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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**

While the class was intimidating, it was necessary to move me to the next level in my learning. This class was taught by two individuals, but I believe the lecture is best suited to be given by one person for consistency and efficiency. Others may have a different opinion.

**Personal Growth**

 Learning how to do a Literature Review was very difficult for me. It may have been assumed that the process is easy for entry CORE students but believe me; it is not. Jose Galvin’s “Writing Literature Reviews” took me through the step-by-step process of what the review should contain and how it should be structured. Currently, I have only a basic understanding of the dissertation process and have become more familiar with the core elements of a dissertation. My familiarity stems from the knowledge gained in this class and from reading published dissertations. Literature Reviews, I have realized, have much value. Literature Reviews help you assess the quality of each article, and they reveal the similarities between them.

Reviews of articles written on the same topic, mention the same seminal authors or groundbreaking research from pre-eminent scholars. Shared concepts or theories are also included amongst authors, so it is easy to become familiar with heavily used concepts and terms. One of the benefits of reading a plethora of articles for me is learning new vocabulary.

Whenever I begin an assignment or open up Pro Quest, I pull out my small notepad that is dedicated to new vocabulary. It only takes a few seconds to look a word up and write the meaning down. A literature review helps to discern which type of research methodology was used to gain the most insight or data for a group of researchers writing on the same topic. Some use longitudinal studies, some take advantage of a large population sample whereas others have used a small portion of the subset to gather data and reach a conclusion. When completing a review, one gets to compare whether in person or on-line surveys worked best or whether in person interviews or phone interviews made the participants more comfortable, therefore garnering the most information.

Comparing conclusions and challenges of each research method is also very beneficial so that in the future I am most informed of how I want to conduct my own research. One of the other course outcomes that was achieved was discerning the difference between qualitative and quantitative dissertation research. This class combined with Statistics for social research I helped in this area.

**Reflective Entry**

During the time of completing the 20 and 60-day assignments, I was going through serious medical issues, having to make a few trips to the emergency room. What I can say is, it was a pressing. The work however, was still enjoyable. Through weakness, headaches, lightheadedness, shortness of breath and short dizzy spells, I persevered. Honestly, it has been rough. Our God is a keeper and lifter up of our heads. It was literally him who rose me up in the morning to go to work and on my days off, God rose me up to sit at my dining table and look up articles. It was the resurrection power of God who did not let me die and empowered me to keep going. As I reflect, I want to thank him and exalt him. God deserves all the honor, praise and glory.

What a time, what a time. Perhaps I have a high tolerance for pain or perhaps I’m committed to succeeding, committed to living, committed to finishing my goals and completing my God-given assignments. Satan tried to have the final say and impede my progress. He even tried to remove me from the face of the earth. As the scripture says, I did not die, but I lived to declare the works of the Lord. The battle is not over but I am stable and feeling much better. This is still going to be a challenging summer since I am absolutely exhausted and need some serious downtime and will also have to prepare for a forum paper presentation. Lord Help Me!

The 20-day assignment was fun and very educational. This served somewhat as a prerequisite for the 100-day assignment. It is enjoyable and inspiring to read others’ research and what they are passionate about. Dissertations reflect commitment, discipline, passion, drive, and purpose.

**Future Expectations**

The prayer is that in the next couple of CORES, I will become more skilled at writing literature reviews. At this time, my reviews are sub-par. Another expectation is for me to reach a decision about whether quantitative or qualitative research will be best suited for my research goals. Some of the books recommended in the syllabus are on my list to purchase at a later stage. These books will help me during my dissertation phase as well as serve as resources for the future. One of my goals is to become an adjunct professor and I’ll be able to refer to these resources as a guide. While reading other people’s dissertations, it makes me think that I’ll never reach that state or be able to accomplish what they have accomplished. One of my fears is that I will not “sound” scholarly enough.

People use a lot of complicated words when they write articles and dissertations. It is important to remind myself, that while my quality of research and scholarship should be at a certain level, by the time I get to the dissertation phase, it is still a reflection of who I am and how I have learned. Not everyone speaks the same or writes the same. Our languages and vocabular reflect our educational achievements, personalities, as well as our environment. This is something I have to remind myself of. The academic books I have enjoyed the most ae written in a vernacular I can understand. One’s that translate the meaning and purpose of subject with ease.

There is also the expectation that the student body at Omega Graduate School will. continue to grow and that I will have an opportunity to discuss these sociological issues and solutions with my fellow students in person, on campus. The campus at OGS seems to be an ideal, retreat-like environment for learning. Another expectation I have is to continue to have opportunities to develop my dissertation development skills and become even more familiar with seminal scholars in my area of research. The origin of the theories and concepts come from seminal works, and they are always referred to when reading journal articles. The key will be to remember these seminal writings and categorize them in my files so I will always have access.

**Conclusion**

I am appreciative of the time that Dr. Reichard shared with me and his willingness to answer even the most trivial questions. He should probably be teaching more advanced students. Just this week, I had a very intellectually stimulating conversation with an associate of mine. This is a fellow church member, whom I have vaguely known for some years. We see each other at church affairs as well as private events at the President of my alma mater’s house. She is a tenured professor at Howard University, and we share a love for the school and the success of the African American community. This past week was the first time we hung out together. We took the train to an outdoor jazz concert at a new park close to the new Amazon headquarters. One fact I knew about her was that she teaches interior design, but I had no idea what types of projects her and her students have been working on. Currently Howard University has a partnership with HUD and one of the local housing agencies in our city. Howard had been commissioned to draft design models for affordable housing.

This past year, she came up with an assignment for her students to submit a design proposal for affordable housing that would be wealth building. It was like, wow, I could not believe we had the same mindset and passion. For my Faith-Integration and Interdisciplinary studies class, my topic was wealth building, and I used the final 100-day worksheet to draft out a vision for this type of community. One of the most intriguing books I found during CORE 3 was “Assets and the Poor: New American Welfare Policy” by Michael Sherraden. It is a seminal writing that emphasizes assets and long-term wealth building strategies over income. George Mason University has the book in their library, but this is an investment I want to make by next year. One of the eye-opening theories of Sherraden’s book is something that has resonated with me for a while now. Not too many people care to teach the poor wealth building strategies because they think it does not pertain to them or that they are not worthy of such an education. As a man thinketh, so is he.

If we repeatedly speak wealth and success into someone’s life, they begin to internalize it and envision it themselves. Not everyone would catch on to the vision, but many would appreciate the financial literacy and begin to make a change in the way they manage their finances. My friend has a few different ideas on how a low-income property can generate wealth for families allowing them to become financially independent. One of the ideas I shared with her was my vision to start a non-profit where I and other experts would go into housing communities and give seminars on empowerment, health and wellbeing and teach wealth building strategies. We also debated about the ways these communities could accumulate social capital. My new favorite construct.

My point in bringing this up is because I realized God is ordering my steps and it was confirmation that my ideas are not too far-fetched. It also made me re-think leaving OGS. Yes, I have been researching other schools that have larger student bodies, have in-person residencies and more of a name in the academic community. Maybe this was just a phase during a very physically and emotionally taxing school term. Not saying I have made a final decision, but perhaps God does have me in the right place after all and once it is all said and done, it will be God’s favor and the quality of my research that will open doors for me and get me where I need to go.