

## ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTAL END OF YEAR REPORT

Submit by June 30, 2025 to the Director of Academic Assessment.

Program / Department: Jewish Studies

Submitted by: R. Steven Notley, Ph.D.

### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM STUDENT LEARNING GOALS and OUTCOMES

**I. List the Program Goals in the first column and indicate in which year those goals will be assessed.**

*Program Goals = what the program aims to achieve and what it should offer students who take it.*

*[Each goal should be assessed at least once over a 3-year cycle – indicate by X]*

Year	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
<b>Goals for the Jewish Studies Program</b>			
Goal 1. To learn how to effectively interpret the Bible based on sound hermeneutical principles.	X		
Goal 2. Demonstrates familiarity with the background, literature, and theology of the Bible and the individual books of the Hebrew Bible.	X		
Goal 3. To be acquainted with the salient features of the history of the people of Israel.		X	
Goal 4. To understand and articulate the major religious aspects of Judaism.		X	
Goal 5. To develop the capacity for critical thinking and theological reflection.			X
Goal 6. To foster intellectual curiosity, creativity, and a desire for lifelong learning.			X

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### II. Program Goals and Specific Student Learning Outcomes for assessment in 2024-2025

1. *In column 1, identify which goal(s) will be assessed this year. In column 2, list the corresponding specific learning outcomes.*

Specific Learning Outcomes = component parts of program goals which identify in more detail what you want students to know or be able to do by the end of the program.

2. *Attach syllabi of courses where learning outcomes will be assessed and any other relevant assessment tools.*

*[The table below should enable you to provide the relevant information succinctly. This section can be done as a narrative if preferred, but please ensure you include all the information required to complete the table.]*

Program Goal to be assessed this year	Specific Student Learning Outcomes to be assessed (Typically taken from course syllabus)	Which course will these be assessed?	How assessed? (eg. Rubric, survey, focus group)	Does assessment tool already exist? Y / N?	If NO, who will create it?	By when?	When will data be collected & analyzed?
Goal 1: To learn how to effectively interpret the Bible based on sound hermeneutical principles.	i) Interprets the content of Scripture using sound exegetical principles	BIBL404-The Writings of the Hebrew Bible	Exam	Y		12/31/24	June 2025
	ii) Applies the content of Scripture to contemporary life.	BIBL325-The Pentateuch	Exam	Y		12/31/24	June 2025

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Goal 2: Demonstrates familiarity with the background, literature, and theology of the Hebrew Scriptures.	i) Identifies the salient features of the cultural, geographical, political, philosophical, and religious settings of the Hebrew Bible.	BIBL403- Historical Books of the Bible	Exam	Y	Instructor	12/31/24	June 2025
	ii) Demonstrates a general knowledge and understanding of the individual books of the Bible.	BIBL301- Survey of Hebrew Scriptures	Exam	Y	Instructor	12/31/24	June 2025

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### III. Rationale for decisions

*[Include a brief explanation of the rationale for your decision to assess outcomes for these program goals and specific learning outcomes in the way(s) indicated. Why is this course/essay the best place to assess this goal/outcome? Why is this method (eg. survey, rubric) the best way to assess the goal/outcome?]*

At the beginning of the 2024-2025 academic year, we created archive folders on a SharePoint website for each course offered in the Jewish Studies Program. Within those folders are subfolders to preserve documentation: (1) the course syllabus, (2) assignments, quizzes, and exams, (3) examples of student work, and (4) student course evaluations. In writing this report, we selected the course assignments/exams that presented the best tools to evaluate the student learning outcomes. Those results are presented below.

**Program Goal 1 Learning Outcome i):** BIBL404-The Writings of the Hebrew Bible. The course is intended to introduce the student to the Writings (*Ketuvim*) of the Hebrew Bible, e.g. Psalms, Daniel, Ruth, Esther, etc. The student is provided with the historical and religious background for a selected work that often serves to shape the basic themes in that work. To read skillfully a student must engage critically the historical setting for the writings, which itself is sometimes in question. The selected work this academic year was the Book of Daniel which portrays the Jewish people in Exile in Babylon. There are numerous critical questions surrounding the work's interpretation. Students considered those issues each week during the semester. To measure the learning objectives for the course, they were given a comprehensive final exam in Hebrew that was comprised of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The essay questions addressed the issues of interpretation and contemporary application. For the 98 students in the course, the class average for the learning outcomes measured was 92%.

**Program Goal 1 Learning Outcome ii):** BIBL325-The Pentateuch. The course focuses on developing the skills needed to analyze and comprehend Hebrew texts and later Jewish commentaries, for this course particularly that of Nachmanides. Emphasis is placed on analyzing a commentator's style in addressing various textual problems. The comprehensive final exam was determined to be the best tool to assess the students' learning outcomes. In the exam the student was expected to critically analyze the language of various legal statutes presented in Hebrew texts, to be familiar with the approaches of Jewish commentators, and to determine which approach best represented Jewish tradition. For the 22 students in the course, the class average for the measured learning outcomes was 88%.

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**Program Goal 2 Learning Outcome i):** BIBL403-Historical Books of the Bible. This course studies large portions of the Early Prophets. The aim is not only to gain an historical perspective from the period in which they lived but also to draw moral lessons from them. The purpose of the course was to assist the student to identify the salient features of the cultural, geographical, historical, political, philosophical, and religious settings found in the individual books studied. Among the tools available to measure student learning outcomes, an exam in Hebrew was determined to serve this aim best. For the 22 students in the course, the class average for the measured learning outcomes was 87%.

**Program Goal 2 Learning Outcome ii):** BIBL301-Survey of Hebrew Scriptures. Students are introduced to the weekly portions (*Parashat Hashavua*) from the Pentateuch that are read each Sabbath in the synagogue. These selections are traditionally accompanied by fixed readings from the Prophets and the Writings. The extensive nature of this collection covers the entirety of the Hebrew Bible and so serves well as the literary foundation for a survey of the Hebrew Scriptures. The student is expected to be familiar with the selected readings and the historical Jewish commentaries on them (e.g. Rashi, Rambam, etc.). The course learning objectives were measured with a comprehensive final exam comprised of over 60 short essay questions that tested the student's knowledge of the intricacies of the Hebrew text and the various approaches to answer questions on the selected passages. For the 98 students in the course, the class average for the measured learning outcomes was 92.5.

### IV. What conclusions can be drawn based on your assessment results?

The first thing that must be said and underscored is that these undergraduate students are native English speakers. Yet, they are expected to read and analyze large portions of Hebrew text that requires an advanced proficiency in the Hebrew language. By comparison most graduate seminaries in the United States that offer courses in Hebrew Bible do not require such a high level of Hebrew proficiency. In addition, the students read a variety of Jewish commentaries that span from the medieval to the modern period, and these commentaries themselves are written in a different Hebrew dialect. Even taking this into account, the requirements for each course in terms of the amount of material read, the critical thinking expected, and the engagement with the variety of traditional approaches is remarkable. It is also clear that the students are not simply reading the literature for its historical and philological importance but find within the writings relevant ethical lessons that have current import.

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A general, overall assessment of the student learning outcomes for these courses indicates a high level of learning has been achieved by the students.

**V. Based on your analysis of the assessment results, what curricular or instructional changes will be made to improve student learning outcomes?**

Based upon this assessment, I do not see that any specific actions need to be taken at this time.

**VI. Please evaluate the quality of program-level assessment in your area and specify any steps needed for improvement. When, and by whom will these steps be implemented?**

Based upon this assessment, I do not see that any specific actions need to be taken at this time.