

## STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

**PROGRAM:** Theology and Religious Studies

**SUBMITTED BY:** Brian Doyle

**DATE:** Fall, 2018

**BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHERE AND HOW ARE DATA AND DOCUMENTS USED TO GENERATE THIS REPORT BEING STORED:** Faculty are informed early in the semester as to which of their students are majors. The faculty are instructed to keep all papers/exams of the majors for assessment purposes. The full time faculty do an excellent job of this. Not all adjuncts have the same relationship with the students so they are not as reliable. This will change.

The papers and exams are scanned and kept by the department chair in his Google Drive.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Program description from the Course Catalog

This program invites students to examine the significance of religious experience through the disciplines of theology and religious studies. Courses explore the human encounter with the divine through its historical and contemporary expressions in the lives of individuals and communities

**List all of the program's learning outcomes:** *(regardless of whether or not they are being assessed this year)*

*Upon successful completion of the BA in Theology and Religious Studies, students will be able to:*

Learning Outcome	Year of Last Assessment	Assessed This Year	Year of Next Planned Assessment
Analyze the relationship between the moral and spiritual dimension of the self and the individual's role in establishing a just community	2017		2020
Apply theological principles in the examination of the dialogue between faith and reason	2017	X	2020
Theologically analyze doctrinal and dogmatic statements and arguments	2015		2022
Theologically analyze scriptural and historical source materials	2015	X	2019
Academically defend the dignity of the human person and for the condition of human diversity through thoughtful engagement with diverse religious traditions	2015		2019
Practice civil engagement through discussion of religious differences and the possibility of pluralism	2015		2021
Articulate a global and historical perspective by examining a wide range of religious traditions in their cultural contexts	2015		2021

**Describe briefly how the program's outcomes support Marymount's mission, strategic plan, and relevant school plan** *(generally not more than two paragraphs, may use bullet points):*

As a liberal arts school in the Catholic tradition, theology and religious studies stand at the heart of our academic mission. The University Administration has continually named theology as one of the important areas of the strategic plan and the liberal arts core as it reflects our Catholic Identity. The LAC requires two courses in TRS. All students take TRS 100: Theological Inquiry and then any of the other courses to fulfill the requirement. A significant number of undergraduate the students enroll in a moral theology course to fulfill that requirement for the LAC. The TRS program reflects many of the goals and objectives of the university and its mission.

**Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements to the process, and provide evidence of the existence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment** *(generally not more than two paragraphs, may use bullet points):*

TRS 100 continues to be an important aspect of our assessment of the department's success but it is a poor assessment of the successes (and shortcomings) of the program. As the Liberal Arts Core assessment process is improved, so will the data available to us about this course which every undergraduate takes at MU (the only course for which that is true). To that end, an Honor's student is writing her thesis as an assessment of TRS 100 and its impact on the faith of our students.

As a result of our assessment processes (annual reports and program reviews) we have added several new classes as noted in our program review. We have also lobbied for and received two instructor positions (2+2+engagement). One of these positions is working to improve our website and related materials to increase enrollment in the major. The other is planning and executing two annual events. The first is our inter-faith event that we have administered for over a decade. The other is a new event which is motivated in part from our assessment. We are now administering an annual ecumenical event each fall.

**Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Planned Improvement</b>	<b>Update</b> <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
Students will analyze the relationship between the moral and spiritual dimension of the self and the individual's role in establishing a just community	As stated in previous reports, all sections of TRS 100 now include a unit on social justice or moral theology so as to better prepare students for their upper level TRS classes that deal with these issues more specifically. Our new moral theologian has published and worked with justice related activities. He is employing our service learning rubric this academic year.	Dr. Shadle has developed a service learning rubric that has been approved for use with the new Saints Center for Service (2016). This rubric was employed in his two courses with service learning which are offered four times each academic year. This will provide excellent data for this outcome moving forward.
Students will apply theological principles in the examination of the dialogue between faith and reason	The new course being presented, Faith and Doubt (see appendix), will delve more deeply into this specific outcome. It will build on the interest and questions raised in TRS 100 and the rest of the TRS curriculum.	We have offered TRS 280: Faith and Doubt in Christian Theology (fall 2017). The course was a success. Modifications will be made before it is offered again in Spring 2019
Students will theologially analyze scriptural and historical source materials	No specific improvements are planned for this outcome beyond the collection of more and better data. Having one student finishing the program this year, especially when she was an outstanding graduate, is not enough to make many changes to this outcome's assessment.	We have a greater number of majors at this time so assessment is improved.

**Provide a response to last year's University Assessment Committee review of the program's learning assessment report:**

Comment: TRS has had a program review since the last annual report. We responded to the concerns in that document and were asked to respond to APBP for their concerns after the Program Review

**Outcomes Assessment 2017-2018**

**Learning Outcome 1:** apply theological principles in the examination of the dialogue between faith and reason

**Assessment Activity**

<b>Outcome Measures</b> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	<b>Performance Standard</b> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	<b>Data Collection</b> <i>Discuss how the data was collected and describe the student population</i>	<b>Analysis</b> <i>1) Describe the analysis process.  2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
Senior Seminar Paper (direct) and papers from TRS 451: Christian Faith in the Modern World	Students were expected to articulate a theory arguing about the coherence of Christian faith and the gift of human reason. Expectation was that more than 75% of papers would achieve results of good or excellence on their papers (see rubric in appendix)	Senior Seminar Papers (direct) and papers from TRS 451: Christian Faith in the Modern World (direct)	There were five senior papers assessed. Four of them were applicable to this outcome. Three did an excellent job assessing the relationship between faith and reason. The fourth paper did a good job meeting the objective (B level work). Thus 100% met the standard, 75% exceeded the standard. Students used critical reason to explore issues of violence, feminism and social justice from a Christian theological position.
Papers from TRS 280: Faith and Doubt in Modern Theology (direct)	Expectation was that all TRS students would achieve results of good or excellence on their papers (see rubric in appendix)	The second paper for this course had the prompt: <i>Should Christian faith be considered rational? Defend your answer using the texts from class. It is probably best if you employ some of the arguments that disagree with your position and how you 'defeat' them.</i>	This was a class of 30 students. Two of the students were majors. Thus we were able to compare the work of the majors (both earned A's) with the work of non TRS majors. It was clear that TRS majors have a familiarity with the arguments for and against Christian faith and can use reasoned arguments in the examination of different issues regarding faith and reason. These two students met the standard.

### Interpretation of Results

**Describe the extent to which this learning outcome has been achieved by students** (*Use both direct and indirect measure results*):  
The major does an excellent job preparing its majors for the achievement of this outcome. All five seniors demonstrated excellence with this issue in either their senior papers, papers from their independent studies, or participation in TRS 280.

**Briefly describe program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:**  
This has always been a strength of the department since it is essential to the training and teaching of all members of the faculty. We can continue this excellence but must work to ensure that the students are aware of their leaning as specific to the relationship of faith and reason. Several had not realized how much they had learned on this topic until it was assessed for them. The department needs to be more explicit in its discussion of program outcomes and where they are met.

**Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:**  
TRS 280 will be offered again in Spring 2019. Several improvements will be made as a result of the faculty member's assessment of the course and the results of the final papers, exams, and student evaluations. Specific modifications need not be discussed here but it was clear that the students were not as prepared to discuss evolutionary biology as assumed by the professor. So, yeah, I blame the science department.

**Learning Outcome 2:** theologically analyze scriptural and historical source materials

### Assessment Activity

<b>Outcome Measures</b> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	<b>Performance Standard</b> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	<b>Data Collection</b> <i>Discuss how the data was collected and describe the student population</i>	<b>Analysis</b> <i>1) Describe the analysis process.  2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
Senior papers, papers from majors only TRS 451	At least 75% of papers will analyze biblical texts within historical, social, and theological context	Senior TRS majors which are kept by department chair	All five senior papers demonstrated mastery of biblical criticism. One paper was on the Letter to the Ephesians and placed this letter in the greater corpus of the work of St. Paul. The other papers used biblical arguments from the Old and New Testament with marked sophistication. 100% of senior papers demonstrated achievement of the standard.
Papers from TRS 260: New Testament Gospels	At least 75% of students can, with specificity, evaluate the role the author plays in the theology of a specific gospel	Final papers of the class with one TRS major among 27 other students (mostly SBA students)	The class itself had mixed results. Most students' papers demonstrated an understanding of the centrality of social context to the theological interpretation of a gospel (75%). The TRS major enrolled in this course wrote an excellent paper on the role of the poor in the Gospel of Luke.

### Interpretation of Results

**Describe the extent to which this learning outcomes has been achieved by students** *(Use both direct and indirect measure results):*

The majors in the program showed excellence (5/5) in the use of biblical material as they looked at feminist and liberation theology, violence in the church and capital punishment. Since we require at least one biblical course (many take two) this is a strength of the department.

**Briefly describe program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:**

The strengths have been noted above. Only one major was enrolled in NT Gospels when taught by full time faculty member. Despite requests, the adjunct did not supply the papers of majors when this class was taught in 2016. We MUST do a better job of engaging the adjuncts in assessment – at least to the point of submitting papers.

**Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:**

The results of the objective were good but one improvement can be made. The student writing on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians demonstrated a lack of exposure to the works of Paul, despite taking a course on the New Testament (TRS 260: New Testament Gospels). Because the course on the Epistles normally is taught in Greece and Turkey, we have not offered it with regularity. Moving forward, the NT Gospels course will include a discussion of St. Paul (probably tied to the Gospel of Luke) to ensure majors can locate Paul historically and theologically in relationship to the Gospels.