Instructional Program Priorities Learning Outcomes

Program B.A. in Humanities & Religious Studies: Humanities Minor

Department Humanities & Religious Studies

Number of students enrolled in the program in Fall, 2011: 6

Faculty member completing template Jeffrey Brodd (Chair) (Date January 25, 2012)

Period of reference in the template: 2006-07 to present

1. Please describe your program’s learning-outcomes trajectory since 2006-07: Has there been a transformation of organizational culture regarding the establishment of learning outcomes and the capacity to assess progress toward their achievement? If so, during which academic year would you say the transformation became noticeable? What lies ahead; what is the next likely step in developing a learning-outcomes organizational culture within the program?

The program’s learning-outcomes trajectory since 2006-07 can best be described as a gradual progression toward a fully implemented assessment system that has been beset by general reluctance on the part of faculty but also highlighted by three especially significant steps toward improving student learning and the means of assessing it. These steps are a careful analysis of alignment of programmatic offerings with General Education (especially Areas A and C) and Baccalaureate Learning Goals (in 2007-08), a major revision of the program’s curriculum (commenced in 2008-09), and most recently, development of an assessment plan that realistically parses the program’s learning goals into sets of measurable learning outcomes. Currently the mood among faculty is optimistic and relatively enthusiastic.

The two most important periods of transformation have been Fall 2008, with the completion of our departmental Self-study, and the most recent twelve months, with focused attention on assessing a specific learning outcome (reading skills) and subsequent development of the sets of measurable learning outcomes, all of which are designed to facilitate means of measurement, mostly direct means, while accurately reflecting the intentions of our programmatic learning goals.

2. Please list in prioritized order (or indicate no prioritization regarding) up to four desired learning outcomes (“takeaways” concerning such elements of curriculum as perspectives, specific content knowledge, skill sets, confidence levels) for students completing the program. For each stated outcome, please provide the reason that it was designated as desired by the faculty associated with the program.

Note: This is the list of the four programmatic learning goals prior to the recent revisions and parsing into sets of learning outcomes, more on which in sections 3, 4, and 5 below. The list does not indicate prioritization of the four.
a) Demonstrate knowledge of human cultures, their values and forms of expression
b) Demonstrate analytical reading, critical thinking skills and effective communication skills (both written and oral) of a variety of texts
c) Appreciate the importance of lifelong learning
d) Demonstrate an ability to undertake synthetic and cross-disciplinary study and learning

a) Demonstrate knowledge of human cultures, their values and forms of expression

This learning goal reflects more explicitly than the others the two undergraduate components of the departmental mission statement:

First, through General Education courses, the Department provides the foundation for undergraduate students’ historical and contemporary interdisciplinary understanding, appreciation of the arts, and development of tolerance and respect for diverse cultures and religious cultural systems. Second, within its undergraduate major and minors, the Department strives to facilitate students’ achievement of an historical and contextual understanding of changing perspectives on aesthetic and spiritual values, and of an historical, contextual, and interdisciplinary understanding of diverse cultures and global religious systems.

The Humanities minor emphasizes most all of the aspects touched on in the mission statement, even rubbing elbows with the “religious” and “spiritual” (as much art, architecture, and music produced through the ages is religious to some extent). Commitment to these aspects of the learning goal is evident in our course list and curricular plan. Along with the “Approaches to the Humanities,” students are required to take elective courses in three areas of study: Ancient-Renaissance, Enlightenment-Postmodern, and Global/Non-Western.

b) Demonstrate analytical reading, critical thinking skills and effective communication skills (both written and oral) of a variety of texts

This learning goal emphasizes the various means of articulating the knowledge addressed in the first learning goal. Most all courses in the Humanities minor incorporate extensive reading of both primary and secondary sources. The faculty’s sense of the significance of reading is evident in our decision to focus our 2010-11 assessment efforts on this particular aspect. As the Assessment Report notes (p. 1): “Analytical reading skills are vital for effective work in humanities and religious studies. In keeping with the diverse array of subjects studied in our curriculum, students are asked to read a variety of genres. We also have a very diverse group of students, due especially to our high number of General Education offerings.”

Analytical reading skills depend to some extent on critical thinking skills, which indeed are foundational to all aspects of study in the humanities and religious studies, including the communication of knowledge learned. Some of our courses, most especially the required methodology course “Approaches to the Humanities” and the HRS 190 seminar (not required, but a popular elective for the minor), emphasize student participation in discussion and oral reports, and thus call on oral
communication skills. Written communication skills are vital for all courses. While “Images of America” is the designated Writing Intensive course in the Humanities curriculum, many courses meet or come close to meeting the WI requirement of 5,000 words. The HRS 190 seminar, for example, includes among its requirements a 15-page term paper, including a peer-review process.

c) Appreciate the importance of lifelong learning

Recent faculty efforts have produced text designed for our departmental website, to include sections on why one might wish to major or minor in Humanities & Religious Studies. The segment on the Humanities summarizes well our faculty’s perspective on the relevance of such an education for lifelong learning:

On one level, the study of the Humanities is a profoundly personal experience. Introduced to great thinkers and artists—even to entire cultures—we join them in humanity’s search for meaning and the discovery of ideas and ideals that have stood the test of time. On another level, the Humanities nourish a cultural literacy that gives us a tremendous edge in finding productive places in a world in which effective leadership and communication require an understanding and appreciation of other peoples and their cultures.

Along with these important reasons for enhancing one’s understanding of cultures and one’s cultural literacy, ongoing development of the practical skills spelled out in the learning goal c) is vital for nurturing a student’s preparation for lifelong learning.

d) Demonstrate an ability to undertake synthetic and cross-disciplinary study and learning

In the College of Arts & Letters, the Department of Humanities & Religious Studies occupies a vital middle ground between the arts and letters, depending on the latter as our means of researching and communicating knowledge, but very much beholden to and appreciative of the arts as subject matter. This is clearly evident in the Humanities minor, which devotes considerable attention to the performance of culture (art and architecture, literature, music, and theater). We see our program as being at the crossroads of the arts and letters, providing, in the words of one of our newly devised learning outcomes, “context for studying (within and/or outside of HRS) from relevant disciplinary perspectives such as history, English, philosophy, and art history.”

Within the curriculum of the Humanities minor, there is much emphasis on synthetic and cross-disciplinary study and learning. Humanities by its very nature is cross-disciplinary.

3. For undergraduate programs only, *in what ways are the set of desired learning outcomes described above aligned with the University’s Baccalaureate Learning Goals? Please be as specific as possible.*
The Department of Humanities & Religious Studies offers about forty General Education courses in Areas C1, C3, and C4, and Graduation Requirements in the categories of Writing Intensive and Race and Ethnicity. It is natural, therefore, that our programmatic learning goals align closely with the Baccalaureate Learning Goals. This was true prior to the adoption of the new BALGs, and it is even more clearly apparent now that we have revised our learning goals and the accompanying learning outcomes.

As part of the preparation of the departmental Self-study and coinciding with the assessment of G.E. Area C, the department in AY 2007-08 investigated the alignment of its learning goals with both the Area C goals and the BALGs. As noted in the Self-study (p. 6):

As a part of the process, and to meet the Self-study mandate that assessment be included in the report, a departmental reporting template which identified the GE Area C learning goals that aligned with the University Baccalaureate Learning Goal for Cultural Literacy was developed in consultation with the Faculty Assessment Coordinator, Terry Underwood and the HRS Program Review Team Chair, Amy Liu.

The HRS faculty effectively demonstrated the alignment of their courses (and by implication, the program) with the student learning outcomes developed for both General Education Area C and the Baccalaureate Learning Goals. Without exception, HRS faculty were able to offer specific examples of assignments and activities linked to the Department’s goal of cultural literacy, GE Area C (Arts and Humanities) learning goals and the Baccalaureate Learning Goals for “Cultural Legacy.” This information confirmed the Department’s sense that the emphasis on cultural literacies which is present in the Department’s course matrix is actually reflected in the department curriculum. Additionally, this assessment reflected the Department’s belief that its curriculum provides a strong foundation for this University-level educational goal.

Throughout the process of revising our learning goals and formulating measurable learning outcomes, faculty have paid close attention to the recently revised BALGs and to the VALUE Rubrics that fortify them. The wording of the learning goals (see #5 below) reflects this approach and the general intention to align them more closely with the BALGs, and several of the learning outcomes depend on various VALUE Rubric categories for their formulations, including Lifelong Learning, Civic Engagement, and Integrative Learning.

4. For each desired outcome indicated in item 2 above, please:
   a) Describe the method(s) by which its ongoing pursuit is monitored and measured.
   b) Include a description of the sample of students (e.g., random sample of transfer students declaring the major; graduating seniors) from whom data were/will be collected and the frequency and schedule with which the data in question were/will be collected.
   c) Describe and append a sample (or samples) of the “instrument” (e.g., survey or test), “artifact” (e.g., writing sample and evaluative protocol, performance review sheet), or other device used to assess the status of the learning outcomes desired by the program.
d) Explain how the program faculty analyzed and evaluated (will analyze and evaluate) the data to reach conclusions about each desired student learning outcome.

The program has monitored and measured learning goals a) and b) more consistently and thoroughly than goals c) and d). We anticipate that our newly devised set of learning outcomes will greatly assist in establishing sound means of assessing these goals (please see below).

Learning goal a) Demonstrate knowledge of human cultures, their values and forms of expression

During AY 2010-11, some faculty administered content surveys at the beginning and end of the term in order to assess this learning goal. Such a survey was employed in HRS 11 (Appendix A), a course populated by 93% seniors/juniors and 19% HRS majors/minors. The opening survey reveals a lack of familiarity with concepts germane to Western cultural history from the Renaissance to the present. The end-of-term surveys indicate significant learning with regard to this subject matter. The survey, then, confirms in general the approaches taken in the course, while offering numerous insights regarding specific aspects that might be undertaken differently in order to enhance student learning.

Learning goal b) Demonstrate analytical reading, critical thinking skills and effective communication skills (both written and oral) of a variety of texts

The program has attended especially to the reading and writing aspects of this goal. The HRS 190 seminar (a popular elective among Humanities minors) regularly assesses student writing via its term paper Rubric. The “Organization” and “Writing Quality” indicators are especially pertinent.

The AY 2010-11 assessment efforts focused on reading skills, employing two main techniques. The Reading Practices Survey (Appendix B) was administered to eight classes. Design of the survey took into consideration a variety of objectives:

- Correlate aspects of reading practices to student performance
- Compare HRS majors/minors to non-major GE students
- Compare students within the major/minor in core versus elective courses
- Compare reading skills with regard to different genres or types of readings

The survey yielded valuable information regarding student practices.

Assessment via the Reading VALUE Rubric involved review and scoring of short response papers to a variety of texts in HRS 108, “Approaches to Religious Studies,” a required course for the Humanities concentration but not for the minor (and therefore this aspect of assessment is not relevant here).

On learning goals c) and d):

Aspects of learning goal d) (Integrative Learning) have been assessed in an ongoing manner, through application of the HRS 190 seminar Rubric, especially through the “Contextual Depth” indicator, which demands (for an “Advanced” achievement) that the paper: “Analyzes and interprets research material with information drawn from other HRS courses, and analyzes topic within the context of H/RS perspectives.” Because HRS 190 has been offered most semesters, and as of Fall 2010 is offered every semester, we have collected much data in this regard. Effective analysis and application of the data,
however, is the next step, undoubtedly to be developed based on the new learning outcomes (see #5 below). Learning goal c) (Lifelong Learning) is especially dependent on a more tangible and thus measurable set of learning outcomes. As noted in #6 below, some headway on this front was made via the alumni survey undertaken in preparation for the Self-study. We look forward to increasing significantly the outreach to alumni as a means of fortifying assessment of this goal.

5. Regarding each outcome and method discussed in items 2 and 4 above, please provide examples of how findings from the learning outcomes process have been utilized to address decisions to revise or maintain elements of the curriculum (including decisions to alter the program’s desired outcomes). If such decision-making has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.

Many minor revisions to courses have resulted from the results of assessment efforts, especially with regard to learning goals a) and b). On a grander scale, assessment efforts, especially those of AY 2010-11, have brought about the full revision of the departmental assessment plan, with its newly worded learning goals, the addition of “Competence in the Discipline” goals for both concentrations, and an accompanying set of learning outcomes for each goal.

The newly formulated goals and the accompanying outcomes, correlating to the four former goals, are as follows (subject to some final revisions over the course of the next month):

a) Demonstrate knowledge of human cultures, their values and forms of expression

1. Knowledge of Human Cultures: Students majoring in Humanities & Religious Studies should be able to demonstrate knowledge of human cultures, their values and forms of expression in ways that prepare them to understand, adapt, and succeed in increasingly diverse and complex contexts.
   1.1. Explain the distinguishing values and prominent forms of literary and artistic expression of the major eras of Western culture (e.g. the Middle Ages).
   1.2. Explain the distinguishing values and prominent forms of literary and artistic expression of Asian cultures.
   1.3. Analyze cultural transformations through time, recognizing both persistent aspects and innovations, and proposing well reasoned explanations for such.
   1.4. Compare two or more cultures, identifying common themes or issues along with those that are distinctive.

b) Demonstrate analytical reading, critical thinking skills and effective communication skills (both written and oral) of a variety of texts

2. Intellectual and Communication Skills: Students majoring in Humanities & Religious Studies should be able to demonstrate analytical reading skills, critical thinking skills, and effective written and oral communication skills in order to facilitate clear understanding and articulation of subject matter in academic and professional pursuits.
   2.1. Demonstrate ability simultaneously to extract and construct meaning when reading diverse texts.
2.2. Demonstrate comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

2.3. Use appropriate structure, development, usage, and reference sources to write clear, purposeful, analytical prose. [These are adapted from the English Dept. Writing Assessment Scoring Rubric]

2.4. Present information orally in a persuasive, logical, and organized manner that draws effectively on relevant evidence.

c) Appreciate the importance of lifelong learning

3. Lifelong Learning: Students majoring in Humanities & Religious Studies should be able to acquire foundations and skills for lifelong learning for purposes of enhancing personal enrichment, intercultural awareness, and active engagement with the challenges and opportunities of the modern world.

   [From VALUE rubrics: Lifelong Learning and Civic Engagement]

3.1. Explore a topic in depth, yielding insight and information indicating special interest in the subject.

3.2. Make explicit references to previous learning and apply in an innovative (new and creative) way that knowledge and those skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.

3.3. Review prior learning (past experiences inside and outside of the classroom) in depth to reveal significantly changed perspectives about educational and life experiences, which provide foundation for expanded knowledge, growth, and maturity over time.

3.4. Demonstrate evidence of self-reflection on perspectives because of working within and learning from diversity of communities and cultures.

3.5. Express, listen, and adapt ideas and messages based on others’ perspectives.

d) Demonstrate an ability to undertake synthetic and cross-disciplinary study and learning

4. Integrative Learning: Students majoring in Humanities & Religious Studies should be able to demonstrate ability to synthesize and undertake cross-disciplinary study and learning in order to understand holistically the place and relevance of these fields and their subject matter.

   [4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 from Integrative Learning VALUE rubric]

4.1. Apply learning acquired in Humanities & Religious Studies as context for studying (within and/or outside of HRS) from relevant disciplinary perspectives such as history, English, philosophy, and art history.

4.2. Select and develop examples of life experiences, drawn from a variety of contexts (e.g., family life, artistic participation, civic involvement, work experience), to illuminate concepts/theories/frameworks of fields of study.

4.3. Create wholes out of multiple parts (synthesize) or draw conclusions by combining examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.

4.4. Adapt and apply skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation to new situations to solve problems or explore issues.
6. Has the program systematically sought data from alumni to measure the longer-term effects of accomplishment of the program’s learning outcomes? If so, please describe the approach to this information-gathering and the ways in which the information will be applied to the program’s curriculum. If such activity has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.

The program reviewed the alumni survey administered by the Office of Institutional Research during AY 2008-09 as it prepared the Self-study. This excerpt from the Self-study (p. 10) conveys the survey’s relevance for review of the program:

One of the program’s teaching goals, “development of an empathetic understanding of human diversity within historical and cross-cultural contexts,” appears to be one of the program’s strengths for its graduates: 94.9% of the students who responded to our alumni survey agreed (50.6%)/strongly agreed (44.3) that “majoring in Humanities/Religious Studies has changed the way I look at the world.” 94.9% agreed (48.1%)/strongly agreed (46.8%) that “the curriculum in Humanities/Religious Studies has provided me with a comprehensive view of the arts and religion.” Both of these responses, while indirect measures, reflect students’ sense that the HRS department is meeting its teaching and learning goals related to cultural legacies.

Additionally, 96.2% of the HRS graduates who responded to the OIR survey felt that the HRS curriculum provided them with adequate (40.5%)/exceptional (55.7%) training in written communication skills. Similarly, answers to a question about the curriculum supporting another of the discipline’s preferred competencies, critical thinking, led 96.4% of the respondents to describe their training as adequate (53.1%)/exceptional (43%).

The department looks forward to drawing on the newly designed OIR General Alumni Survey, to which we plan to append the permitted five specific questions. These will be designed especially to assess the recently revised learning outcomes of the Lifelong Learning and Integrative Learning programmatic learning goals.

7. Does the program pursue learning outcomes identified by an accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization as important? Does the set of outcomes pursued by your program exceed those identified as important by your accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization?

No / not applicable.

APPENDIX A

HRS 11 Arts and Ideas of the West

Survey Questions
1. The term Renaissance Humanism means _______________________

2. The Renaissance began where/when approximately? _______________________

3. Whose writings started the Protestant Reformation? _______________________

4. Linear Perspective is used in _______________________

5. Where and what is Versailles? _______________________

6. What is Absolutism? _______________________

7. The Enlightenment emphasized _______________________

8. What is Rational Humanism _______________________

9. When did the French Revolution occur? _______________________

10. What kind of hero is Victor Frankenstein? _______________________

11. What kind of novel is The Death of Ivan Ilyich? _______________________

12. When did the Industrial Revolution occur? _______________________

13. Cubism refers to a style of _______________________

**APPENDIX B**

HRS Reading Assessment Project, Spring 2011: Practices Survey
Please respond on the accompanying form to the following as accurately as possible.

1. Are you an HRS major or minor?
   a) Yes          b) No          c) Maybe (undeclared)

2. What college is home to your major?
   a) Arts & Letters          b) Business Administration or Health & Human Services
   c) Education or Social Sciences & Interdisciplinary Studies
   d) Engineering & Computer Science or Natural Sciences & Mathematics
   e) Undeclared

For 3-5, consider this question: In your experience at Sac State during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?

3. Come to class without completing readings or assignments
   a) Very Often          b) Often          c) Sometimes          d) Never

4. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class
   a) Very Often          b) Often          c) Sometimes          d) Never

5. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)
   a) Very Often          b) Often          c) Sometimes          d) Never

For 6-9, consider this question: During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities?
6. Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from your courses and readings so you can repeat them in pretty much the same form
   a) Very Much  b) Quite a Bit  c) Somed) Very Little

7. Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular text, case, or situation in depth and considering its components
   a) Very Much  b) Quite a Bit  c) Somed) Very Little

8. Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships
   a) Very Much  b) Quite a Bit  c) Somed) Very Little

9. Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions
   a) Very Much  b) Quite a Bit  c) Somed) Very Little

For 10-13, consider this question: During the Fall Semester 2010, how much reading and writing did you do?

10. Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings
    a) None  b) 1-4  c) 5-10  d) 11-20  e) More than 20

11. Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment
    a) None  b) 1-4  c) 5-10  d) 11-20  e) More than 20

12. Number of written papers or reports **between 5 and 19 pages**
    a) None  b) 1-4  c) 5-10  d) 11-20  e) More than 20
13. Number of written papers or reports of **fewer than 5 pages**
   a) None   b) 1-4 c) 5-10   d) 11-20   e) More than 20

14. About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)
   a) 0 hours   b) 1-5 hours   c) 6-10 hours   d) 11-15 hours   e) More than 15 hours

**For 15-20, consider this question: How often do you do each of the following while reading sources as part of your coursework?**

15. Articulate questions about the material
   a) Very Much   b) Quite a Bit   c) Somed) Very Little

16. Infer the meanings of words based on the context in which they are used
   a) Very Much   b) Quite a Bit   c) Somed) Very Little

17. Consider connections between what you are reading and related details and ideas in other things you have read
   a) Very Much   b) Quite a Bit   c) Somed) Very Little

18. Predict what you think will follow later on in the reading
   a) Very Much   b) Quite a Bit   c) Somed) Very Little

19. Identify what kind of source you are reading and how it differs from other kinds of sources
   a) Very Much   b) Quite a Bit   c) Somed) Very Little
20. Identify the underlying intention of the author of the source
   a) Very Much       b) Quite a Bit       c) Somed) Very Little

Thank you for completing this survey!

Department of Humanities & Religious Studies