

Annual Assessment Report Template

This form is intended to facilitate reporting program outcomes assessment to accrediting agencies, Board of Trustees, Strategic Planning Committee, and other internal or external audiences.

The department mission statement, PLO's, curricular map and multi-year assessment plan should be posted on the departmental website.

Department: Religious Studies

Date: September 20, 2015

Department Chair: Charles Farhadian

I. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment

Program Learning Outcome	Ecclesial Engagement
Who is in Charge	Charles Farhadian
<u>Direct Assessment Methods</u>	Analysis of final written assignments and in-class participation in RS-180 (Senior Seminar) according to the assessment rubric for the Ecclesial Engagement PLO. The theme of RS-180 was Theology of Leadership.
<u>Indirect Assessment Methods</u>	Students were not asked to self-evaluate specifically in the area of Ecclesial Engagement, but were asked more general questions – “What suggestions do you have for making the Religious Studies major more effective with respect to hermeneutical competence, theological judgment, and ecclesial engagement – at the end of the semester.
Major Findings	Evaluations of student work – specifically in the area of Ecclesial Engagement – ranged from 3 (Good) to 4 (Excellent). The average over 13 students was 3.3. Two answers, accompanied by general agreement, were given to the end-of-the-semester evaluation question: (1) “We should give more guidance, early in the major and indeed for all students at Westmont, on choosing, being involved with, and making connections to churches”; and (2) “We should have more interdisciplinary teaching and activities.” The following question was asked by a student in the course of the discussion: “How many of us would say they feel moderately secure in each of these areas [i.e., Hermeneutical Competence, Theological Judgment, Ecclesial Engagement]? All 13 students reported that they felt moderately-to well-equipped in all areas. Also, a final discussion at the end of the semester helped generate insight (data) on our students’ Ecclesial Engagement.
Closing the	We will take a two-prong approach to strengthening our Program Learning Outcome of Ecclesial Engagement. First, we

Loop Activities	will include more discussion and reflection on the connection between the life of the mind and our Christian commitment and engagement with the church. Second, we will continue to encourage our majors to enroll in the RS-190 internships and practicum course, with a view of strengthening the connection between learning, service, and the church. RS-190 is the lab for putting feet to what students have learned in the classroom. Through the creation of a portfolio, which includes learning plans, RS-190 will translate what is learned in class into the application of engagement with the church and its ministry. These strategies will be measurable.
Discussion The final assignment, which provided data for our reflection on our Program Learning Outcome, Ecclesial Engagement, illustrates that our students are moderately to well-engaged with the church, its life, and ministry. Several students displayed surprising sophistication when reflecting on the nature of the church, leadership, and their own engagement with the church, with some for instance clearly articulating differences between secular and Christian leadership.	

II. Follow-ups

Program Learning Outcome	Quality of measuring instruments: for the 2015 report we use “moderate” to “well-engaged” to denote the level of achievement in meeting the department’s program learning outcomes. Written assignments and oral discussion were employed to assess students’ understanding.
Who is in Charge	Charles Farhadian, Maurice Lee, Kelly Soifer
Major Findings	Our 2014 assessment of seniors focused on Hermeneutical Competence. Students needed to strengthen their Hermeneutical Competence (that is, interpreting, articulating, and communicating Christian doctrine).
Closing the Loop Activities	In 2014 students preached on biblical texts and engaged theologically with the biblical material in RS-126 and RS-180 in order to enhance their Hermeneutical Competence.
Discussion All members of the Religious Studies department value Hermeneutical Competence and seek to advance our students’ ability to understand and clearly articulate Christian doctrine. The course assignments of preaching on biblical texts in both RS-126 and RS-180 encourage theological reflection. In addition, the new offering of two semester-long historical theology courses provides students with more opportunities to learn theology in historical contexts. It is too early to tell how well those courses are meeting our department’s intended outcomes, since we are only three weeks into the first semester of implementation. In addition, these are specific assignments that were added in order to close the loop:	

RS/HIS 119 Early and Medieval Christianity (Fall, 2014 & 2015)

1. Experiential Research Project (15%): Students will conduct an experiential research on the churches of the tradition prior to the Protestant Reformation, namely, the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church (including its ethnic branches—Coptic, Syrian, Greek, or Russian). Students are to visit the worship services of both Catholic and Orthodox Churches for three weeks each (total 6 weeks), interview priests/clergy and lay members of the churches, and write one report of seven to eight pages (2000 – 2200 words), comparing the Catholic and Orthodox churches on liturgy, church, their continuity with the past and contextualization for the present, in consultation with the course material (readings, discussion, and lectures). Grading is based on: command of and engagement with the subject; quality and depth of the interviews (questions and answers); creative organization; drawing insightful implications and/or parallels for contemporary Christianity.

RS 120 Reformation and Modern Christianity (Spring, 2015)

2. Experiential Research Project (15%): Students will conduct an experiential research on the churches of the Protestant Reformation, along with the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church: namely, churches of different Protestant denominations (Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, etc.). Students are to visit the worship services of the two churches of the different traditions (e.g., Catholic and Presbyterian, Episcopalian and Pentecostal, or Baptist and Orthodox) for three weeks each (total 6 weeks), interview priests/clergy and lay members of the churches, and write one report of seven to eight pages (2000 – 2200 words), comparing the two churches and traditions on liturgy (worship), church structure (including women's leadership), theologies, ethnic diversity, their continuity with the past and contextualization for the present, in consultation with the course material (readings, discussion, and lectures). Grading is based on: command of and engagement with the subject; quality and depth of the interviews (questions and answers); creative organization; drawing insightful implications and/or parallels for contemporary Christianity.

RS 134 Gender in Theological Perspective (Spring 2014; Fall 2015)

3. Interview Project on Gender, Sexuality, and Theology (15%): Students will conduct interviews on an assigned topic and present a short report of those interviews on the topic's corresponding date throughout the semester (see the course schedule below). A student is to conduct interviews with three groups on a given topic in light of the assigned readings: Westmont peers, faculty/staff, and church members (at least three peoples from each group). When interviewing church members, students must visit a local church of choice (worship services) across denominations and traditions (Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Churches) at least for two weeks, interview both male and female priests/clergy and one or two lay members of the churches. Each student is to construct one's own interview questions; and the report (2-3 pages in single space, to be submitted to the professor) should contain a summary of broad themes emerged in the interviews, any comparison among each interviewed group (if appropriate), their respective rationale for their theological positions and practices, and the consistency between beliefs and practices in consultation with the course material (reading,

discussion, and lectures). Each pair will be given 15-20 minutes in class for presentation of their report (including Q&A). More specific guidelines, if necessary, are to be announced.

RS/HIS 151 History of World Christianity (every semester)

Extra Credit: Students will have two opportunities for earning extra credits for the class (4 points each). Extra credits will be added to the Discussion Assignment (see above).

- a) Attend a worship service of either the Eastern Orthodox church or the Roman Catholic church at least two consecutive weeks and write a brief two-page report (single-spaced) on its liturgy (including the communion) and your account on worship experience.

III. Other assessment or Key Questions-related projects

Project	
Who is in Charge	
Major Findings	
Action	
Discussion	

IV. Adjustments to the Multi-year Assessment Plan (optional)

Proposed adjustment	Rationale	Timing

V. Appendices

A. Prompts or instruments used to collect the data

Questions for student final paper included: a) Why leadership? Define leadership. Explain similarities and differences between Christian and other forms of leadership; b) What are the core competencies of leadership?; and c) What makes Christian leadership particularly unique? Students in this Senior Seminar course, Theology of Leadership, were invited to incorporate insights from research, readings, discussion, and personal experience into their final essays. The final essays were the basis for a large part of our department's assessment of Ecclesial Engagement.

B. Rubrics used to evaluate the data is online at

http://www.westmont.edu/_academics/departments/religious_studies/RSMajorAssessmentRubric.html

and is unchanged from prior year.

A. Relevant assessment-related documents/samples (optional)

Below please find selections of reflections provided by the instructors of Theology of Leadership on students' final paper. The reflections reveal moderately to well-equipped students in terms of Ecclesial Engagement.

On student A:

Big questions first: Why leadership? The need for leadership tells us about humanity itself: limitedness. We are not autonomous, and need the other. But there is the admission of power and submission.

Why is this the case? From Christian perspective, it can be the result of sin or as an intent of creation. Playing God - Power is a gift. Power is a catalyzing creativity.

Leadership involves maintenance and repair.

Where is leadership? What is the telos?

This is "advancement of my team," need for survival. Comes out of a scarcity mentality. This is discussed in business and political circles (though she gave no citations).

How are leaders chosen? Core competencies:

Kingdom-oriented. Doctrinally aware, historically rooted, teleological. Understanding the goal. Philippians 2.

Incarnational. Quick anecdote, quotes by Gregory, Pope Francis. We need to be well-acquainted with those we minister with. Independent study on gender and disability

Discernment. Benedict, Gregory the Great. Be contextually aware, behaviorally wise. Combo of active and passive. Knowing one's role. Knowing one's flock. **Multiple refs to her other classes at Westmont. More summative than any other student so far.**

Ethically Consistent. Tried for a catchy term. Embody the traits that you want in others. DCC, David Brooks (Goodness and Power).

Being a Catalyst. Good power is catalyzing and creating. (Andy Crouch). Universal advocate for everyone in the flock. Eventually, she does demonstrate reliance on Philippians and some other scriptures. She drew well from Gregory, Benedict, Black/Willard. No references to Nehemiah until very end, or any reference to the Pastorals that I recall. No refs to Bonhoeffer and King either.

I really appreciated how remarkably articulate she is and how she can sustain her thoughts for several minutes without being boring! She also drew heavily on past classes, which made her presentation truly summative.

On student B:

p. 1. **Strong opening statement:** "Leadership is not generally an aspect of life for which many people feel the need for a theology. In my upbringing, I thought of leadership as a personality trait that some people possessed and others did not, but it was apparent to me that those who possessed it were more highly prized than those who did not. There were structures in place, by which the superior people who possessed this trait would be in control."

"Ralf Nader says, "The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers." **Not sure where she learned that Mr. Nader spells his first name that way!**

p. 2 "Through a number of different avenues in this paper, I will argue that leadership is about the combination of service and empowerment." GREAT.

p. 3 "This is different from pulling someone up from above but instead, just as Jesus entered into the reality we know by becoming

human, we must also enter into the reality of the people who we are leading." Powerful statement, and intriguing.

"On a very basic level, the Christian life must be lived in community. We are not isolated believers because this faith is not merely a mental understanding, but something that constantly affects the way we interact with one another and affects the outcome of the entire world." **I like it. But no citations of outside references.**

"The relationship of the Trinity in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is often characterized by love, but here I would like to suggest that there is also a relationship of leadership, in the form of service and empowerment, present." Very good.

p. 4 "The Trinity is the ultimate leader of all of creation. In God being the omnipotent, omniscient creator, it only makes sense that He would hold an authoritative position of leadership over His own creation. This also means that the overarching purpose of leadership falls under God's redemptive purpose for the world." **XXXX is drawing profound, theological conclusions. Very insightful.**

p. 5 "Conversely, the leadership of God is for the sake of the mission of God, which is not linearly directional but rather holistically restorative." Really fascinating. **I continue to be intrigued that she is using almost no references from class texts up to this point, but we'll see where the paper ends up!**

p. 6 "Because we are ultimately all followers of Jesus, examining the structure of Jesus' relationship with his disciples is a good place to start when understanding what leadership is and looks like."

p. 7 "So leadership as I have described it in this sense is a call for all of the humans on Earth." **Compelling argument!**

pp 10-11 Her exploration of humility is very strong. Good sources, and conclusions.

p. 14 I like her use of Wright

pp 15-16 Conclusion very strong

Bibliography

XXXX paper is intriguing to me -- I would say she took to heart the idea of defining her own philosophy of leadership as much or more than a list of competencies. Given that approach, which is different from the 3 others I've read so far, I think she was successful. Her reflections are theologically grounded, creative and frankly, somewhat wise beyond her years!

On student C:

p. 1 **Strong intro sentence:** "What makes a "Christian" leader different from a secular leader? What separates a "good" Christian leader from a "bad" Christian leader? Why do we need leaders at all? Who has the authority to elect a leader? These questions, amongst others, call us to consider a theology of leadership." **Followed by very strong thesis paragraph.**

p. 1 "In answering this question, we must first address the "why" of leadership at all." **Great declarative statements about leadership, though as with XXXX, little support from sources until end of page 2.**

p. 3 "Clearly leadership was part of God's intended plan, not a result of the fall." Stated after giving scriptural support. **Would have preferred at least one outside source to back up her claim, but her scriptures are strong.**

p. 3 "Core Competency 1: Personal devotion to God

The distinguishing factor between the Christian leader and the secular leader is the Christian leader's personal devotion to God." I like the contrast between secular and sacred.

p. 5 Strong personal illustration undergirding her point.

p. 5 "Core Competency 2: Morality

In class we debated whether or not you needed to have "good character" in order to be an effective leader (April 13, 2015)."

p. 6 "Christian leadership, furthermore, relies theologically on a transformed character." **I appreciate that XXXX makes definitive statements about leadership, and backs them up with examples.**

p. 7 "Core Competency 3: Modeling

Ultimately, both Paul and the history of church leaders call for morality because they believe in the upmost importance of the pastor or Christian leader serving as a model for his or her flock." **I appreciate her reliance on class texts AND outside sources.**

p. 8 "Core Competency 4: Primacy of Biblical Instruction

Christian leaders must place every action within the framework of encouraging the spread of the gospel message."

p. 10 I'm unable to be objective about this, but oh how I enjoy it! I yearned and hoped for this for years, and it is gratifying to hear about it now. "Reflecting back on my own high school experience when XXXX was leading a small group for two friends, and myself I never liked it when she would ask me about my relationship with God. I thought that was something I should freely share if I so desired, but not feel any pressure about. Looking back, I was so wrong. I did not like to talk about my relationship with God because it was not at a good place, and I needed that challenge to be forced to think about my faith."

p. 10 "Core Competency 5: Discernment

Christian leaders must be discerning. They cannot ascribe to one model for every situation."

p. 13 "Core Competency 6: Knowledge, Education and Training

Considering the wide array of denominations within Christianity today, and even within protestant Christianity, we see quite an array of different perspectives on the issue of pastoral education and training." **GREAT to see this competency, which hasn't been listed by two others I've read.**

p. 14 "Core Competency 7: Holistic Care for the individual

Christian shepherds must pursue holistic care for their flocks—including physical, emotional, and relational—rather than simply relegating their care to the spiritual realm." **I appreciate her reference to Nehemiah. I also like her personal illustration of her struggle between studies in psychology and theology.**

p. 15 "Core Competency 8: Communal Ministry

Not notwithstanding the importance of the holistic care for the individual, and discernment in how we minister differently to different people, Christian leaders must ultimately strive for communal ministry."

On student D:

p. 1 clear and concise opening thesis paragraph. I also appreciate his footnoting.

p. 2 creative way to introduce his competencies by laying out a historic (though brief) description of leadership from Gregory and the pastorals.

p. 5 I appreciate his reference to Herbert poetry, since no others have referenced the poetry so far.

p. 6 The same with Wesley's "Catholic Spirit" sermon. I also appreciate the way he connects catholicity with humility.

pp 8-9 His thoughts on the role of suffering in leadership are sensitive and good.

pp 10-11 Creative and deeper examination of Nehemiah, again unlike his peers that I've read so far.

p 12 Similarly good insights from Herbert on how his focus on congregational life leads to unity

pp 13-16 Good concluding paragraphs. Summative in regard to his points and the paper as a whole.

On student E:

p. 1 Lovely opening paragraph

p. 4 "true missio dei" is knowing Christ? **Not sure about that.**

"Thus, Christian leadership begins with the knowledge of who God is. However, knowledge does not necessarily mean head knowledge, facts and information, or rational reasoning. In Desiring the Kingdom, James Smith argues that humans are not fundamentally thinkers—we do not know things through our minds. Instead, we are fundamentally lovers, formed by ritual actions performed based on what we love and shaping our imaginary vision of the good life." **great quote from Jamie Smith on knowing God**

pp7-8 Great use of **Letter from B'ham Jail, Brenda Salter-McNeil**

p. 10 I appreciate her reference to **Fee's Philippians' commentary**

p 10-11 Intriguing ideas about how Gregory and Benedict were unfamiliar with following others due to their context. **Not sure I agree with her, and am looking for sources that drew her to these conclusions.** But it's creative and original.

p. 12 More of the same -- she claims we need to listen to the poor and thus resist ethnocentrism. Again, no outside sources.

Accountability as a competency. **I agree, and it's original.** I don't recall other students mentioning this one.

p. 13 Moral integrity: strong and multiple references

p. 16 Good words on discernment, rooting it in hearing the will of God.

On student F:

p. 1 "While worldly leadership offers other motives, it is the Christian leaders counter-cultural responsibility to recast the vision of God's Kingdom for the lives and societies of today." **Good**

"Effective leadership in the Christian church is accomplished with the recognition of it being given, not owned, and through specific core competencies that must be applied well." **good distinction**

p. 2 "Embracing purity is not an effort toward perfection, but an acknowledgment of the sin and dirt that marks the lives of all." **Wise insight.**

p. 2 "Formation is inevitable, but the answer to "by what?" and "to what?" is largely an active choice." **Another good insight.**

p. 3 Good references from Foster on spiritual disciplines, and Crouch on work. Pascal too! "All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone."

p. 4 Good quote from Lewis, but no citation: "The whole purpose for which we exist is to be thus taken into the life of God. Wrong ideas about what that life is will make it harder."

p. 5 Strong outside references (Wright, Adeney)

p. 6 Great insight! "Humility begins with obedience." **Followed by feast of references:** Newbigin, Farhadian, Book of Common Prayer, Herbert

p. 7 Excellent personal example from her time in Barstow.

p. 11 same with her experiences on Istanbul semester

p. 12 **Yet another mature insight:** "If the Church has nothing to say about peace, justice, and reconciliation, then the Church has nothing to say."

pp 12-13 Good work contrasting MLK and Augustine

On student G:

p. 1 His definition of leadership: "to lead is to assume responsibility for other people, to cultivate trust with others, and to act out of that responsibility and trust." **A good start, but it's entirely relational.** There is no mention of authority or leading objectively out of values/convictions/faith. Ironically, his explanation of the core competencies are entirely reliant those things.

First core competency: "*I suggest that the single, most fundamental competency of a Christian leader in a Christian context is being a disciple of Jesus Christ:* that is, spending time with, learning from, and striving to be like Jesus." **Ironically, I don't think anyone has mentioned this yet!**

p. 3 Good reliance on Gregory and especially Benedict, noting: "it is notable that he dedicates the entirety of his longest chapter to humility." I don't think I knew that!

p 4. General references to modern-day applications of humility, but nothing specific.

p. 6 Interesting that half the roles in the monastery are not necessary to the monastery. Like mentioning the length of the chapter on humility, **he has clearly done some research on the Benedictine Rule.**

p. 9 Excellent work culling unique need for discernment and wisdom in 1 Timothy 3.

p. 11 I appreciate how he links wisdom and discernment. He also includes good examples from his life here, along with reference to Herbert.

p. 13 Good sweep of various calls to moral purity from scriptures and writings from class.

On student H:

p. 1 " This paper will address those questions from a Christian perspective insofar as they pertain to leaders both inside and outside of the church." **I like her acknowledgement of leadership outside the church.**

Good intro: "let us consider the goal of leadership, or why leaders are needed, framed in theological terms."

p. 2 Beeley: "As Christopher Beeley explains, since the early church “the central purpose of pastoral ministry was to shepherd God's people toward their heavenly life with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, both now and in the age to come” (17)."

p. 3 Beeley again. **I like the way she anchors the paper in core concepts on church and theology of leadership taken from Beeley and Britton.**

p. 4 Good work drawing on Fee's commentary on Philippians.

p. 5 Beeley and Britton again.

p. 6 "It is worth mentioning that at this time I do not plan to seek ordination. As such the core competencies discussed below will be framed not exclusively for role of the pastorate, but in a manner that has relevance for all kinds of Christian leaders. Certain authors wrote with the pastorate specifically in mind, and while this will be acknowledged along the way many of the leadership traits set forth for pastors are applicable to lay people as well, as articulated by Beeley above." **I like this caveat. It shows she's thinking of her own leadership path for the future, and the broader body of the church.**

p. 7 "A key component of discernment is wisdom, the value of which scripture highlights repeatedly."

p. 7-8 **Outstanding example from personal experience** (camp counselor)

p. 8 Glad that included this: "But how is discernment cultivated? The sort of thoughtful, contemplative discernment Christian leaders need comes from an “interior life of prayer and study” **Very thoughtful and discerning!** Multitude of refs too, and further

examination on pp 10-11

p. 10 Good job expanding the understanding of discernment: "Even here, in balancing that which equips leaders to do their work well with their work itself, discernment is crucial."

p 11 Great job referencing **Conciliarism!** "Just as the church relied on the direction of the Holy Spirit then so too Christian leaders must look to the guidance of the Holy Spirit today to inform and guide the church."

p 13 Outstanding personal example again - Cello mentor

p 14 "The third core competency for leaders is a commitment to being of upright character in every area of life." **Great examination of various sources from class (though none from scripture)** and strong personal experience from her trip to Spain.

p. 16 "The fourth core competency I find worth discussing is the ability of leaders to be organized and have a plan." **This one stands out to me because no others have so far mentioned it.**

On student I:

p. 2: Interesting opening paragraphs, presenting unique insights: "Does leadership innately entail authority, or does it entail influence, or both? What is the biblical model for leadership? Is every Christian a leader, or is leadership a gift from God given to a precious few?" **Great questions that no one else asked (at least so far).**

p. 4 I like that he included some Greek work in the paper.

p. 5 **Fascinating examination of leadership, authority and hierarchy!** Interpreting the latter part of this chapter is important in order to determine the role of leadership within the church."

p. 6 "The beauty of Willard and Black's argument is that it is completely consistent with Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 12." **I like what a different direction XXXX takes in this paper.**

"Thus, the hierarchical relationship is one with Christ, not with one another. Jesus is the true leader of the church, and He is the one

who grants His church the authority to be men and women of δικαιοσύνη."

p. 10 "It has already been mentioned that authority plays a part in leadership. However, there is a difference between how the world and church considers the relationship between authority and leadership."

p. 12 Great contrast: "These examples brilliantly illustrate the difference between influence and authority. A worldly leader will take and command authority over his or her followers to do what he or she wants them to do. A Godly leader will compel his or her followers to do the right thing."