Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program: PhD program	Department: Theological Studies
Degree or Certificate Level: PhD/Graduate	College/School: College of Arts & Sciences
Date (Month/Year): Dec 2020	Primary Assessment Contact: Daniel L. Smith
In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2019-2020	
In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2018	

1. **Student Learning Outcomes**
   Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle?

   Program Learning Outcome #3 ("Graduate students will be able to design and teach undergraduate courses within the major undergraduate courses in the department and develop into competent teachers.")

2. **Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning**
   Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please identify the course(s) in which these artifacts were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

   This outcome was assessed through a review of course evaluations from courses taught by our PhD students in the 2019-2020 academic year, as well as written reports from the one doctoral student who worked as a Teaching Assistant and the professors that he assisted. A full list of the courses is available in Appendix A. All of the courses were offered as in-person classes on our St. Louis campus, though all Spring 2020 courses switched to online in March, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. **Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process**
   What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and include them in/with this report.

   Daniel Smith (Dept Chair) reviewed the course evaluations, compiled the data, and requested the reports. Course evaluations were examined from three angles: (1) evidence relating to course design from the student comments; (2) evidence relating to effective pedagogy from the student comments; and (3) summaries of numerical scores. The aggregated data, including a detailed chart, are included with this report (see Appendix A).

4. **Data/Results**
   What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

   Our Learning Outcome #3 stipulates that students will, on one hand, "design and teach undergraduate courses," a goal that all of the students evaluated have clearly achieved. On the other hand, we also speak of the need to "develop into competent teachers," a more subjective measure. The meta-evaluation of doctoral student instructors' course evaluations revealed that their scores (both those related to the "course" and to the "instructor") were

roughly equivalent to (and often higher than) the Department and College mean scores. Due to completion rates, these scores cannot be over-emphasized, but there were not signals that our graduate student instructors are delivering an inferior educational experience. In-depth review of student comments related to course design and effective pedagogy yielded more positive results. Numerous student comments specifically highlighted instructors' innovative course design, thoughtful selection of course readings, and clear course structure. Other comments spoke to the pedagogical prowess of instructors who facilitated engaging class discussions, demonstrated *cura personalis*, and made helpful course adjustments in the March 2020 pivot to remote learning.

Again, all of the courses studied for this assessment report were in-person courses on the STL campus, and Spring 2020 courses did all pivot to remote learning in March.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions
What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

The data suggest that we are forming competent teachers fully capable of designing introductory courses, delivering university-level instruction, and adapting to challenging pedagogical circumstances (e.g., the pivot to remote learning in March 2020).

Still, the fact that there are a few courses that seemed to be under-performing—according to the numerical scores on the course evaluations—coupled with the extremely positive experience of our student who served as a TA with two active faculty mentors may suggest that there is still room for improvement.

6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings
A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

The PhD assessment report was distributed in draft form to the current/outgoing Coordinator for Graduate Studies, the soon-to-be interim Coordinator for Graduate Studies, and the members of the Graduate Studies Committee.

B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies
- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites

- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan
- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process

- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

These findings advocate for three changes: (1) availability of mentored teaching opportunities for all PhD students [to be implemented in the 2020-2021 academic year], (2) revised wording of Learning Outcome #3, both for clarity of meaning and for further elucidation of what "competent" teaching looks like, and (3) addition of student-created syllabi as artifacts to be examined as part of the assessment process.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

n/a

7. Closing the Loop: Review of <u>Previous</u> Assessment Findings and Changes

    A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?

In our review of Learning Outcome #5 (see 2018 report), the data indicated that we needed to make it clearer to our PhD students that attendance in and participation in our professionalization brown bag series was required.

    B. How has this change/have these changes been assessed?

We have not yet made a formal assessment of this change, although I believe that we still struggle to ensure that all students attend the professionalization workshops.

    C. What were the findings of the assessment?

n/a

    D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

As Department Chair, I will work with the incoming Coordinator of Graduate Studies to publicize our brown bag events more pro-actively, and to follow up with absentee students to explore ways to improve their attendance.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools and/or revised/updated assessment plans along with this report.

Appendix A: Course Evaluation Review for Fall 2019 – Spring 2020

Courses Reviewed:

Fall 2019	Spring 2020
THEO 1000 35 THEO 1000 39 THEO 1000 40 THEO 1000 43L THEO 1000 50L THEO 1000 52 THEO 1000 53L THEO 1000 63 THEO 1000 64 THEO 1000 66 THEO 1000 67 THEO 1000 69 THEO 2210 01 THEO 2210 03 THEO 2710 06	THEO 1000 40 THEO 1000 41 THEO 1000 43 THEO 1000 48 THEO 1000 52 THEO 1000 55L THEO 1000 56 THEO 1000 59 THEO 1000 67 THEO 2710 02 THEO 3560 01 (TA)

Note:
Due to the pandemic, no numerical scores are available for Spring 2020 courses. The same analysis of written comments (for evidence relating to course design and effective pedagogy) was used for both semesters. While numerical scores were reviewed, the low response rate in many sections reduces the value of basing assessment on the numerical averages.

FA19	Course Design	Effective Pedagogy	Numerical Scores in comparison to Benchmarks
1000 35	Students noted his use of discussion in place of straight lecture	Students noted his enthusiasm and high engagement with material and students, with multiple students noting a new desire to minor in THEO.	Roughly equivalent to or higher than Dept/CAS avg
1000 39	Students noted the good structure/coherence of the course	Multiple positive comments on the good quality of teaching	Generally higher than Dept/CAS avg
1000 40	Some concerns about quantity /quality of readings; lack of feedback also noted	Students noted enthusiasm for course matter and openness to dialogue	Roughly equivalent to Dept/CAS avg
1000 43L	Good mixture of lecture, small group discussion, and low-stakes assignments	Students noted that students were on phones in class, generally unengaged	Significantly lower than Dept/CAS avg
1000 50L	High quality of syllabus noted	Good *cura personalis*, but some student engagement issues	Significantly lower than Dept/CAS avg
1000 52	Good use of low-stakes assessments; diverse range of readings appreciated	Passionate about material and good availability to students	Generally equal to or higher than Dept /CAS avg

FA19	Course Design	Effective Pedagogy	Numerical Scores in comparison to Benchmarks
1000 53L	Course was rigorous and challenging, well structured	Complaints about rigor and slow grading turnaround; high-quality teaching/in-person engagement	Roughly equivalent to Dept/CAS avg
1000 63	[no relevant feedback given]	Passionate about material and good *cura personalis*	Significantly higher than Dept/CAS avg
1000 64	[no relevant feedback given]	[no relevant feedback given]	Generally equal to or higher than Dept /CAS avg
1000 66	Good selection of readings; concerns about quizzes	Complaints about reliance solely on lectures to convey material; good *cura personalis*	Generally equal to or lower than Dept /CAS avg
1000 67	Well-paced syllabus	Over-reliance on lectures, without other learning aids/technology	Generally lower than Dept/CAS avg
1000 69	Good course design noticed and appreciated by students	Enthusiasm for material and good *cura personalis*	Generally higher than Dept/CAS avg
2210 01	Good course design/pacing, and adjustments made during the semester	Enthusiasm for material and good *cura personalis*	Generally equal to or higher than Dept /CAS avg
2210 03	Some concerns about pacing, and design of how student learning was assessed	Enthusiasm for material	Generally lower than Dept/CAS avg
2710 06	One student mentioned a concern about the course organization	Enthusiasm for material and good *cura personalis*	Generally equal to or higher than Dept /CAS avg
SP20	**Course Design**	**Effective Pedagogy**	~~**Numerical Scores in comparison to Benchmarks**~~
1000 40	Multiple students noted the good selection of readings	F2F had some concerns around lectures, but appreciated class discussions; switch to remote appears to have gone well	-
1000 41	Good organization of class, with helpful study guides	F2F enthusiasm and engagement noted as positives; added videos for remote learning	-
1000 43	Good class design/structure noted by students	F2F: passion for material, engaging class discussions; switch to Zoom went well	-
1000 48	Good selection of readings	F2F: reliance on lectures; loss of synchronous meetings was noted as a negative	-
1000 52	Creative course design, integrating MOCRA, Rare Books Room, etc.	F2F discussions appreciated; switch to discussion boards was seen as a helpful substitute; weekly update emails also helped	-

SP20	Course Design	Effective Pedagogy	~~Numerical Scores in comparison to Benchmarks~~
1000 55L	Good range of materials, including and in addition to the readings	F2F discussions appreciated; recorded lectures and discussion boards seen as helpful substitutes	-
1000 56	Value of diagnostic quiz noted	F2F: Good mix of lecture & class discussion; video lectures & final study guide were appreciated	-
1000 59	Clear organization of course	F2F class discussions went very well; discussion boards and weekly update emails were very much appreciated	-
1000 67	Good clarity about assignments/due dates	F2F discussions appreciated; good use of Blackboard in switch to remote learning	-
2710 02	Innovative course design centered on student expert presentations (which had mixed reviews)	Range of F2F class activities was appreciated; recorded lectures were appreciated	-
3560 01 (TA)	[Course evals only addressed primary instructor, Dr. Block]	[Course evals only addressed primary instructor, Dr. Block]	-

PhD Students as TAs
Craig Sanders served as a TA in 2019-20 for Dr. Block and Dr. Rosenberg.

Report from Craig Sanders:

In Fall 2019, I was TA for Randy in Theological Foundations, and in Spring 2020, I was TA for Elizabeth in Ethics of Technology. Randy is my teaching mentor for 2020-21.

I would credit the Reinert Center's Core, which I took in Summer 2019, and the Online Teaching course I took this summer as instrumental in helping me design the course. But Randy and Elizabeth both shaped how I approached my course, and here's a quick outline chronologically:

Fall 2019
- Randy and I met prior to the semester to talk about course texts and learning outcomes, and his process for developing a syllabus.
- I sat in on most classes and participated in facilitating discussion. Randy and I would often talk after the class about managing classroom discussion or upcoming topics.
- I lectured twice during the semester. Randy observed and offered feedback.

Spring 2020
- Elizabeth and I met prior to the semester to talk about the course and how I might contribute and I suggested a course text.
- Elizabeth had me review a first-day survey, compiling feedback, which helped her finalize the syllabus.
- I helped facilitate class discussion.

- I graded low-stakes assignments which helped prepare me for the type of assessments and feedback I would offer in my own course.

Report from Dr. Elizabeth Block:

Craig attended every class meeting of Ethics of Technology, actively participated in group discussions, and was responsible for teaching two of the class sessions over the course of the semester. In addition, he graded the reading journal assignments throughout the semester. We regularly talked about how class was going and conversations he had with students. He was available to students for office hours, although I don't know how frequently they took him up on it. At times, it felt as though we were co-teaching because Craig was such a helpful participant in conversations. We ran the class seminar style, so we mainly sat in a circle having great discussions. We talked together about teaching strategies and have continued to have those conversations since his time as my TA. He reached out to me to talk about assignments for this semester, teaching during COVID, how to ask students for mid-semester evaluations, etc.