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Letter of Recommendation for Teaching Portfolio of Florian Pohl
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Florian Pohl taught four different courses as a primary instructor at Temple University's Department of Religion during his tenure here as a graduate student. Three were part of our core curriculum distribution requirements, Introduction to Western Religion, Introduction to World Religions (introductory courses) and Death and Dying (an upper level course that meets our writing requirement). He also taught an upper level Introduction to Islam. While I did not observe Florian's teaching, I closely monitor the teaching evaluations in our department. I was also the instructor for the teaching practicum required of our graduate students the semester that Florian enrolled in the course. I am writing this recommendation based on my observations of Florian's student evaluations and on his performance in the practicum.

The College of Liberal Arts suggests that three items on our Course and Teaching Evaluations (CATE) are the best indicators of quality teaching and course preparation: "The instructor taught this course well," "I increased my ability to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view," and "This course had value to me." In the evaluations from fall 2003 and Spring 2004 (four sections), Florian achieved scores ranging from 3.86 to 4.86 on a five-point scale on all three questions. In only two (of twelve) instances did the scores go below 4.0. The comments consistently noted his organization, sensitivity, openness and approachability. Florian's evaluations ranked among the Department's best for that year.

In the Teaching Practicum, Florian consistently impressed me with his thoughtful and meticulous approach to his teaching. The syllabus he created was by far the best in the class, particularly in terms of clarity and thoroughness. A requirement of the practicum was to bring examples of class assignments that corresponded to our topic for the week. Florian brought in examples of exercises he used in class that required much preparation and innovation on his part. He was committed to drawing students into active learning. He also used technology in most creative and effective ways. I was also most impressed with the frequency with which Florian sought feedback from students about the course. The course portfolio he prepared as the final assignment for the practicum was also exemplary. It illustrated the extent to which Florian is committed to thinking about his

teaching, learning from others, and working assiduously to produce the best possible learning environment for his students.

As Florian suggests in his statement of teaching philosophy, he is committed to creating a student-centered teaching environment where students learn not only about the subject matter, but also how to critique and analyze the information they are learning as well as to develop a broader perspective of the world around them. It is clear from the evaluations he received here at Temple, and from my own observation of Florian as a student of educational practice, that he has set goals for himself that are both admirable and that he has been able, already in his brief teaching career, to achieve.


Rebecca Alpert
Chair