Learning Outcome:
Diligent students will be able to identify and analyze key themes and texts of Christian life and thought.

Means of assessment:

Instructors of T/RS 122 designated questions on an exam, quiz or assignment that asked students to analyze a key text in the Christian tradition in relation to central themes in Christian teaching.

Members of the department who did not teach T/RS 122 read the essays and rated them according to these criteria:

Responses will
- Describe the key points of the text under consideration.
- Show familiarity with the central theme(s)
- Demonstrate how the text expresses and illuminates that theme

Criteria for success: 80% of projects will be have met each criteria.

Questions used for assessment:

A. In “The Orthodox Imperative,” Cardinal Dulles argues that Christianity cannot do without orthodoxy and the church has been given the task of safeguarding it. In a brief essay, describe what Dulles means by “orthodoxy” and why it matters. In your answer include some of the modern objections to orthodoxy and how Dulles responds to them.

B. What is William Loewe’s definition of sin? How is his definition grounded in the Bible? Would Augustine agree or disagree with Loewe’s definition of sin? Use specific examples from the confessions to defend your response.

C. What, according to Loewe/Lonergan, is the Law of the Cross? What are the three steps? Why is it a “law”? Is there evidence in the Confessions that Augustine participated in the three-step Law of the Cross? If so, then explain by drawing on specific episodes/examples from the Confessions.

D. How Does the Book of Ruth contribute to the Christian understanding of the human person?

E. In the briefest terms, how does St. Anselm argue in Cur Deus Homo that Jesus Christ has two natures, one divine, one human?

F. Trace and describe very briefly Augustine’s developing engagement with Scripture over the course of the Confessions, from his earliest encounter with the Bible, through his conversion (Your answer will inevitably make evident the importance and authority of Scripture for Christian life and thought.).
G. Analyze the text of Pope Pius XII’s statement on ordinary and extraordinary means of preserving life. Test paper contains excerpt from the text.

H. Respond to the following question about the excerpt from book II of St. Augustine’s confessions.

**Part I.** Respond to the questions below concerning this passage from Book II of St. Augustine’s *Confessions*. (10 points)

Thus the soul commits fornication when she is turned from You, and seeks apart from You what she cannot find pure and untainted until she returns to You. All things thus imitate You—but pervertedly—when they separate themselves far from You and raise themselves up against You. But, even in this act of perverse imitation, they acknowledge You to be the Creator of all nature, and recognize that there is no place whither they can altogether separate themselves from You. What was it, then, that I loved in that theft? And wherein was I imitating my Lord, even in a corrupted and perverted way? Did I wish, if only by gesture, to rebel against Your law, even though I had no power to do so actually—so that, even as a captive, I might produce a sort of counterfeit liberty, by doing with immunity deeds that were forbidden, in a deluded sense of omnipotence? Behold this servant of Yours, fleeing from his Lord and following a shadow!

a) What is the primary question Augustine is asking in this passage?
b) What action of his made him ask that question?
c) He suggests that the answer to his question is surprising and rather ironic. Express in your own words the answer he discovered.
d) Explain in your own words the meaning of the phrase “the soul... seeks apart from You what she cannot find pure and untainted until she returns to You.”
e) What does this passage suggest about his understanding of the nature of God?

**Part I.** Respond to the questions below concerning this passage from Book II of St. Augustine’s *Confessions*. (10 points)

And I viewed all the other things that are beneath You, and I realized that they are neither wholly real nor wholly unreal. They are real in so far as they come from You; but they are unreal in so far as they are not what You are. For that is truly real which remains unchanging. . . .

And it was made clear to me that all things are good even if they are corrupted. . . . [I]f they are deprived of all good, they will cease to be. For if they are at all and cannot be at all corrupted, they will become better, because they will remain incorruptible. Now what can be more monstrous than to maintain that by losing all good they have become better? If, then, they are deprived of all good, they will cease to exist. So long as they are, therefore, they are good. Therefore, whatsoever is, is good. Evil, then, the origin of which I had been seeking, has no substance at all; for if it were a substance, it would be good. . . . I understood, therefore, and it was made clear to me that You made all things good, nor is there any substance at all not made by You.

a) This passage is the conclusion of a long discussion in Book VII. What is the subject of that discussion? (What question has he been asking?)
b) In your own words (and in one simple sentence) give the answer he comes to.
c) Earlier in Book VII Augustine had considered other possible answers to that question. What was one possible answer he had considered?
d) Augustine insists that “You made all things good.” How could he use the Bible to justify this assertion?
e) What does this passage suggest about his understanding of the nature of God?
Responses from 190 students enrolled in T/RS 122 to exam or quiz questions about central texts and themes showed that 89% of them were able to describe the key points of the text under consideration, 67% of them expressed familiarity with the central themes of Christian teaching contained in that text and 51% of them were able to relate the key points of the text with central themes in Christian teaching.

Conclusions
While the percentage of students who could identify the key points of the text under consideration (89%) satisfied our criteria for success, they were less successful at showing familiarity with the central themes expressed in the texts and at demonstrating how the text expresses those themes.

Recommendations for Improvement:
Members of the department discussed the results of this assessment project at our annual end-of-the-year meeting and made the following recommendations:

- Include more in-class assignments that require students to discuss major theological themes in a text.
- Include reading exercises that help students identify the main points of reading assignments.
- State exam questions more clearly.