

Bergen Community College

ASSESSMENT REPORT FORM FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Assessment Period: Fall 2012 – Spring 2014

Department/Program: Philosophy and Religion Department

Department Chair: George Cronk

Department Assessment Liaison: Toby De Marco

Date Submitted: DRAFT

❖ **Program Description or mission/goal statement of the Department/Program:**

❖ [Source: internal PHR documents, BCC PHR Department Brochure, BCC PHR web site] The mission of the BCC Philosophy and Religion faculty is to provide students with a substantial and educationally meaningful program of philosophical and religious studies through well-designed and well-taught on-campus, online, and partially online (hybrid) courses.

❖ **Intellectual Skills**

❖ An integral feature of our mission – both in Philosophy and in Religious Studies – is to impress upon students the value of critical thought and the value of precision in the use of language and to help them develop the habit of thinking, speaking, and writing with logical rigor and clarity. To that end,

❖ 1. we seek to base all philosophy and religion courses on the reading and discussion of the writings of major philosophical and religious thinkers (i.e., on primary sources rather than on textbooks, either in anthology form or in the form of "great books" or "classic texts"), including, in the case of religion, the study of the sacred scriptures of the major religions of the world;

❖ 2. we incorporate in all philosophy and religion courses the teaching of basic principles and methods of logical reasoning and/or critical thinking as well as techniques of academic research and writing; and

❖ 3. we require students in all philosophy and religion courses to do a substantial amount of expository, analytic, and critical writing in response to the materials studied in the courses.

❖ **Instructional Methods**

❖ In carrying out our mission, we utilize instructional methods calculated to meet the educational needs of all students, recognizing that there is a diversity of learning styles among BCC students. We organize the learning process through appropriate combinations of lectures, group discussions, collaborative learning processes and projects, audio-visual presentations (videos, PowerPoint presentations, carefully-

designed reading and writing assignments [papers, tests, library research projects, etc.]).

❖ Student Learning Goals

❖ We seek diligently to assist and encourage our students in the achievement of the following student learning goals in philosophy and in religion:

❖ 1. Philosophy:

- ❖ • Students will identify and analyze the basic problems of philosophy in the fields of metaphysics, epistemology, and value theory.
- ❖ • Students will demonstrate a sound working knowledge of the basic principles of logic and the ability to incorporate them in their analyses of philosophical issues.
- ❖ • Students will state and support their own views on philosophical issues logically, coherently, concisely, and clearly, both orally and in writing.

❖ 2. Religion:

- ❖ • Students will explain the relationship between religion and culture.
- ❖ • Students will apply academic methodologies to the study of religion.
- ❖ • Students will analyze sacred texts and traditions recognizing the various hermeneutical approaches.
- ❖ • Students will defend positions on religious issues with critical precision, clarity, and rigor, both orally and in writing.

❖ The mission statement of the Department of Philosophy and Religion is consistent with and supportive of the overall Mission and Goals statement of Bergen Community College and gives special support to the elements in that statement that are underlined below: [underlining of BCC Mission, Vision]

Mission

Bergen Community College educates a diverse student population in a supportive and challenging academic environment that fosters civility and respect. The College offers a comprehensive set of accessible, affordable, high-quality credit and non-credit courses as well as degree and non-degree programs. Bergen provides lifelong learning opportunities for all members of the community. The College responds to community needs through workforce training and continuing education, and by developing programs for employers.

Vision

As a college of choice, Bergen Community College provides a comfort level that enables students of all abilities to mature as learners and engaged citizens. A leading community college in the nation, the College creates a stimulating, rigorous, and inclusive learning environment. Use of innovative technology enhances learning experiences and widens access to learning media. Community and business leaders value the College as a reliable partner and principal provider of workforce development. Bergen County residents of all ages and cultural backgrounds appreciate the College as the hub of their educational and cultural activities.

❖ **Program Learning Goals/Outcomes:**

- ❖ The Bergen Community College program in Philosophy and Religion provides students with opportunities to study in two related but distinct fields of academic inquiry: (1) philosophy and (2) religious studies.
- ❖ The BCC program in Philosophy introduces students to the basic principles and techniques of logical thinking and argumentation, to the history of philosophical thought, to the basic problems of philosophy (What is real? What can be known? What is really worthwhile?), and to a set of methods by which contemporary moral, social, and political problems may be clearly understood and perhaps resolved.

❖ Philosophy Program Goals

- ❖ 1. Students will identify and analyze the basic problems of philosophy in the fields of metaphysics, epistemology, and value theory.
- ❖ 2. Students will demonstrate a sound working knowledge of the basic principles of logic and the ability to incorporate them in their analyses of philosophical issues.
- ❖ 3. Students will state and support their own views on philosophical issues logically, coherently, concisely, and clearly, both orally and in writing.
- ❖ The Religious Studies program introduces students to the basic problems and methods of theology; to the sacred literatures of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other religious traditions; and to the history, basic beliefs, and characteristic practices of the major religions of the world.

❖ Religion Program Goals

- ❖ 1. Students will explain the relationship between religion and culture.
- ❖ 2. Students will apply academic methodologies to the study of religion.
- ❖ 3. Students will analyze sacred texts and traditions recognizing the various hermeneutical approaches.
- ❖ 4. Students will defend positions on religious issues with critical precision, clarity, and rigor, both orally and in writing.

SEMESTER 1: CREATING PROGRAM-LEVEL ASSESSMENT PLAN

1. Program Learning Goal(s) or Outcome(s) to be assessed (from the above section):

American Association of Universities and Colleges (AAUC) LEAP Goals, BCC General Education Goals, PHR Department Philosophy Program Goal 2 and 3 (above); PHR Department Philosophy Student learning Goals 2 and 3 (above). Use: AAUC LEAP Goal Rubric for Information Literacy: Evaluate Information and Its Sources Critically.

Introductory Level (30-32 credits) SLO's

9.3.1 Evaluates information sources for their relevance to need, appropriateness/audience, authority, reliability, currency, and point-of-view/bias.

9.3.2 Identifies a source's main idea and major points.

9.3.3 Distinguishes between scholarly vs. popular sources; articles vs. editorials vs. reviews.

Gateway Level (60-64 credits) SLO's

9.3.5 Analyzes the logic of arguments in the information gathered.

9.3.6 Recognizes and describes various aspects of a source that may impact its value for a specific research project (e.g., bias and currency may impact the value of the information).

9.3.7 Distinguishes between primary vs. secondary sources in a subject or discipline-specific context.

9.3.8 Distinguishes between trade publications and general sources.

9.3.9 Determines whether additional information, source types, and/or viewpoints are necessary.

2. Means of Assessment:

Online and/or Scantron™ multiple choice/true-false quiz to be administered to some sections of PHR-102 Contemporary Moral Issues (General Education (GE) course) during the Fall 2013 semester. The information literacy AAUC LEAP Goal is most relevant in two PHR courses: PHR-100 Reasoning and PHR-102 Contemporary Moral Issues. PHR-102 is an applied ethics course. Some professors cover media literacy in PHR-100. Since information literacy is directly taught in PHR-100 and is more a "by-product" skill in PHR-102, the PHR Department decided to assess the information literacy student learning goal/outcome in PHR-102.

NOTE: "by-product skill" refers to a generalized skill (can be applied in many domains). One might say that one of main points, purposes of a liberal education is to obtain, acquire, and convey such skills, and that is what presumably the AAUC LEAP Goals are attempting to articulate.

▪ Feedback from Dean:

April 2014: Good course selection for this assessment plan.

SEMESTER 2: DEVELOPING ASSESSMENT TOOL (s) and TIMELINE

3A. Describe or attach assessment tool (s), including sources of data, timeline for data collection and how data will be analyzed.

After being given the opportunity to read three brief editorial-like articles on same sex marriage, students in sample selected course sections will complete and submit a seventeen question multiple

choice/true-false quiz. The quiz includes “tester” questions to determine to some extent validity (and therefore usefulness) of responses based upon the personal views of the students, determination of having read the articles, consistency of position, and understanding of the moral/legal issue. Individual professors will administer the quizzes either in hard copy with Scantron™ or in Moodle quiz format. Professors were provided both formats from the PHR Assessment Liaison.

The quiz will be administered during the Fall 2013 semester. The PHR Assessment Liaison requested certain data from professors based upon the results of the quizzes. This data was submitted by the end of the Fall 2013 semester.

The data will be analyzed by the PHR Assessment Liaison. Various statistical tools/techniques will be used in order to derive the following results analysis: mean accuracy scores for each course section and for total, correlations between certain answers and students’ self-reported personal views, statistical significance testing of those correlations.

3B. Desired results faculty would like to see.

- **Feedback from CIE:**

SEMESTER 3: COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA

4. Summary of Results (attach aggregated data table, survey tool, etc., to support the summary):

Semester 3 = Fall 2013.

The quiz contained twelve (12) information literacy questions. Only four (4) questions had a majority of an incorrect answer. Consequently, eight (8) questions had a majority of a correct answer. Therefore, a majority of students selected correct answers. Roughly, two-thirds (66%) of students selected correct answers.

n = 143 student participants

81.5 % of students believe that same sex marriage is morally permissible.

91 % of students believe that same sex marriage should be legally permissible.

Only one student demonstrated inconsistency in the “tester” questions (#13-17).

5. Recommendations for Improvement:

Although 66 % of students demonstrated information literacy skills by selecting correct answers in the quiz, the Philosophy and Religion Department wants that number to be higher (probably in the 80s percentage).

Two out of the four questions in which there was a majority of incorrect answers involved detecting words/phrases that have emotive meaning/connotations.

▪ Feedback from Dean:

April 2014: Interesting results and good recommendations .

SEMESTER 4: CLOSING THE LOOP AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

6. Use of Results: Semester 4 = Spring 2014.

The Philosophy and Religion discussed the results and interpretations of the results. We hypothesize that the main reason for a majority of students failing to detect emotive meaning in texts is that the students did not have a full grasp of the meaning of “emotive meaning/connotation.” Consequently, either our next assessment project involving information literacy should define the terms and give examples BEFORE students engage in the assessment mechanism (or simply not use the phrase “emotive meaning”), or professors should emphasize this information literacy concept in their PHR-102 courses. Probably, most professors address the concept of emotive meaning mechanism of rhetorical slanting but may use different terms. So, in the future we shall adopt an assessment mechanism that makes clear the terms.

Although the results exceeded our expectations, the Department determined that a need for emphasis on information literacy is desirable, especially in PHR-102 and PHR-100. Consequently, in the future some professors will be taking their students for specialized library instruction. Others have developed an online learning module for information literacy. We seek to improve the critical thinking/reasoning of our students with respect to information literacy.

▪ Feedback from CIE:

- **Comment from Dean:**
 - **It is interesting that results can be affected by the students' lack of understanding of the terminology. Good assessment plan!**

Last Updated: August 2013