**Course Learning Journal**

PHI 815 – History of the Integration of Religion and Society

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Professors

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Introduction

I am asked to “describe the expectations of the graduate program and the campus residency for this course.” I know from the DSL program’s catalog description that this program is designed for scholar-practitioners, with the emphasis on practical application of knowledge attained. This is order to become world changers.

The intent of this course is to explore the *integration of religion and society from a historical perspective*. I perceive that it fits into the DSL program as a provider of background information, rather than practical skill-building emphasis. I am unsure as to why this course is placed within the course sequence for the DSL program; instead, I simply trust that it has been placed into the sequence because it builds knowledge.

Personal Growth

This course stretched me in many ways, but especially in theological principles. I have not been affiliated with any form of religious organization for nearly 50 years, and I communicated this to the professor.

At first I really struggled with the material and lecture content. All of my fellow students came from strong Christian backgrounds and were “fluent” in Christian principles, doctrine, and scripture. I made it very clear to my professor that I was coming from a zero background.   
At times I felt completely overwhelmed by the content of this course – despite having taken a philosophy course as an undergraduate student. This is because the philosophical arguments in this OGS course were narrower, and did not include the classical philosophers or standard ethical arguments with which I was familiar.

During the first half of this course I frequently misunderstood assignment instructions, which created immense frustration. However, after stepping away from my program and returning after a few months, something “clicked” as I approached my 100-Day Assignment with fresh eyes. I think that it was good for me to complete a few courses at another university so that I could return to OGS with perspective and a greater appreciation for the spiritual aspect (which was missing entirely from the other university’s curricula).

Reflective Entry

While this course was mainly theoretical, I was able to contextualize some of its content in my volunteer position with the Hospital Foundation. I began to think of my volunteer service as a form of ministry. While my work is outwardly secular in nature, inwardly I was able to connect service to a higher power with my service to the community. Once that realization occurred, the content of this course gained relevancy to my life.

As for concerns, the only concern is that I cannot overtly express any form of spiritual ideas or thoughts in my work. However, as stated above, I gain inward strength and purpose.

Future Expectations

My only questions and concerns relating to the program expectations are whether I would be expected to incorporate scripture or Christian principles within my action research project. While a reflective section of the project would be acceptable, the incorporation of religious principles into the research itself would offend some of my fellow Foundation members and possibly get me into trouble with the Healthcare District. In light of these risks, I am confident that my professors will help me to maintain secularity in my hands-on research.

Conclusion

The DSL program’s catalog description states that this program is designed for scholar-practitioners, with an emphasis on practical application of knowledge attained. This is order to help OGS graduates become world changers.

I have not been affiliated with any form of religious organization for nearly 50 years. Therefore, I’ve admittedly struggled with some of the deeply religious content of my courses. Nonetheless, I feel enriched by this added dimension of learning – especially as it informs my newly discovered sense of purpose by viewing my work as a form of ministry to the community.

While my work is outwardly secular in nature, inwardly I was able to connect service to a higher power with my service to the community. Once that realization occurred, the content of this course gained relevancy to my life.

As I move through the DSL program, I am confident that I will continue to receive the same gracious support that I’ve receive thus far, including the accommodation of my secular restrictions within the context of my volunteer work.