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Omega Graduate School

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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 class was an all-encompassing learning and research element of the Omega Graduate School mission and objective. Faith-Learning Integration and Interdisciplinary Studies introduced me to the art of hermeneutics in various disciplines as well as weighing scripture against the theories, concepts and ideologies of these disciplines. The class exercises and assignments challenged me to apply my Christian worldview to economics and sociology while analyzing current trends and problems in the world of affordable housing. My skills for interpreting scripture were enhanced as well as the ability to integrate my Christian tradition and reason personal experiences.

My Christian worldview of economics in the context of low-income families had to be evaluated. It was also important to contextualize my Christian interdisciplinary research findings eloquently and enlighten the reader on the issues of economics, wealth, poverty and low-income housing with the application of biblical truths. New research questions would arise compelling me to confront divergent beliefs and practices. In the end, it was necessary to assess the value of this research and link it with my Christian beliefs and practices in order to continue on the path of scholarship.

**Personal Growth**

The class was certainly a challenge. The 20-day allowed me to assess my own worldviews and calling as it relates to my vocational. The assignment also allowed me to assess the validity of my research interest and how it may benefit the industry I have been working in for so long. It was somewhat of a reflective paper and at the same time an exercise challenging me to hone my research and writing skills. One of the theories I’ve developed an interest in since my second CORE is social capital. For some reason, this theory has intrigued me enough so that I’ve wanted to research the origin of the theory, the strength of the theory and its correlation and effect on low-income families.

One of the benefits of the 20-day assignment was the mental preparation for the 60-day assignment. The 20-day, 60 and 100-day assignments were sort of a progression. Ideas for which concepts and theories were generated and written down during the 20-day. The disciplines in which to engage during the 60-day were assessed ahead of time giving me an advantage for the next assignment. My growth occurred in the areas of critical thinking, interdisciplinary literature review and the application of my faith with my vocation.

I always enjoy the 60-day developmental readings. During this time, I learn new vocabulary, which is a “thing” for me. The 60-day allows me to express my feelings, concerns or agreement with various ideologies and theories as well as familiarize myself with seminal authors and preeminent scholars in different fields. The key is to remember these scholars and use their works later on in my program.

The cross-sectional conversations with various disciplines for the 100-day assignment was a welcomed growth opportunity. The 100-day worksheet was initially intimidating but turned out to be very beneficial. The worksheet caused me to critically think through a drafted plan of how I will utilize my research and knowledge in the future, after completing my Ph.D. A detailed analysis of how my research will affect others and how it can be communicated was required. It was an assignment that forced me to learn how to engage the literature of various disciplines in order to have a written dialogue. Researching emerging trends in economics was never on my radar but helped tremendously. This was definitely an exercise that developed my interdisciplinary research skills and introduced me to theories and writings I would not have otherwise read.

**Reflective Entry**

Before one begins a learning journey, its good to assess one’s skill level and understanding of the subject matter. Once I completed the 20-day assignment I had a better understanding of my strengths and weaknesses and what areas of scholarship I needed to develop. Assessing residents’ finances is what I do for a living. Having to recertify each tenant every year, developed my understanding and knowledge of liquid and risky assets, retirement planning and financial management. It is my responsibility to examine bank statements and quarterly investment statements. Crafting a budget is another skill I have developed over the years. The assignments for this class have given me an opportunity to use these skills and transfer them into ideas for research. My experience and work knowledge that was reflected upon during this assignment has also been used to discern which disciplines needed to be integrated into my research interest and which theories would pair with existing knowledge.

The 20-day was a chance to assess my worldview and apply the Creation-Fall, Redemption-Consummation biblical narrative to a social science context. One thing about the OGS program is that I get to re-educate myself in scripture and enjoy God’s word simultaneously with my studies. How many Ph.D. students can say that? This spiritual trajectory of birth, sin, redemption and restoration fits into many of the current issues of our day. As a faith filled researcher, this narrative is crucial as the impetus for my research and other OGS students.

**Future Expectations**

Hopefully, there will be assignments that challenge me in the same way this one has. Opportunities to delve deeper into wealth building theories and strategies coupled with the expertise of sociologists is a necessary task for my research. A faith-integration class that conversates with the field of ethics is also a welcomed learning experience. One of my interests is Christian but it is difficult to remember the seminal ethicists that have framed many of the theories of today. It would be exciting to incorporate the discipline of ethics into my research of interest and engage in written dialogue with various scholars and writers in the field.

In future CORES, I expect to dialogue with other students about their learning experience and how they have integrated their faith into their research. It is a hope that students will share with each other what disciplines that have become more familiar with, and which ones support their research interest. It is also an expectation to have this dialogue in person on campus to really be able to glean from my co-horts and facilitators and engage in healthy debate. Learning in a retreat like setting such as OGS and interacting with fellow students in between classes would expose me to other ideas of faith integrations and give me a chance to talk with those I may not agree with. Students from OGS come from all over the world, so our personal experiences, backgrounds, and cultural habits vary.

Each of us practice our faith in different ways and have been called to a variety of professions which lends to a diverse of perspectives and opinions. The students at OGS also belong to different denominations so it would be exciting to learn the tradition of these denominations from a human instead of a book. This is also necessary during the 60-day and 100-day meetups. One other expectation is for the student population at OGS to grow in number. This will enhance the experience for every student.

**Conclusion**

The class stretched my writing and research abilities which is what it is supposed to do. The assignments may have been difficult, but I still enjoyed them and learned a great deal. Some of the books, such as Assets for the Poor, I want to one day purchase and read through it in detail. This will be a great book to have in my repertoire. For future teaching opportunities, I want to begin extending my current home library and equip myself with resources that will be useful for a potential non-profit startup. Checking out books for my assignments at OGS allows me to browse sources and decide whether they are ones I want to keep. There are certain writers I have come across during class, that have written multiple books. It will be an exciting journey to study these authors further. Faith-integration during this course has been defined, explained and the process of faith-integration has been mandated for not only this class, but the process applies to future classes.

The skills of faith-learning integration and interdisciplinary studies have been developed to where I can appreciate them more and see the necessity to use them in other contexts outside of class. When expressing my desire to teach ethics or Christianity at a secular university, it was told to me that I would not be able to genuinely teach my faith within a framework of revelation and biblical truth. My answer to that is if I am not learning faith-learning and interdisciplinary studies to have the skills to be able to reach those who do not believe or those who are skeptical and depend on intellect, then what am I learning these skills for. Is the Holy Spirit not able fortify and elevate all of the knowledge I have gained in order to penetrate the unbeliever. Is the anointing of Christ not able to work miracles and give increase to he dialogue that has occurred in the classroom so that redemption and salvation take place, even if not in my presence. Surely God can!