

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The Department has agreed on several goals for our work together, and these goals are listed below. In order to merit advancement, any member of the Department must have achieved these goals in a manner that satisfies their colleagues. As faculty, excellence in teaching and professional growth is more important to us than anything else, but we realize that teacher/scholars are people of differing temperaments and professional interests, and there is no one best definition of success as a professor. Accordingly, we do not use our criteria in a fixed or quantitative manner, for this might hinder rather than help us form a judgment about a faculty member's overall effectiveness and importance to the Department. The Department will follow the procedures for evaluation (e.g., materials, class visits, evaluative materials) given in the most recent *Faculty Evaluation Procedures & Criteria*.

I. Teaching

The Department of Religious Studies endorses the University's commitment to excellent teaching. Faculty will bring disciplinary expertise to their teaching and offer an appropriate range and variety of courses that contribute to a well-rounded departmental curriculum. In the classroom, an excellent teacher conveys an enthusiasm for learning that may spark a complementary excitement in students; promotes students' critical thinking and self-reflection; helps students acquire knowledge and insight; and demonstrates the interrelatedness of knowledge. In addition, the Religious Studies Department commends its faculty for availability to students beyond the classroom. The instruments for judging teaching excellence include but are not limited to the following: student evaluations that may be both formal and informal, testimony from colleagues who visit classes, course syllabi and other materials. Because the Department is increasingly aware of the reality of implicit bias in teaching evaluations, including informal ones, we analyze student feedback with a critical eye, and seek to place more weight on other evaluative criteria, such as class visits. The Department recognizes the following components of teaching for evaluation:

- A. Providing a stimulating classroom environment for careful and systematic study of Religious Studies and religious traditions. This study may include examination of primary texts; the origin and historical development of religious traditions; philosophical, ethical, and social aspects of Religious Studies; and the relationship between Religious Studies and other disciplines.
- B. Helping students improve the following skills, as described in the University's Educational Goals:
 1. Think critically and creatively;

2. Communicate clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing;
3. Develop and apply knowledge both independently and collaboratively.

C. Supporting our curricular programs.

1. Offer courses that support the Religious Studies Major.
2. Offer courses that support the University's Core Curriculum.
3. Offer courses in interdisciplinary programs as consistent with one's expertise.
4. Where appropriate, supervise summer research or Independent Study projects.

II. Professional Growth

The Department recognizes that scholar-teachers advance general and specialized fields of knowledge for the benefit of the common good. Professors demonstrate their commitment and contribution to these endeavors in a variety of forms. For the purposes of evaluation, "professional growth" shall be evaluated on the basis of modes of academic discourse: the presentation of original thinking, scholarship, research, and translation through publication and the presentation of papers and lectures. The publication of books, monographs, translations, articles, chapters, edited volumes, and reviews are the strongest indication of a professor's intellectual and scholarly vitality. This creative dialogue with communities of learning demonstrates a professor's willingness to have their work intellectually reviewed and to participate in a public exchange of ideas and knowledge. The Department recognizes no quotas for publication, but expects sufficient evidence to warrant the assumption of a commitment to continued intellectual inquiry, scholarly excellence and ongoing professional growth. Colleagues in the Department accept the responsibility to mentor informally and formally junior colleagues. Advancement to the rank of full professor is contingent upon evidence of distinguished service and a strong record of publication in addition to sustained growth in other areas. Furthermore, the Religious Studies Department strongly endorses the University's commitment to academic and intellectual freedom and recognizes that professors, when guided by a deep conviction of the worth and dignity of the advancement of knowledge, will pursue the advancement of knowledge and the common good in various directions and manners, and that the individual's freedom of inquiry must never be seriously compromised.

III. University Service

The excellence and reputation of the University depend on the excellence and reputation of its Departments. Consequently, we view "university service" as including all activities beyond the classroom that contribute to the welfare of either the departmental or the university-wide "body politic." Here we recognize two basic modes of activity:

- A. Serve as appropriate in such ways as working on University or departmental committees, working on departmental projects, contributing to interdisciplinary

programs, helping develop special programs and lectures, taking part in cooperative ventures with other departments, and doing research or writing on behalf of the Department or the University.

- B. Contribute to learning activities beyond the classroom. (These activities recently have been called "cocurricular" to distinguish them from "extracurricular" activities such as attendance at parties or sporting events.)

IV. Academic Advising

Tenure-track faculty in Religious Studies are expected to advise a reasonable number of students. Faculty shall be available at appropriate times and give the attention required for good advising. Although students are ultimately responsible for their academic programs and their success in pursuing them, the Department recognizes the need for advisors to have a general working knowledge of essential University requirements and procedures as outlined in the *Bulletin* and *The Logger*.

V. Service to the wider community beyond the University

Service can include contributing to the life of religious groups or other organizations in ways that draw on a faculty member's professional expertise and skills. The groups served may be local, regional, national, or international.

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