

**PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE TO CORE CURRICULUM
JESUIT HERITAGE REQUIREMENT IN
THEOLOGY & RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

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The Problem

1. The Department of Theology & Religious Studies has used assessment data to reconsider and revise the TRS101 introductory course on a number of occasions in the last 25 years.¹ Nevertheless, the course continues to be a neuralgic point with faculty and students. Students object to the course merely on the grounds that it is required. Faculty are frustrated by 200- and 300-level students' lack of reliable retention levels or knowledge base from the intro course.²
2. A number of recent changes in the curriculum and TRS faculty composition have combined to put increased—and unsustainable—pressures on the department with respect to TRS101.
 - a. The new Core has put unsustainable demand on the TRS101, particularly in the fall semesters.
 - i. Traditionally we have offered 14–15 sections of the 101 each semester. In fall of 2015, first-year students were placed in TRS101 at nearly twice the previous rate, which meant we had to support the equivalent of 25 sections of the course, only 7 of which (28%) were taught by FT faculty.³
 - ii. Similarly, we had to support the equivalent of 25 sections in Fall 2016, only 3 of which (12%) were taught by FT faculty.⁴
 - iii. In addition, whereas we used to have $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{3}$ of first-year students (approximately 175–200) taking the TRS101 in the fall semester, in the last two years closer to 60% of the incoming class has been enrolled in the TRS101. This creates a significant staffing imbalance between fall and spring semesters. It also encourages students to complete their TRS core requirements in a hurried manner, rather than spreading them out over their undergraduate career.

¹ Every semester the department collects summative course assessment data from students; annually we collect peer and self-evaluation data from faculty. In addition, in 2003 we undertook a survey of the entire campus FSA community and every student who at that point had taken the intro course, for a total of over 2000 surveys sent out and a return rate of nearly $\frac{1}{3}$. Substantial revisions were made to the 101 course as a result of those survey results, and incremental changes have been made on a regular basis since that time.

² The department has tried various strategies to create consistency across the multiple sections of the course, including common themes and texts, but the course continues to vary significantly from one section or instructor to another. Thus, while technically 101 remains a prerequisite for the upper-level courses, functionally the faculty must re-teach whatever overlapping material is central to a particular 200- or 300-level course.

³ Six of the 25 were double-sized sections because we simply did not have sufficient personnel, even with the part-time faculty, to support this demand. Total enrollment in Fall 2015 sections of TRS101 was 618 compared to a 2010–2014 5-year average of 403 students.

⁴ One of these was a double section. Enrollment in Fall 2016 sections of TRS101 totaled 532; 393 of those seats were taken by first-year students.

- b. The department has seen a significant loss of FT faculty due to retirement or death. In spring of 2012, we had 14 faculty in FT relationships with the university.⁵ Since then, we have lost 9 FT faculty⁶ and replaced 2,⁷ for a net loss of 7 FT faculty. We used to be able to have FT faculty teach the intro class and also support the 200- and 300-level electives. As a result of this 50% contraction in FT faculty, we no longer can support both the 101 and the rest of the Core, no less our own major, minor, and graduate programs.
- c. The significant increase in PT faculty required to teach so many sections of the 101 has entailed a concomitant shift in department resources, especially time commitments of the chairperson and other support personnel, with the result that an inordinate proportion of department resources are devoted to supporting this one class and the 18–20 faculty who teach it. This problem is particularly acute with respect to the numerous PT faculty, especially with respect to syllabus compliance and the necessary course assessment procedures.⁸
- d. TRS FT and PT faculty contribute to the CAPA, EGC, EHE, and ISJ segments of the new interdisciplinary Core. This has created even more of a drain on those who might be available to teach the TRS101.

The Proposed Change

The I-Core document specifies the Jesuit Heritage TRS Core requirement as TRS 101 and one additional TRS course. We recommend the following emendations to that I-Core JH-TRS requirement:

1. Change the JH-TRS Core requirement to *one lower-division TRS course* (a 100- or 200-level elective) *and one 300-level TRS elective*.⁹
2. The two courses could be taken in either order; neither would require a prerequisite.¹⁰
3. TRS101 would cease being a prerequisite for 200- and 300-level JH-TRS Core courses.

⁵ Cozzens, Donnelly, Hahnenberg, Kelly, Lassiter, Lauritzen, Mason, McGinn, Menkhaus, Nietupski, Nuth, Saritoprak, Schubeck, and Spencer.

⁶ The visitor has gone elsewhere; seven faculty have retired; and one died.

⁷ One visitor; one tenure-track.

⁸ We anticipate that this administrative strain would be reduced significantly by the proposed restructuring of the TRS Core because (a) it will allow the department to deliver the Core with fewer courses overall and (b) the PT faculty who would be teaching in the restructured TRS Core generally will have terminal degrees and be teaching in their areas of specialization, rather than teaching a broad introductory course that requires them to address material and issues that fall beyond their particular competencies.

⁹ This language would allow TRS101 to count toward core but would not require that specific course. Students who already completed their D-Core or I-Core TRS requirements will not be affected by this change. Students in the “First-in-the-World” grant intervention groups (in Fall 2017 and Fall 2018), will continue to be placed in TRS101 “Gold” sections, to avoid serious interpretive problems for the FITW study data. After the “First-in-the-World” (FITW) Grant intervention period concludes (in Fall 2018), we anticipate that few if any sections of TRS101 would be offered; functionally, the JH-TRS Core requirement would become “a 200-level elective and a 300-level elective.”

¹⁰ TRS 200-level courses are surveys that engage the breadth of a religious tradition or field of religious/theological study; 300-level seminars pursue a narrower religious or theological topic in greater depth. Class format and teaching strategies differ, while the level of difficulty remains constant.

4. The effective date for this change would be backdated to Fall 2015, to the inception of the I-Core.¹¹
5. Students in the I-Core who already will have taken the TRS101 before Fall 2017 can take either a 200- or 300-level TRS course to complete their JH-TRS requirement.

Alignment with TRS Learning Goals

Through ongoing review of programs and curricula, TRS has refined its Core Student Learning Outcomes for the 2017–2019 Undergraduate Bulletin. There are two SLOs:

1. Critically analyze the culturally and globally diverse dimensions of religious experience as expressed in sacred texts, art, ritual practice, ethical commitments, and social structures.
2. Appreciate how culturally and globally diverse religious traditions provide resources for responding to injustice and living ethically.

The 100- or 200-level TRS courses must address both SLOs, while 300-level TRS courses must address one of the two SLOs.

TRS Matrix of Core Course SLOs

The following chart specifies precisely which of the foregoing SLOs are to be met by each TRS core course. Instructors may add one or two additional course-level SLOs, but the syllabus must include whichever of the following SLOs has been designated for the course.¹²

Course Number: Title	Goal 1	Goal 2
101: Introduction to Theology & Religious Studies	X	X
200: Introduction to Old Testament/Tanakh	X	X
205: Introduction to New Testament	X	X
210: Introduction to Judaism	X	X
220: History of Christianity	X	X
222: American Christianity	X	X
223: African-American Religion	X	X
224: Minority Religions	X	X

¹¹ The University Registrar and other staff in that office recommend backdating this change to forestall a flood of petitions from I-Core students who would want to take advantage of the more flexible requirement.

¹² *NB:* This list is current for the date of this document. However, the TRS department reserves the right to add/subtract courses to/from this list, with the approval of the TRS Core subcommittee but without the approval of the full Core Committee, as long as the additional courses are designed to achieve the stated learning outcomes.

Course Number: Title	Goal 1	Goal 2
225: Religion in Popular Culture	X	X
226: Religions of Ohio and the Western Reserve	X	X
230: Contemporary Catholic Theology	X	X
231: Contemporary Catholic Theology: Global Perspectives	X	X
232: Jesus: History and Theology	X	X
233: Saints and Society	X	X
234: Theology Behind Bars	X	X
235: Catholicism in a Digital Age	X	X
236: Church and Ministry	X	X
240: Introduction to Islam	X	X
252: Religions of India	X	X
253: Chinese Religions	X	X
254: Japanese Religions	X	X
260: Moral Decision Making	X	X
261: African-American Christian Social Ethics	X	X
268: Catholic Moral Theology	X	X
270: Figureheads, Founders, Visionaries	X	X
271: Christian Spirituality	X	X
272: Soul Food, Food for the Soul	X	X
299: Special Topics in TRS	X	X
300: History of the Ancient Near East	X	
301: Archaeology and the Bible	X	
302: The Bible through the Eyes of the Hungry		X
306: Jesus in Film and History	X	
308: Healing in Early Christianity & the Greco-Roman World	X	
309: Special Topics in Biblical Studies	X	
315: The Holocaust and its Meaning		X
319: Special Topics in Jewish Studies	X	
321: History of the Papacy	X	
322: Women in Christian Tradition	X	
323: Life, Times, & Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr.		X
324: History of Christmas	X	
326: History of the Idea of Evil		X
328: The Franciscan Movement	X	
329: Special Topics in Christian History	X	
330: Models of God	X	

Course Number: Title	Goal 1	Goal 2
331: Sin, Grace, and Wholeness		X
332: Christology	X	
333: Understanding Church	X	
334: Sacraments	X	
335: What Happened at Vatican II	X	
336: African-American Theology		X
339: Special Topics in Systematic Theology	X	
341: Islam in America	X	
342: Islam and the Environment		X
349: Special Topics in Islamic Studies	X	
350: Tuohy Seminar	X	
351: Silk Road Religions	X	
359: Special Topics in Asian Religions	X	
361: Liberation Ethics		X
362: Religion, Ethics, and Public Policy		X
363: Social Justice and the Economy		X
364: Christian Sexuality		X
365: Religion, Terror, and Culture Wars		X
366: Religion, Freedom, and Law		X
368: Christian Social Justice		X
369: Special Topics in Religious Ethics		X
371: Ignatian Spirituality: Origins & Development	X	
372: Theology of African-American Sacred Music	X	
373: Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton		X
379: Special Topics in Spirituality	X	
389: Special Topics in Pastoral/Practical Theology	X	
399: Special Topics	X	

Benefits of This Change

1. This change will benefit students.
 - a. It will allow students to choose topics of interest in TRS to meet the JH-TRS Core requirement, rather than being required to take the 101 intro course.
 - b. It will provide more flexibility for students wishing to study abroad, since they will be able to entertain pursuing a TRS equivalent regardless of whether they have taken the current 101 prerequisite. It also thereby will eliminate a certain number of academic petitions each year.

- c. Students will be much more likely to be taught by FT faculty in the department, or by PT faculty with terminal degrees.
2. The change will benefit the TRS department.
 - a. It will allow FT faculty to continue to support the Core while simultaneously contributing to the TRS major, minor, and graduate programs at reasonable levels.
 - b. FT faculty will be able to focus on courses that fit their areas of specialization.
 - c. TRS faculty will have more opportunity to develop innovative courses in the new Core, including ones with topics of interest to various majors/programs (e.g., health).
 - d. When it comes to supporting the TRS PT faculty, the greatest demands on the department chair's and AA's time are attributable to the TRS101 intro course. Eliminating the 101 will relieve some of the excessive demand placed on the department AA and the chairperson who have been running twice-a-semester in-service workshops and other support activities specifically for PT faculty teaching TRS101. In addition, fewer PT faculty will be necessary to deliver the courses in this restructured TRS Core, and those PT faculty will be teaching in areas that relate to their specializations and research interests. The numerical reduction will have a proportionate effect in lightening the currently very heavy administrative burden, and the more focused courses in their respective fields will be easier for the PT faculty to organize and deliver without excessive support from the department chair.
 3. The change will benefit the College and University.
 - a. The number of TRS sections taught by PT faculty has more than trebled between fall 2012 and fall 2016.¹³ The vast majority of those PT sections are TRS101. Elimination of 101 will not eliminate PT faculty teaching TRS Core courses, but it will create a better balance between the number of sections offered by FT and PT faculty.
 - b. Because students will be required to take 300-level courses as part of the TRS Core, and because currently the 300-level courses (which are required for majors and minors) tend to have below-cap enrollments, we estimate that TRS will be able to offer 7–10 fewer Core courses each semester and still meet the academic needs of our students. This is estimated to save the university upwards of \$25,000/semester, depending upon the pay grade of the PT faculty who assist with the 200- and 300-level electives.

Timing

If adopted, this change will be published in the *2017–2019 Undergraduate Bulletin* and be applied retroactively from the onset of the Integrated Core Curriculum. This timing will have immediate curricular (and cost) benefits for students, the department, and the university.

Respectfully submitted,



¹³ PT faculty taught 9 sections in fall 2012; 8 of those were the 101. In fall 2016, PT faculty will be teaching 31 sections; 22 of those are TRS101.

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