Department of Religion
Critical and Normative Interpretations of Religious Life and Thought

Intended learning outcomes assessed with this instrument: Ability to form, evaluate, and communicate critical and normative interpretations of religious life and thought

Student work assessed: Senior student essays

		Levels of Achievement		
		10 9 8 7	6 5 4	3 2 1 NA
		Excellent	**Good**	**Lacking**
Criteria	**Writing/Mechanics**			
	Style	Elegant sentences, with rich, apt, and expressive vocabulary. The style shows mastery of conventions in the discipline and employs these creatively to achieve a definite purpose	Solid, consistent style with appropriate vocabulary and few errors of word choice or usage	No clear sense of style. Confusing shifts of voice. Odd or faulty word choices. Lack of control over the interplay of style and effect.
	Mechanics	Shows thorough mastery of grammar, punctuation, and format	Technically correct with respect to grammar, punctuation, format.	Errors of grammar, punctuation, or format undermine the author's purpose
	Organization	The structure of the argument is made clear to the reader; topics are introduced in a reasoned order; the argument is advanced in well-developed paragraphs	There is a discernible order to the argument, but that order may not be clearly explained, the essay may digress or lose its way either within paragraphs or in the order of paragraphs.	Little apparent logical structure within paragraphs or in the overall sweep of the argument.
	Formation of Argument			
	Thesis	Main proposition is clearly and forcefully stated, and may even offer an innovative approach to the subject.	A plausible thesis that identifies something important about the subject. May not be especially illuminating.	A commonplace or confused thesis that fails to illuminate relevant features of, or perhaps misunderstands, the subject.
	Evidence and Warrants	Identifies and presents evidence relevant to the given thesis. Accurately, perhaps creatively, construes the evidence to support an interpretation. Draws convincing inferences from evidence. Effectively situates evidence in context.	Identifies relevant evidence, but may not show the relevance persuasively. Evidence may be uneven in relevance or too scanty to build a strong argument. Evidence may be simply cited, rather than built upon. Evidence may be offered without recognition of context.	Fails to identify relevant evidence, misinterprets the given evidence, or fails to interpret it clearly
	Critical presentation of thesis and argument	Recognizes grounding assumptions. Anticipates objections, legitimate dissent, and possible alternatives to thesis; addresses these in generally accessible scholarly and specialist idioms. Establishes clear criteria for judgments and conclusions.	Shows some awareness of grounding assumptions and possible limits to the position taken. Offers judgments and conclusion with a loose sense of guiding criteria.	Proceeds from unrecognized assumptions. Does not recognize possible alternatives. Offers judgments without establishing criteria.

Critical Interpretation	Reveals distance from subject; is attentive to insider/outsider assessments of religious phenomena; also attentive to author's own stance as interpreter	Offers a critical evaluation of the problem under consideration	Fails to offer a critical evaluation of the problem under consideration. May offer simple narrative description, or ungrounded assertions.	
Normative and/or constructive interpretation	Discusses truth claims implicit or explicit in the subject, evaluating, defending, or objecting to them. Establishes clear norms and acknowledges the context of argument surrounding these norms. May advance and defend a novel position.	Offers a normative interpretation of the problem under consideration	Fails to offer a normative interpretation of the problem. May offer simple narrative description, or ungrounded assertions.	
Craft of Scholarship/Guild Practices				
Assessment of the significance and implications of the thesis	Thesis reflects an interesting research problem grounded in a nuanced grasp of how the subject fits within the discourse of the field. Introduction or conclusion states the value of the argument and shows its significance	Recognizes the significance of the project in general terms and relates it loosely to the ongoing scholarship in the field.	Shows little awareness of the significance of the project or how it is situated in ongoing scholarship	
Use of secondary literature	Attentive to virtues and limits of secondary literature; engages in dialogue with relevant authors; eschews unnecessary reliance on secondary authors for the phenomena considered	Shows evidence of using relevant secondary sources but does not integrate them adequately into argument (relies on them too much or too little)	Does not use secondary sources appropriately	
Citations	Properly documented with consistent use of an appropriate stylesheet		Significant lapses in citations	
			Total Score	