.0)
66	3.5/3.0/4.0 (3.5)
67	4.5/3.0/4.0 (3.8)
68	4.0/4.2/4.5 (4.2)
69	4.0/3.7/4.0 (3.9)
70	3.0/3.5/3.5 (3.3)
71	3.0/2.5/3.0 (2.8)
72	4.5/3.8/3.5 (3.9)
73	3.0/2.5/2.5 (2.7)
74	3.0/4.0/4.0 (3.7)
75	3.5/4.0/4.0 (3.8)
76	4.0/3.5/4.0 (3.8)
77	3.0/3.5/3.5 (3.3)

Appendix D: Chronology

Date	Members Participating (Initials)	Action
Oct. 2011	RDC, TMW, DBD*	Formation of assessment committee and design of an assessment plan
Dec. 2011	RDC, TMW, DBD*	Refinement of assessment plan; drafting of scoring rubric for sample papers to be collected in Spring 2012
Dec. 2011	RDC, TMW	Consultation with those scheduled to teach REL 301 in Spring 2012 to elicit their help in gathering data from their respective REL 301 classes
Dec.2011- Jan. 2012	RDC	Individual consultation with REL 301 faculty to finalize details for embedding test questions or other assignments in their classes to provide assessment data
March- April 2012	RDC	Collection of 77 papers from REL 301 classes to be used in the assessment
April 30- May 5, 2012	RDC, TMW, DBD	Individual reading and scoring of the 77 collected papers according to the scoring rubric; compilation of data; consultation regarding the assessment project and what can be learned from it
May 17, 2012	RDC	Final drafting and submission of this report

*Dr. Dyron Daugherty was in Pepperdine's Buenos Aires program in the 2011-2012 academic year. Consultation with him prior to May 2012 was in the form of email correspondence and telephone conversations.