

Bergen Community College

Assessment Report for 2008-2010

Department/Program: Philosophy and Religion/Arts, Humanities, Wellness Division

Department Leader: George Cronk

Liaison: Toby DeMarco

Assessment Project Coordinator (if not the Department Leader): Toby DeMarco

Date Submitted: March 25, 2009

Program(s), if applicable (AAS, Interdepartmental, etc.):

Mission/Goal statement of the department or program:

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 and Goals]

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: Create the Assessment Plan

Goal or learning objective being assessed:

Philosophy Program Goal: Students will state and support their own views on philosophical issues logically, coherently, concisely, and clearly, both orally and in writing. Religion Program Goal: Students will defend positions on religious issues with critical precision, clarity, and rigor, both orally and in writing. To be assessed in six (6) sections of PHR-101 Introduction to Philosophy, and five (5) sections of PHR-121 Religions of the World. We are assessing student oral articulation and presentation skills, both quality and quantity, with respect to the content (knowledge, information, and skills) of PHR courses. We are attempting to answer the following assessment questions: Are our students participating in class? Are students participating enough (for some end)? What is the quality of student participation when they do participate?

The main purpose in collecting this data will be to establish a baseline for further assessment.

PHR-101 Learning Objectives assessed:

"3. interpret, summarize, and paraphrase, both orally and in writing, the views of philosophers as expressed in philosophical texts"

"5. state and support their own views on philosophical issues logically, coherently, concisely, and clearly, both orally and in writing."

PHR-121 Learning Objectives assessed:

5. state and support their own views on religious issues, both orally and in writing, and with logical and critical precision, clarity, and rigor.

Relevant Core Competencies: (check as many as apply)

Communication

Quantitative Reasoning

Critical Thinking

- Civic Responsibility Technological and Information Fluency Personal Skills
 Interpersonal Skills Creativity and Aesthetic Appreciation Applied Knowledge

Means of Assessment:

Rubrics for the evaluation of student class participation activities. Activities include: in-class, oral participation; on-line chat and postings on discussion boards; in-class group work; in-class journal writing; etc. Professors will use rubrics to assess student class participation activities in their course sections. Each professor will collate results for each course section (mean for course section, and individual rubrics). Results will be submitted to the Assessment Liaison for statistical analysis and Department reporting.

SEMESTER 2: Develop an Assessment Strategy

Criterion for success:

70% of students will participate satisfactorily (grade C (or equivalent) or above) as determined by "universal" rubrics

Dean's Comments:

VP's Comments:

SEMESTER 3: Implement Assessment Plan & Strategy

Summary and analysis of data collected:

Data to be collected during Spring 2009 semester. Five sections of PHR-101 (three different professors) and three sections of PHR-121 (two different professors) were used as the sample. 63% of students in the PHR-101 sample earned a "C" grade (or equivalent) or better on class participation instruments (the various MOAs for class participation listed above). 65.67% of students in the PHR-121 sample earned a "C" grade (or equivalent) or better on class participation instruments (the various MOAs for class participation listed above). These results did not meet PHR Department's goal of 70%. Nonetheless, these initial data establish a baseline that may be used for comparison in future assessment projects.

(The Summary should appear here. Use attachments only to provide information to support the summary.)

SEMESTER 4: Reporting and Revising

Use of results:

Students in PHR courses are generally not participating at the level that the faculty of PHR think is desirable. The Department has discussed and will continue to discuss the significance of class participation in our overall learning goals. In other words, if we do not deem oral and/or class participation to be highly significant as a learning goal, then we should delete these goals from our course objectives. The Department is not considering that action now. On the other hand, faculty members are discussing ways to improve the quality of, and increase the quantity of, class participation. That is, we want more students to participate more often in a rigorous manner. Some PHR professors have been using in-class logs or journals. All students are required during selected class sessions to write entries based upon the reading and discussion material. These entries, then, may be used as a springboard for oral class participation. Some professors require oral presentations; however, this would only ensure a lot of participation for

one class session (unless presentations are required more frequently, which could be unwieldy). Moreover, discussions by faculty members during Department meetings and other times about experimenting with other collaborative, active learning strategies and techniques will probably occur as a response to the data presented herein. [From Stage 2 Report: Look for correlations between active, satisfactory class participation and assignment, examination, and overall course grades; to determine current level of participation (establish a baseline for use in additional, future assessment; to determine whether class participation should be increased and by what mechanisms; to determine role of class participation in overall course grade for PHR courses.]

Dean's Comments: [deleted as requested]

VP's Comments:

Evaluation of General Class Participation Performance

NAME: _____

Attendance: ___ excellent (3) ___ satisfactory (2) ___ needs improvement (1)

Punctuality: ___ excellent ___ satisfactory ___ needs improvement

Attentiveness: ___ excellent ___ satisfactory ___ needs improvement

Preparedness: ___ excellent ___ satisfactory ___ needs improvement

Volunteering

answers

or sharing ideas: ___ excellent ___ satisfactory ___ needs improvement

Asking questions: ___ excellent ___ satisfactory ___ needs improvement

Effort in small

group

discussions: ___ excellent ___ satisfactory ___ needs improvement

(if non-existent "0" may be used for average/mean purposes)

Additional Comments:

Current Participation Grade: _____ (average of 7 factors above)

Current Participation Grade (optional): _____ (in other form)