

Program: Theology

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Intended Outcome: Use scripture and tradition in moral reflection on issues including sin and evil, virtue, conscience, discipleship, law, contemporary moral debates and moral decisions.

Means of Assessment: Review midterm exams from six majors enrolled in T/RS 335: Virtue Vice and Christian Ethics. Relevant sections of the exam include 1) 6 short answer questions which ask students to demonstrate their understanding of the concept of virtue as it is developed in Christian tradition, and 2) an essay question asking students to demonstrate their ability use scripture and tradition to discuss the role of virtue in the Christian moral life.

Type of Assessment: Course-embedded measure

Criteria for Success: 85% of answers will be show an understanding of the concept of virtue that is informed by tradition.

Results or Progress: All students were able to distinguish between two different modes of moral reasoning (morality of happiness vs. the morality of obligation. All students scored 75% or above on the questions regarding the concept of virtue. Four out of the six scored 85% or above. In all cases, the average on each criteria was above 85%.

Use of Results for Improvement: Make exam more conceptual rather than focusing on simple descriptive answers. After discussing the results, the members of the department agreed that there is a need to “raise the bar” in terms of our expectations for majors.

Program: Theology/R.S.

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Intended Outcome: Demonstrate knowledge of the content, historical background and literary characteristics of the Bible.

Means of Assessment: Review of short essays from six Theology Religious Studies majors enrolled in T/RS 318: The Apocalypse of St. John. Essays required students to describe elements of the literary and historical background of the Book of Revelation. Description of the assignment: Assignment goal: To acquaint ourselves with the “literary” background of the Book of Revelation—that is, ancient books of the same genre as Revelation (more or less). Assignment details: Your research must include the following: 1. Provenance of the text, which will include: a. How was the text found (if it was recently found)? Or was it simply preserved? b. Date of authorship c. Author (if not person, type of person [e.g., Greek, Jewish, poor, wealthy, etc.]; often this is unknown) d. Social/historical situation (e.g., what was happening when/where it was written) e. What led to its authorship? 2. Literary overview of the work—i.e., how does the work progress (e.g., is there a plot line, etc.) 3. Thematic overview of the work (with specific examples/citations)—i.e., what’s the work about and what makes it “apocalyptic”. Students' essays were evaluated on the following criteria: 1) Describes provenance of text; 2) Describes literary characteristics of text; and 3) Identifies key elements of apocalyptic writing. They were scored on a 3 point scale: 3 points for an excellent response; 2 for good and 1 for adequate.

Type of Assessment: Rubric

Criteria for Success: The average of score will be 2.5 or above on a 3 point scale.

Results or Progress: On the first two criteria, all students were ranked excellent or good in terms of their ability to describe the provenance of the text (average score 2.5 out of 3) and its literary characteristics (average 2.8 out of 3). On the 3rd criteria, ability to identify the key elements of apocalyptic writing, two were adequate, one good and three excellent (average 2.17).

Use of Results for Improvement: We recommended that students spend more time in class discussing the literary characteristics of the apocalyptic genre and developing a template for recognizing these traits before the essays are completed.