**UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS**
**ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT PLAN**
**Religious Studies**

## Basic Information

Program Name: Religious Studies

College: Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

Department: Philosophy and Religious Studies

Program Level (check all that apply)

- ☐ Associate's
- X Bachelor's (Arts)
- ☐ Undergraduate Certificate
- ☐ Master's
- ☐ Doctoral
- ☐ Graduate Certificate

Date Plan Submitted: _____

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Department Curriculum and Assessment Coordinator & email: Phillip Spivey (pspivey@uca.edu)

## 1. Introduction (identify college, unit, and degree programs)

- Both UCA Religious Studies and Philosophy programs constitute the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies in College of Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences. UCA offers a B.A. in Religious Studies and B.S. in Philosophy.
- UCA Religious Studies program is an interdisciplinary exploration of how world religions affect spiritual beliefs, differing societies, unique histories, and world cultures. Students pursuing a B.A. in Religious Studies develop both comprehensive knowledge of world religions and methodologies necessary for academic research. UCA Religious Studies courses are designed to assist students applying what is learned in religious studies courses to both post-graduate and professional development. Courses help students understand religious practices; accurately describe world religious traditions; and apply religious studies to occupations related to psychology, history, health sciences, law, and non-profit organizations.

## 2. Student Outcomes:

There are four SLO's within the assessment plan; see Appendix 1 for Rubrics

- SLO 1: Critical Analysis and Understanding of World Religious Traditions - Demonstrate depth of factual accuracy regarding historical developments, internal variations, common features, and ethical teachings of major world religious traditions (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) within a global context.
- SLO 2: Research Methodologies - Apply social scientific and humanities-based research methodologies to analyze complex religious or spiritual phenomena while recognizing the strengths and limitations of these analytical approaches.
- SLO 3: Communication - Clearly, accurately, and concisely express the core concepts, practices, impacts, and beliefs of world religious traditions in written and/or verbal presentations to both specific and general audiences.
- SLO 4: Academic and Professional Skills - Apply advanced interdisciplinary research, academic writing, and critical understanding of religious studies to professional development, post-graduate goals, careers, or graduate school admissions.

## 3. Assessment Cycle*

- Proposed Two-Fold Assessment Cycle: Fall 2026 (December 14) and Spring 2027 (May 17)
- Yearly assessment reports will be distributed to Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies faculty for review by end of every Spring semester.

## 4. Curriculum Map*

- See **Competency Description** below and **Appendix 2.**

## 5. Assessment Methods and Measures (Formative and Summative recommended):

- Following the design of the UCA Religious Studies direct and indirect assessment framework:
    - Formative and Area Assessment (Course-Level): Students introduce foundational skills in introductory courses (RELG 1320/1330). Progression into 3000- and 4000-level courses reinforces these elements. Programmatic courses are embedded directly with distinct pairs of assessment rubrics to gauge subset performance:
    - Rubrics 1 & 3 (Critical Analysis & Communication) are integrated directly into courses such as Buddhism (RELG 3325), Chinese Philosophy and Religion (RELG 4305), and Jewish Scriptures (RELG 3332).
    - Rubrics 2 & 4 (Research Methodologies & Professional Skills) are integrated into Theories & Methods (RELG 3301) and Asian Religions in America (RELG 3326).
    - Summative Evaluation (Program Mastery): In accordance with the assessment standards, instructors of 3000- and 4000-level courses collect course projects (including essays, research tasks, internships, or verbal presentations). This tracking builds toward the ultimate 2028/2029 primary programmatic benchmark: guiding majors to cross the finish line to graduation with a cumulative multi-rubric assessment score within the "Good" to "Excellent" range (12-16).

- Religious Studies majors must fulfill all Religious Studies requirements listed on 2022 Religious Studies Courses Checklist and in so doing will complete all required Student Learning Outcomes at three different levels: Introduction, Reinforcement, and Application. Desired scores reflect the SLO alignment relative to the level. See Appendix for detailed breakdown of course alignment with SLO level.

    - *Theories & Methods in Religious Studies* (RELG. 3301): All Religious Studies majors must complete this course and earn a Rubric Assessment Score of 4-8, which would reflect a C or better in the course (Rubrics 2 and 4).
    - *Buddhism* (RELG. 3325): Religious Studies majors can choose to complete the course and earn a Rubric Assessment Score of 4-8, which would reflect a C or better in the course (Rubrics 1 and 3).
    - *Asian Religions in America* (RELG. 3326): Religious Studies majors can choose to complete the course and earn a Rubric Assessment Score of 4-8, which would reflect a C or better in the course (Rubrics 2 and 4).
    - *Chinese Philosophy and Religion* (RELG. 4305): Religious Studies majors can choose to complete the course and earn Rubric Assessment Score of 4-8, which would reflect a C or better in the course (Rubrics 1 and 3).
    - *Religion in the United States* (RELG. 3300): Religious Studies majors can choose to complete the course and earn a Rubric Assessment Score of 4-8, which would reflect a C or better in the course (Rubrics 3 and 4).
    - *Jewish Scriptures* (RELG. 3332): Religious Studies majors can choose to complete the course and earn a Rubric Assessment Score of 4-8, which would reflect a C or better in the course (Rubrics 1 and 3).
    - *Christian Scriptures* (RELG. 3333): Religious Studies majors can choose to complete the course and earn a Rubric Assessment Score of of 4-8, which would reflect a C or better in the course (Rubrics 1 and 2).
    - *Judaism* (RELG. 3335): Religious Studies majors can choose to complete the course and earn Rubric Assessment Score of 4-8, which would reflect a C or better in the course (Rubrics 3 and 4).
    - *African American Religious Thought* (RELG. 3345): Religious Studies majors can choose to complete the course and earn a Rubric Assessment Score of of 4-8, which would reflect a C or better in the course (Rubrics 1 and 2).

## 6. Data Collection and Review

- Religious Studies majors' course projects related to assessment rubrics are to be collected by class instructors only for 3000 and 4000-level Religious Studies courses.
- What will be the benchmark/target for each outcome? See **Appendix 1**.
- What individuals/groups will be responsible for data collection? Department Curriculum and Assessment Coordinator, Phillip Spivey, will be responsible for collecting data from Religious Studies instructors teaching assessed courses during Fall/Spring semesters.

## 7. Participation in Assessment Process

- Who will participate in carrying out the assessment plan? Religious Studies faculty, UCA Religious Studies majors, Department Chair, in consultation with Department Curriculum and Assessment Coordinator.

- Religious Studies faculty will be assessed by Religious Studies majors only enrolled in their 3000 and 4000-level courses. Faculty assessment will be focused on how effective the course instructor communicated course's assigned rubrics.
- UCA Religious Studies majors will be assessed and assigned a course rubric score by instructor. Assessment tools for fulfilling course rubrics can include essays, research projects, presentations, and internships.
- Department Chair will review assessment data and make recommendations.
- Department Chair will ensure all stored data and reports based on data are stored properly in accordance with FERPA regulations.

**8. Data Analysis**

- Yearly Assessment Reports will be made available to department faculty during Fall semester's first department meeting.
- Fall 2026 course(s) will be assessed in December. Spring 2027 course(s) will be assessed in May. After faculty have considered both sets of data, then an overall 2026/2027 Assessment Report will be prepared by Department Curriculum and Assessment Coordinator.

**9. Plan for Using Assessment Results to Improve Program**

- Tracking Religious Studies major's grade progress through 3000 and 4000-level Religious Studies courses.
- Helping faculty gauge how successful the Religious Studies program in relation to assessment rubrics.
- Developing teaching plans to improve upper-level courses by realigning course objectives to assessment rubrics.
- 2028/2029 Primary Assessment Goal: Guiding UCA Religious Studies majors to graduation with an overall assessment rubric score of 12-16. Secondary Assessment Goal: Evaluate faculty teaching effectiveness related to course content and rubrics.

**10. What are plans to evaluate students' post-graduate success?**

Alums will be surveyed about career progress and/or post-graduate goals one year after UCA graduation. After 2026/2027 assessment report, UCA Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies faculty will have enough information to start developing an effective alumni program beginning in Fall 2027.

**11. What are plans to evaluate teaching effectiveness?**

Teaching effectiveness will be measured by course student evaluations, Watermark reports, department chair evaluations, and Religious Studies majors completing only 3000 and 4000-level Religious Studies Courses.