

**Theology and Religious Studies  
Major and Minor  
2023-2024 Assessment Report**

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**Mission Statement (no changes):<sup>1</sup>**

The Department of Theology & Religious Studies (hereafter THRS) embodies the University of San Francisco's (hereafter USF) mission to "promote learning in the Jesuit Catholic tradition"; offers students "the knowledge and skills needed to succeed as persons and professionals, and the values and sensitivity to be [people] for others"; "distinguish[es] itself as a diverse, socially responsible learning community of high quality scholarship and academic rigor sustained by a faith that does justice"; and "draw[s] from the cultural, intellectual, and economic resources of the San Francisco Bay Area and its location on the Pacific Rim to enrich and strengthen its educational programs."

Religion is one of the most powerful social forces in the world. An understanding of religious traditions helps students navigate the twenty-first-century's complexities. THRS programs critically and systematically explore religious experiences and cultural differences, assisting students in becoming familiar with major religious traditions, values, and symbols. Our faculty encourage students to appreciate the role of religion in public and private life, developing knowledge about human dignity and human rights, freedom, responsibility, and social justice. In developing an awareness of the relationship between belief and justice, students also engage in an exploration in the religious dimensions of their own lives.

**Program Learning Outcomes for the Major and Minor (no changes):**

1) **Human Dimensions of Religion, Theology and Spirituality:** Students articulate how religion, theology, and spirituality underlie and correlate with a broad range of human experience.

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<sup>1</sup> No changes have been made in 2023-2024. Department of Theology & Religious Studies, University of San Francisco, "Academic Program Review: Department Self Study 2018" (January 31, 2018).

2) **Religious Diversity:** Students will articulate the particularities of various faith traditions (including creedal vision, moral teachings, historical context, social expression, and key rites and symbols) in the context of the plurality of world religious traditions, as encouraged by Vatican II's stance on the Catholic Church's relationship with other faiths.

3) **Social Justice:** Students will articulate how religious traditions work for social justice and the good of the entire human family as well as the environment that sustains it.

4) **Theory & Methods of the Study of Religion:** Students employ knowledge of academic methods and practices characteristic of the study of theology and/or religion, including the different contributions of textual, historical, social, and interdisciplinary studies.

### **Curricular Map (no changes):**

#### **Assessment Schedule:**

In 2017-2018, we conducted our last APR. That year we assessed PLO #3. In 2018-19, we assessed PLO #4. In 2019-20, we did the alternative assessment for Covid teaching. In 2020-2021, we assessed PLO #1. In 2021-2022 we did a year of reflection and analysis of our syllabi's presentation of core and department learning outcomes. And in 2022-2023, we assessed PLO #2, thus "closing the loop" and assessing all four of our PLOs.

This year we have assessed PLO #1.

#### **Assessment Methodology and Rubrics:**

Our major and minor is very small. We generally have 15-20 total. As a department, almost all of our classes serve the core. Only once every other year are we able to offer a class for our majors and minors, called Methods and Theories. In 2023-2024, we did not offer this class. Most of our classes have no majors or minors in them. But one class had a major and a minor, namely THRS 251 - Jesuit/Ignatian Spirituality. We selected the final paper for these two students in this class and added ten random other students' papers and assessed them based on our PLO #1. We did not review these papers for grammar or punctuation, or otherwise make judgments about their quality as papers reflecting academic scholarship in a subject matter.

Students were asked to write 4-5 page papers on one of nine topics provided by the instructor and asked to explain their understanding of the idea or practice as well as its significance and implications for their spiritual life. For example, if they choose "Discernment of Spirits" as the topic for their paper, they needed to define what Ignatius meant by this concept and how Ignatius himself discerned, explain how they understood Ignatius's guidelines for discernment, and provide examples to illustrate how these rules work.

A four-point rubric was designed to assess the collected student work products. A score of “4” indicated that the product exceeded expectations for the designated outcome, and a score of “3” indicated that it met expectations for that outcome. Products achieving scores of “3” or “4” were considered to have performed adequately or better on the designated outcome. A score of “2” indicated that the work product showed some signs of development in achieving the outcome, and a score of “1” indicated little to no development towards the outcome. Work products achieving scores of “1” and “2” were considered to have performed inadequately on the designated outcome.

### Assessment Results:

Paper #	Title	Score
1)	Final Paper	4
2)	The Prelude to Silence in Prayer	3
3)	Ignatian Discernment and Modern Psychology	3
4)	Ignatian Imaginative Prayer	2
5)	Discernment of Spirits	3
6)	Jesuit Spirituality, Final Paper	3
7)	Discernment of Spirits #2	4
8)	Foundation of Ignatian Prayer: Heart of Spiritual Exercises	4
9)	Ignatian Discernment	2
10)	Contemplation in Action	3
11)	Ignatian Discernment #2	3
12)	Ignatian Imaginative Prayer	2

Rating	Number of Papers	Percent of Papers
4	3	25
3	6	50
2	3	25
1	0	0

Thus, three papers earned a “4” rating of “exceeded expectations,” which amounted to 25% of the papers. Six papers earned a “3” or “met expectations,” which was half of the papers. And three papers or 25% earned a “2” meaning they “showed signs of development” in achieving the outcome. No students earned a “1” for “indicating little to no development towards the outcome.”

The instructor of the course who participated in this evaluation noted that the THRS major and minor were among the three students who received the highest score of 4, exceeded expectations.

Our results will be shared with the department by email and discussed at our next department meeting. Next year’s assessment may review the work of our majors and minors

in the Methods and Theories course, dedicated to them, as we offered that class again in Fall 2024 and had eleven THRS majors and minors in the course.

Last year's assessment feedback noted that we were hoping to revise our program and core learning outcomes. This year we decided not to do this because of the uncertainty caused by the possibility of divisions and core revision.

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