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***120 Day - Course Learning Journal***

The journal is a written reflection of your learning journey while working in each course and is an integration of the essential elements of the course within your professional field of interest. The objective of the *course* journal is to produce a degree of acculturation, integrating new ideas into your existing knowledge of each course. This is also an opportunity to communicate with your professor consistent with the Tutorial Methodology to express insights gained as a result of the course of study. Submit the course learning journal via DIAL. The course learning journal should be 5-7 pages in length, and should include the following sections:

1. **Introduction** – Describe the expectations of the graduate program and the campus residency component for that course. Summarize the intent of the course, how it fits into the graduate program as a whole, and the relevance of its position in the curricular sequence.

2. **Personal Growth** - Describe your personal growth–*how the course stretched or challenged you*– as well as your progress in mastery of course content and skills during the week and through subsequent readings – *what new insights or skills you gained.*

3. **Reflective Entry** - Add a reflective entry that describes the contextualization (or *adaptation and relevant application*) of new learning into your professional field. What questions or concerns have surfaced about your professional field as a result of your study?

4. **Future Expectations** - Continue the journal by addressing questions and concerns you now have relating to the graduate program expectations.

5. **Conclusion** – Synthesize the three body sections above, evaluating the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional, religious, and educational goals.

**Introduction**

This course of study of PHI 815, History of the Integration of Religion & Society, I believe is a key course in OGS’s programs, where historical understanding is critical to social research, in having an understanding of our current milieu is predicted based on our understanding of historical development of the past. We can know how we got to be at our current state based on having an understanding of history. As a sociologist, I understand history is not only of events that took place in the past, but of social change, whether positive or negative, technology driven or movement driven, this social change correlates to the circumstances where we are at the present time in history. Social change agents are mainly people that impact the world in positive or negative ways. With the focus of this course on the integration of religion and society, we learned how people of religious convictions have impacted social change in the world by becoming active social change agents.

**Personal Growth**

This course challenged my thinking on history, where the role of God comes into play in historical development. From the scriptures we can understand God’s plan of salvation, redemption and justification and the ultimate historical progress to a new heaven and earth with the reuniting of soul, spirit and body. I understand that God is sovereign and is in control of all things, however, God chose not to control all things, and allow His creation to participate interactively in His creation. So, while God has a guiding hand in the world, He for the most part does not cause things to happen throughout history and time, except by way of miracles and His direct interaction with His creation. God allows is creation to be active agents in the world, for better or for worst, as these social agents interact within the world and God interacts with them at that point in time in history. God being eternal it is strange to say He interacts with His creation within the time of creation, nevertheless that is how He chose to function within the social world. God being outside of His created time, it is hard to grasp how God interacts within His creation timeline. What we can know that He created all things and gave humankind the responsibility to care for His creation. As we reflect on the present and the past, we find that we fall short of the responsibility given to us.

**Reflective Entry**

The historical context has been important to me throughout my career, as an applied sociologist and healthcare data analytics, where I understand that the social and healthcare dynamics, I am working with to today has a historical context, in addition to the context of the social systems. In examining the social determents of health as we ‘know’ it today, has a historical, economic, political and societal context to it. In the healthcare industry there has been a push to measure and help address social determents of health of patients. However, the questions that are asked and measured are limited to a select few identifiers, that community resources could help with, but the larger social factors are not deal with, because it would take structural changes to have them impacted, such as workers receiving living wages, or the recreational drug market. Nevertheless, the healthcare industry focuses on social determinants of health, is a great start and does provide leverage to address the larger social structure issues.

**Future Expectations**

As a master’s level sociologist, one of my main concerns of the OGS PhD program is that it is not sociological enough for my interests, I continue to struggle with this, however, I know that the very nature of sociology is interdisciplinary, and a main function of sociology is the social research methodology, from which OGS seems to be strong in. From what I have seen that most students that enroll in OGS are not particularly from a social science background, this could be from my naive experience I have had thus far, but this has brought me concern, whether I am in the right program for my interest. If a local university had a PhD program in sociology, I would have pursued that program. However, there is no local university with a PhD program in sociology, and I have evaluated other online or low residency programs and found that OGS was the most closely fit for me and my sociological interest. What has been great about OGS’s program is the flexibility focus area of the course, this has allowed me to focus on various aspects of sociology, so I could have a well-rounded sociology education.

Now for the Christian based part of OGS’s program, this has been impressed in many ways. One, that OGS develops Christian scholar practitioners to engage the world in such a way that they seek to make positive social changes in the world, Christians out side of the wall of the church following the call of Christ to love, love people in such a way that we cannot sit by and do nothing about the suffering of people in the world, OGS is developing Christians of action! This has been on my heart for so long, and found that sociology aids in developing Christians of love and action, that is one of the reasons I feel called to be a Christian sociologist, to help bring to bear the burden of people out side the church, who feel hated by Christians, thus Christ. We as Christians need to repent of our sin of not loving people. These people outside the church ALL desperately want to be loved, and loved by God, we Christians are the conduit to bring Christ’s love to them, if get off our rears and our high horse and go and live out Christianity in action and love. Secondly, I love that OGS has students from all over the world, not only is that great in and of itself, but what it means that OGS gets all flavors and denominations of Christianity and fosters that open community of believers, which is also a model for us as world changers to incorporate different churches in our communities to enact the positive social change sought. And thirdly, as Christian sociologist, I get to not only learn from Christian professors, but also my fellow Christian students, and what they see as issues in the world that they want to help solve. What this does, it provides me with research topics for future sociological research, in which I could help to provide the research that is needed for Christians and social leaders to understand the dynamics of a given problem so they could help bring about positive social change. I will also actively participate in making positive social change, but as a sociologist one of our main functions is to study the social world; the first step to solve a problem is to understand the problem.

I see the study of sociology/social research is an opportunity to study God’s social creation and thus studying God. I do look forward in my progression of OGS PhD program and what OGS and God has for my development as a Christian sociologist. Though I have expressed concern whether I am in the right program for my interest, I have heard Dr. Ward say to students, in a meet up in regard to OGS’s education methodology is to ‘trust the process’, and that is what I intend to do.

**Conclusion**

This course of study of PHI 815, History of the Integration of Religion & Society has been very insightful and enjoyable to learn how people of faith impacted society. This is my hope a well that I and others of the Christian faith in the current society may impact society for positive social change. One thing that I have noticed on Christians making a difference in society, they acted and made the changes in spite of the societal laws, meaning the Christians lived out their Christian lives in contradiction to society and even the status quo of the predominant ‘Christian’ stance in society, i.e. U.S. slavery, U.S. white ‘Christian’ racism.

WORKS CITED