Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan

Department of Theology

Saint Peter’s College

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Submitted by
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Theology Department Mission Statement:

The Saint Peter's College Department of Theology is engaged in academic consideration of the mystery of God’s relationship with humanity. We stress the centrality of theology as “faith seeking understanding” in overall academic goals of higher education. As a department within the College, we are Christian and Catholic in our religious tradition and explicitly Jesuit in our approach to pedagogy. The courses we offer to undergraduate students examine the interpretation and articulation of the Catholic tradition. The various doctrinal, biblical, spiritual, historical, and moral issues that make up that tradition are the focus of our teaching.

Notwithstanding our identification with Catholic tradition, we are open to a wide range of religious perspectives and the Department is ecumenical in welcoming adjunct lecturers from a variety of non-Catholic backgrounds. Aware of the reality of the world of the new millennium and the tensions among the world’s great religions, the members of the Department are committed to dialogue in order to advance respect for all forms of religious belief, as well as the individual right to reject religious belief.

It is important to note that though we are committed to presenting mainly Catholic theology, we do so in light of the vision of the Second Vatican Council in a way that is open to the insights and common beliefs and values of Protestant and Orthodox Christians and invite our non-Christian students to enter into respectful ecumenical dialogue. It is precisely Catholic to be ecumenical. Although we consist mainly of Catholic theologians, we also include and welcome non-Catholic colleagues who are highly valued for the ecumenical perspectives they bring to our department.

Theology Department General Goals

The Theology Department has four General Goals:

**Goal #1:** Students will have academic opportunities to study the Christian tradition, to value the Jesuit perspective, and to consider the human openness to divine transcendence.

**Goal #2:** Students will receive academic opportunities to achieve maturity of thinking and living, individually and socially, as persons created by God and living in a pluralistic society.

**Goal #3:** Students will be able to develop self-awareness and an understanding of moral and religious values in an educational process that is student-centered.

**Goal #4:** Students will be encouraged to appreciate truth above all. Students will be supported and encouraged to pursue and articulate the truth in the Christian tradition, as well as in the faith traditions of the other world religions, with regard to historical facts (historical figures, events, places, and dates). Students will be encouraged to reflect on the significance of these historical facts.
Compatibility of the General Goals of the Theology Department to the Fundamental Goals of Saint Peter’s College, As Stated in the St. Peter’s College Academic Handbook, 2005 (Ch. 1, Sect. A2)

A) To pursue academic excellence through a strong core curriculum and academic programs which emphasize precision of thought, clarity of oral and written expression, freedom of inquiry, and an appreciation of learning for its own sake.

Theology Department General Goals 1, 3, and 4 complement SPC Goal A.

B) To offer quality undergraduate, post-graduate, and professional degree programs, and to provide appropriate non-degree educational opportunities.

Theology Department General Goals 1-4 are compatible with SPC Goal B.

C) To stress ethical and moral values and personal responsibility as essential for the development of the whole person.

Theology Department General Goals 2, 3, and 4 are consistent with SPC Goal C.

D) To enable students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and values needed for leadership in serving others and shaping society’s response to social, technological, and environmental change.

Theology Department General Goals 3 and 4 are essential for SPC Goal D.

E) To provide opportunities for spiritual development and to foster an appreciation for the significance of religion in a person’s life.

Theology Department General Goals 1-4 are supportive of SPC Goal E.

The Mission Statement of the Theology Department Supports the Mission Statement of Saint Peter’s College

Saint Peter’s College, inspired by its Jesuit, Catholic identity, commitment to individual attention and grounding in the liberal arts, educates a diverse community of learners in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs to excel intellectually, lead ethically, serve compassionately and promote justice in our ever-changing urban and global environment.

The Theology Department’s mission of studying God’s relationship with humanity is primarily and intentionally academic and intellectual. It seeks to impart knowledge. The Department’s mission is not primarily evangelical or catechetical. Therefore, it supports St. Peter’s College’s mission “to educate a diverse community of learners” and “to excel intellectually” by offering students rigorous academic courses that are grounded in history, the Scriptures (the Bible and to
a lesser extent, the Scriptures of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Islam), religious doctrines and practices, and a consideration of the spiritual dimension of being human.

Furthermore, the Theology Department supports the College’s mission to “lead ethically” by offering courses that deal entirely with morality and ethics, and also by incorporating the study of morality and ethics as units of study in other courses (such as Religious Faith in the Modern World [Th 110] or Christianity in the Contemporary Era [Th 120]).

Finally, the Department offers a Service Learning course every year that explicitly requires its students to “serve compassionately and promote justice” by volunteering their time with an approved “partner” or service agency (e.g., Citizen Schools, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, homes for the aged, etc.)

Objectives for Theology Majors and Minors in Accordance with Departmental Goals

**Departmental Goal #1:** Students will have academic opportunities to study the Christian tradition, to value the Jesuit perspective, and to consider the human openness to divine transcendence.

Students will be able to:
1. Define basic theological terms and concepts used in the Christian tradition and in the study of religion in general.
2. Explain the Christian teachings concerning the nature of God and the person and mission of Jesus.
3. Interpret the Scriptures in a non-literal manner.
4. Discuss the significance of the Church and its role in Western Civilization

**Departmental Goal #2:** Students will receive academic opportunities to achieve maturity of thinking and living, individually and socially, as persons created by God and living in a pluralistic society.

Students will be able to:
1. Analyze the possibility, the meaning, and the value of religion in the context of modern knowledge and experience.
2. Discuss the role of contemporary experience and modern science in theology.

**Departmental Goal #3:** Students will be able to develop self-awareness and an understanding of moral and religious values in an educational process that is student-centered.

Students will be able to:
1. Discuss moral principles and Christian/humanistic values.
2. Explain basic Judeo-Christian ethical values and norms, and the belief in the inherent dignity of the human person.
**Goal #4:** Students will be encouraged to appreciate truth above all. Students will be supported and encouraged to pursue and articulate the truth in the Christian tradition, as well as in the faith traditions of the other world religions, with regard to historical facts (historical figures, events, places, and dates). Students will be encouraged to reflect on the significance of these historical facts.

Students will be able to:
1. Explain the central beliefs of the great world religions.
2. Apply insights from the various faith traditions to form a deeper understanding of human experience, history, and contemporary political, social, or cultural issues.

**The Theology Department’s Student Learning Outcome Assessment Plan**

In order to assess the Theology Department’s program of study, it will adopt the following Student Learning Outcomes for its majors.

After completing the requirements for a major in theology, the student will be able to:
1. Articulate the theological approaches of the major figures of the Western tradition (including the leaders of the Protestant Reformation).
2. Analyze and interpret primary texts of important religious figures.
3. Present solid exegeses of Scripture rooted in the Christian Tradition.

1) **Outcome:** The student will be able to articulate the theological approaches of the major theologians of the Western tradition (including the leaders of the Protestant Reformation).

   **Performance Indicators:** The student will be able to present correctly the teachings of major religious figures/theologians. The student will also demonstrate his/her understanding of the origins, contexts, the strengths, weaknesses, and consequences of these teachings.

2) **Outcome:** The student will be able to analyze and interpret primary texts of important religious figures.

   **Performance Indicators:** The student will demonstrate an accurate comprehension of a primary text, its influence on the historical tradition, its implications, as well as its potential for new/modern applications.

3) **Outcome:** The student will be able to present solid exegeses of Scripture rooted in the Christian Tradition.

   **Performance Indicators:** The student will be able to explain the meaning of Scriptural passages that are interpreted in the historical, cultural, social, and religious contexts in which they were written.
Rubric for Assessment

These Student Learning Outcomes will be assessed in the student’s senior year in a Theology major requirement course or major elective course, which will be chosen by the Department chairperson in consultation with the full-time members of the faculty. Only full-time members of the Theology Department teach upper level courses. Therefore a full-time faculty member will assess student’s work (papers, exams, and/or presentations) according to the following rubric:

1 = High Pass
2 = Pass/Acceptable
3 = Fail/Unacceptable

This faculty member will report his/her evaluations of the student’s work to the Department chairperson and to the other Department members for analysis. Both the student’s outcomes and the process for assessing those outcomes will be reviewed.