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DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

HISTORY Shortly after the US Supreme Court encouraged the academic study of religion in public universities in 1963,¹ Western Kentucky University created the Department of Philosophy and Religion, thus bringing this new discipline together with existing appointments in Philosophy. Western today offers the only Religious Studies major among state institutions in Kentucky, and is one of three top programs in Philosophy in the state.

The primary mission of this department has been its contribution to Western's General Education curriculum. Over ninety percent of the department's course offerings and over ninety percent of its course enrollments are in general education courses. Since reaching its present size of thirteen faculty in the 1970's, the department's course offerings have enabled all Western students who wished to do so to take at least one course in Philosophy or Religious Studies.

Despite this primary commitment to general education, however, both majors and faculty in the department are among Western's very best.

STUDENTS The average ACT scores for majors in Philosophy and Religious Studies are higher than those of any other department in Potter College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (figure 1), and are the second highest in the University (figure 2).

Fig. 1. Average ACT Composite by Department - Potter College - Fall 1995

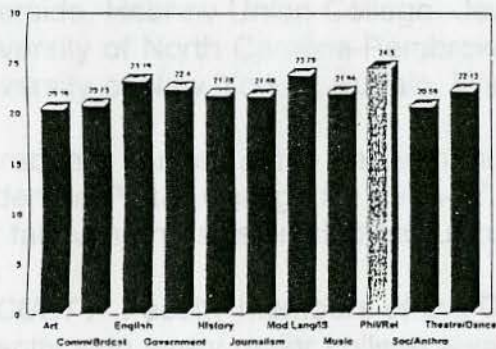
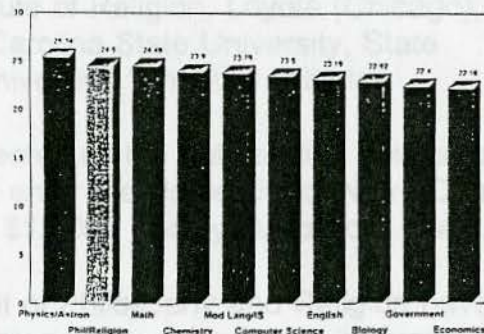


Fig. 2. Average ACT Composite by Department - University - Fall 1995



¹It might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, many not be effected consistently with the First Amendment. [District of Abington v. Schempp, 374 U.S. 203 (1963)]

Despite generally falling total enrollments in the University during the past five years, the Department of Philosophy and Religion has increased both its total course enrollment (figure 3) and its total program enrollment (figure 4).

Fig. 3. Student Credit Hours by Department - Potter College - Fall 1992 & Fall 1996

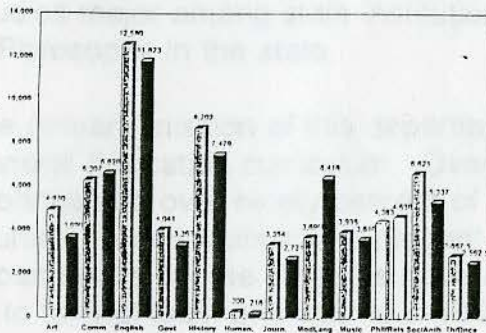
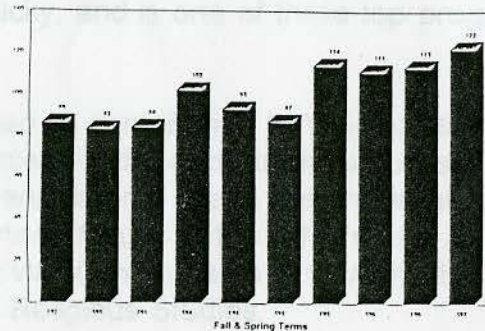


Fig. 4. Philosophy and Religion Total Program Enrollment



STUDENT SUCCESS The success of graduates of this department can be seen in the quality of some of the institutions to which they have gone on for their PhD: Boston University, Chicago, Colorado, Drew, Emory, Florida State, Georgia, Harvard, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Iowa, Marquette, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Notre Dame, Pennsylvania, Rice, Southern California, Temple, Vanderbilt, and University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The success of graduates of this department can also be seen in the quality of some of the institutions at which they presently hold faculty rank: University of California at Riverside, Hebrew Union College--Jewish Institute of Religion, Loyola (Chicago), University of North Carolina-Pembroke, North Carolina State University, State University of New York at Buffalo, Wesleyan University, Wheaton (Illinois),

A graduate student in the department was selected as the outstanding graduate student in Potter College for 1996-97. She will enter the University of Notre Dame this fall with an assistantship for full tuition and \$15,000 each year for four years.

FACULTY Faculty members of the Department of Philosophy and Religion have recently won every major college award, won three of the four major university awards, and been elected Chair of the Faculty Senate three times:

- Potter College Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1994 and 1997
- Potter College Award for Excellence in Research, 1997
- Potter College Award for Public Service, 1996
- University Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1997
- University Award for Excellence in Research, 1997
- University Libraries Award, 1994
- Chair, Faculty Senate, 1991, 1995, and 1996
- Fulbright Scholar, Yemen 1996, Morocco 1997