

# Philosophical, Religious, and Ethical Inquiry

**Student Learning Outcome:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of philosophical, religious, or ethical concepts, traditions, or practices and their corresponding methods of inquiry.

## The Value of Philosophical, Religious, and Ethical Inquiry

Philosophical, religious, and ethical inquiry are related fields of analysis that invite students to explore and engage critically with the concepts, problems, traditions, and practices that constitute those fields of inquiry. These fields provide students with the tools to understand and evaluate philosophical, religious, and ethical claims, to ask pointed questions about the world, and to

discover how to attend to the philosophical, religious, and/or ethical convictions or assumptions that inform diverse peoples and traditions. Beyond this, these fields all build students' analytical and communicative skills and cultivate an ability to engage in respectful dialogue.

## Supporting Skills

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of significant concepts, methods, or theories from a particular philosophical, religious, or ethical domain.
2. Students will analyze, or apply to a given problem domain, the appropriate concept, method, theory, or argument from philosophy, religious studies, or ethics.
3. Students will evaluate significant concepts, methods, theories, or arguments within philosophy, religious studies, or ethics.

## Course Content Criteria

1. Courses in this category familiarize students with concepts, methods, theories, and/or arguments within philosophy, religious studies, or ethics.
2. Courses in this category challenge students to engage and analyze these concepts, methods, theories, or arguments.
3. Courses in this category use primary and/or secondary sources from the domains of philosophy, religious studies, and/or ethics.
4. Courses in this category have philosophy, religious studies, and/or ethics as a central focus.
5. Courses in this category may not be used to satisfy the Civics and Individual Ethics proficiency.
6. Courses in this category include an assessment assignment that requires students to demonstrate each of the skills in the Philosophical, Religious, and Ethical Inquiry Assessment Rubric (below). This assessment assignment should be one of the following: an objective exam, an essay question on an exam, an essay, or a research paper.

## Glossary

1. **Ethical domain:** Courses that fall under the domain of ethical inquiry will cover initial and/or advanced perspectives on what is good, moral, appropriate, just, or right and/or what is bad, immoral, inappropriate, unjust, or wrong in order to increase ethical awareness; and/or will provide students with the necessary theoretical foundation to effectively engage in ethical reasoning and decision-making in a wide variety of situations at the individual, societal, and cultural levels.
2. **Philosophical domain:** Courses that fall under the domain of philosophical inquiry will address traditional or emerging philosophical questions, often fundamental, concerning the nature of reality (metaphysics), our knowledge of it (epistemology), values (theoretical and applied ethics, aesthetics, social and political philosophy), and related topics (language, logic, philosophy of science, philosophy of mind). Philosophical methods of inquiry in these courses place a strong emphasis on presenting, interpreting, and critically evaluating arguments for and against various answers to philosophical questions.
3. **Primary source:** A work that makes an original contribution to the domain of philosophy, religion, or ethics. In philosophy, this could be a book, chapter, article, or essay by a philosopher, living or dead. In religious studies, this could be a foundational religious text like the Bible or the Qu'ran, or commentaries on a foundational text, or a cultural practice or event that is studied through the framework of religious studies. In ethics, this could be a book, chapter, article, or essay making an argument concerning ethics.
4. **Problem domain:** A matter for debate within the fields of philosophy, religious studies, or ethics, or a scenario (hypothetical or actual) that enables insightful consideration of issues or ideas in those fields.
5. **Secondary source:** A work that is an exposition, analysis, or criticism of a primary source. In philosophy, this could be a work that summarizes and explains the philosophical views and arguments of a major philosophical figure or the major views and arguments within an area of philosophical debate. In religious studies, this could be a historical analysis of a primary source, a critical analysis of a religious performance, or a theoretical engagement with a cultural event or practice. In ethics, this could be a white paper or case study, or a discussion or exposition of the major ethical views and arguments.
6. **Religious domain:** Courses that fall under the domain of Religious Studies address traditions commonly referred to by the designation "religion" (such as Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, etc.) including their contents, sects, or subsects. As appropriate to a particular course, this may include practices, beliefs, or texts which may not be commonly referred to as "religious" but are designated as such for the purposes of the course and approached with appropriate methods utilized in Religious Studies in a liberal arts context.

## Philosophical, Religious, and Ethical Inquiry Assessment Rubric

Supporting Skills	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1
<b>Demonstrate an understanding of significant concepts, methods, or theories from a particular philosophical, religious, or ethical domain.</b>	Articulates or applies core concepts, methods, or theories, with substantial familiarity and a high degree of clarity and consistency. Effectively integrates key terms and frameworks with no contradictions or gaps. Explanations are extremely well-structured and clear.	Articulates or applies concepts, methods, or theories with familiarity and general clarity and consistency. Integrates key terms with minor inconsistencies. Explanations are generally well-structured and clear.	Articulates or applies concepts, methods, or theories with some degree of general familiarity, but not consistency. May struggle to integrate key terms. Inconsistencies or conceptual gaps may exist in explanations.	Demonstrates limited familiarity with core concepts, methods, or theories. Struggles to integrate key terms. Major misconceptions interfere with explanations.
<b>Analyze, or apply to a given problem domain, the appropriate concept, method, theory, or argument from philosophy, religious studies, or ethics.</b>	Performs nuanced and highly effective analysis or application of key ideas to a specific problem or domain. Supports ideas with examples and demonstrates critical distance. Goes beyond basic description to offer insight.	Effectively and logically applies or analyzes appropriate concepts. Clearly connects theories to the domain, using examples or illustrations. There is some evidence of interpretive depth and critical distance.	Attempts to analyze or apply concepts but may not do so effectively or appropriately. May include vague examples or unclear connections between ideas and application.	Struggles to analyze or apply concepts. Work is superficial, off-target, or contains major gaps or inconsistencies. Connections between theory and problem domain are poorly articulated or missing.
<b>Evaluate significant concepts, methods, theories, or arguments within philosophy, religious studies, or ethics.</b>	Offers a convincing and detailed evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. Makes original judgments using clear criteria and examples. Demonstrates insight and critical awareness.	Provides a thoughtful evaluation with clear attention to both strengths and weaknesses. Uses appropriate examples and sound reasoning, though may lack originality or depth.	Provides an evaluation, but lacks consistency, clarity, or persuasiveness. May identify strengths or weaknesses but not both. Limited or generic examples.	Evaluation is unclear, not convincing, or overly vague. Lacks specific criteria, examples, or consistent reasoning. Often descriptive rather than evaluative.