

Department/Program: History, Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies	Chair/Director: Gianluca Di Muzio	Assessment cycle/year: 2011-12
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Mission/Purpose

To help our students develop the intellectual tools to understand history, philosophy, politics, and religion, so that they become better-informed citizens and decision makers.

Student learning outcomes (Goals):

- Goal 1. Form students who can effectively evaluate historical evidence
- Goal 2. Form students who read primary and secondary sources critically
- Goal 3. Form students who are able to conduct independent research
- Goal 4. Acquaint students with philosophical ideas from a wide range of historical eras
- Goal 5. Develop each student's critical reasoning and writing skills
- Goal 6. Form students who understand the importance of ethical reasoning and ethical practices
- Goal 7. Help students understand structures and processes of American government commensurate with citizenship duties and an effective civil society
- Goal 8. Help students acquire a high degree of familiarity with a broad range of political systems
- Goal 9. Enhance the ability of students to conceptualize problems and apply analytical tools to solve them
- Goal 10. Expose political science majors to at least three of the subfields of political science

Which Student learning outcomes (Goals) did you assess this year?

We assessed the degree to which our students meet the Breadth of Learning General Education objectives in two classes (HIST-H 105 and PHIL-P 100). This provided information on how well our students meet Goals 1, 2, 4, and 8 in the above list.

Assessment Summary

Outcomes/Objectives	Measure(s)	Findings	Action Plans
<i>Ex. Students will demonstrate proficiency in oral communication.</i>	<i>Rubric applied to capstone project presentations.</i>	<i>60% of students scored a 3 or higher.</i>	<i>Provide tutorials and practice sessions for oral presentations once a month through the tutoring center.</i>
1. Students will articulate how intellectual traditions from diverse parts of the world shape present cultures 2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of a broad range of significant literary, philosophical, historical, linguistic, or religious works	Set of four targeted questions administered to all HIST-H 105 and PHIL-P 100 students at the end of the course	Results for PHIL-P 100 were encouraging. The overall average was extremely close to 2, which was equivalent to "good knowledge" in the 0-1-2-3 scale used. One of the questions ("In your journey through philosophy so far, what different people, places and times have you become familiar with?") had a significantly lower average than the	Our plan for the future is to ask all PHIL-P 100 instructors to incorporate a timeline assignment in all sections of the course. By assigning each philosopher to his or her proper time and place, students will become better able to relate philosophical ideas to historical events. They will also form a better understanding of the role of culture in the formulation of philosophical theories.

<p>and approaches</p>		<p>other three. This indicates that our students have some difficulty arranging philosophers in a timeline and placing them in their respective geographic areas.</p> <p>In HIST-H 105, answers to questions 2, 3, and 4 displayed mildly disappointing averages. Many student answers suffered from a lack of specificity. For example, in answering the fourth question (“What was the role and significance of religion in the development of American life and politics?”), several students stated that religious ideas had a very significant impact on the development of the American nation, but could not provide specific examples. The average for question 2 (“What ideas and currents of thought shaped the course of American history and inspired American leaders?”) seems to indicate that some students had difficulty relating historical events to the ideologies that played a role in shaping them.</p>	<p>We will work with all our HIST-H 105 instructors to craft some new learning experiences for our students. These experiences should be designed to help students form a more precise understanding of the role of ideas in the origin and early development of the American nation. For example, students could be asked to complete a “what if” assignment, imagining the direction American history could have taken if completely different ideas had made their way into the Constitution and into the political debate of the late 1700s and the early 1800s.</p>
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Analysis Questions

Based on your findings and action plans, what primary changes will you make for student learning? Program outcomes? Changes to the assessment process?

Since we are a multi-discipline department, we should work together to emphasize the connection between historical events and the history of ideas. The results summarized above seem to indicate that some of our students have difficulty associating major figures with the historical period when they flourished. Helping our students understand the interconnectedness of events and ideologies should be a key objective for our department, and one of our most frequent assessment targets.