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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**

Learning key concepts is an important element of the course. The term contextualization itself has many facets and can be applied to various scenarios. In the beginning of the course, it is easy to take the word contextualization for granted but the CORE sessions and recommended readings would be necessary to fully grasp the concept and learn how to apply it to biblical truth.

One of the objectives of the class was to assess the value of the sociological integration of religion. This is necessary for any student of theology, any Christian social scientist wanting to make an impact in their community. Sociology and the Christian religion go together as cheese and crackers. One compliments the other. Jesus cares about the human condition and wants to reach every soul and meet every need. If you think about it, the Holy Spirit is an expert on human behavior, attitudes and aspirations. How can one study human interaction and human suffering without considering the creator of the human mind and spirit.

Although the eventual topic of my final paper for this course was on White Christian Nationalism the exercises required would teach me how to evaluate the contribution of social sciences to contextualizing my faith in the area of helping families living in low-income housing. Learning social theories and concepts would assist me in looking at trends, and patterns of human behavior of those that have struggled to make ends meet and have not been reared in financially stable environments. Using these theories and concepts along with assessing how scripture and my faith fits into the milieu of this specific subset is imperative.

Being able to make the inference on how culture has influences biblical teaching and how it has influenced society is an undertaking. Culture is a phenomenon on its own and not something I dared to study prior to enrolling in OGS. In our world there are a myriad of cultures that make up a myriad of social norms, ideas, beliefs and customs. These various cultures intersect quite often and need to be analyzed. Gaining the skills to construct an interdisciplinary Christian mode of contextualization for my scholarly work has been extremely rewarding and will no doubt be beneficial in my future endeavors

It will be an ongoing task to discern and contrast good and bad historical contextualization efforts. There have been many failed attempts by theologists, missionaries, sociologists and even politicians. Many ethnic groups have been taken advantage of, unappreciated and undermined. Analyzing the history of contextualization is another undertaking I would not have thought necessary. There have been many insights gained from contextualization theory that are applicable to family, church and community. Gaining these insights is helpful for anyone committed to a life of Christian service, and anyone committed to advancing the kingdom of God through witness and love.

**Personal Growth**

 My passion has been ethics for years, but I have gained a greater appreciation for the social sciences after this CORE. The ethos of a culture is intertwined in that culture’s ideas, belief system, and way of life. To be honest sociology has not been an appealing subject over the years but I now have an understanding of its value in being able to analyze families living in affordable housing. Low-income housing is a culture in itself where the residents have their own thoughts and beliefs on how they should live or survive. Some of these attitudes and beliefs are passed down through generations and some are developed due to hardship or trauma. The work of social sciences has delved deep into the socio cultural norms and the habits of families from various socio economic backgrounds and have laid the ground work for students such as myself.

The 60-day assignments is always helpful in learning new concepts, theories and vocabulary. I am a fan of learning new vocabulary. In my work lounge (second bedroom of condo) I have a small note pad that I pull out any time I am working on a school assignment. Whenever I come across a new word or a word in which I have forgotten the meaning, I look it up and write it down. The one good aspect of taking the GRE exam (twice!) was the vocabulary section. It is challenging and helped to expand my vocabulary. Completing these assignments also helps to familiarize myself with preeminent scholars I would have never heard of. It is a challenge to read the writings of those with a divergent ideology than mines. Usually opposite of biblical truth. However, their research educates me and inspires me to read more and continue my research along with faith integration. Their un-godly perspectives are an impetus for me to continue my journey of scholarship.

**Reflective Entry**

During the time of completing the 20 and 60-day assignments, I was going through serious medical issues, making a few trips to the emergency room. What I can say is, it was a pressing. The work was still enjoyable. Through the weakness, headaches, lightheadedness, 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.

George Ladd’s piece on the kingdom was an excellent read. It was a profound and revelational analyzation of God’s kingdom. Whenever an assignment requires a hermeneutical application of scripture, I find it most rewarding. With these types of assignments, I usually get new insights into God’s word and find new ways to apply the knowledge gained. As a bible teacher this will be a piece to keep in my repertoire for the future. God’s kingdom is complex as well as commanding. The concept of being apart of a ruling and powerful kingdom is not something the world thinks about and often undervalues. Culture has created its own kingdom and sovereignty. The world’s culture has uplifted Satan’s kingdom without even realizing it. Not to worry though, God’s kingdom will not be outdone or overpowered.

**Future Expectations**

I have a great expectation that my healing will continue and that CORE four will not be as physically challenging. The expectation is that God will do great and mighty things because he is a miracle worker and burden bearer. In my humanness, I do question why me but I trust he will not put more on me than I can handle and that my trial turned into testimony will be a testament for someone else going through hard times. The expectation is the future is bright and God is preparing me to be a world changer and even greater witness for his kingdom.

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 contextualization skills and become even more familiar with seminal scholars in this area. The origin of the theories and concepts come from the seminal works and they are always refereed 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. It was so interesting to constantly see Whitehead and Perry references in my readings for the assignments.

**Conclusion**

I really appreciate the 100-day outline that we had to follow in order to complete our 100-day assignment. It would have been simple to just write an essay on Christian Nationalism, but the outline challenged me to organize my research into categories and dissect the phenomenon more deeply. It is easy for me to assess individual sinful or godly behavior, but it was a new undertaking to have to analyze the behavior of a group of people and ideology. It is so easy to condemn a person or group but just like God’s grace and mercy towards me, it is necessary in my scholarship to analyze the good and bad of person. It is necessary to discern the contributions of a group or find ways to commend that person or group I may not agree with. This helps me to initiate a connection and begin a path for contextualization of my faith in order to not distance myself but find common ground. Christ will chastise but he will also forgive, and he will also redeem.

Lastly, learning how to contextualize scripture in the area of my personal research has been a rich experience and taken me to a new level. No doubt, this process will be necessary throughout my tenure as a Ph.D. student.