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Submission Date: 7/6/2023

Assignment #1 Course Learning:

The journal is a written reflection of your learning journey while working on each course. The Learning Journal integrates 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 insights gained as a result of the course. **The course learning journal should be 3-5 pages** in length and should include the following sections:

1. **Introduction** –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. Also, provide a statement with the following items:

• Provide verification of LOC Reader’s Card, including card number and expiration date.

• Provide the dates of attendance.

• Document the number of hours spent in the LOC performing research.

2. **Personal Growth** - Describe your personal growth–how the course stretched or challenged you– and 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 in your professional field. What questions or concerns have surfaced about your professional area as a result of your study?

4. **Conclusion** – Evaluate the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional, religious, and educational goals.

# Introduction

I attended the Library of Congress (LOC) trip from June 18th to June 25th, 2023, during term 3 of my doctoral studies. While in Washington, DC, students spent approximately 40 hours in the Library of Congress over six days.

The LOC trip offered by OGS is critical to the students as it provides opportunities to practice 21st-century research techniques in the world’s largest library and access to countless invaluable resources for one’s research. This week-long trip provided essential content and context for my dissertation.

The LOC has over 100 million resources on site, of which 40 million are books. These voluminous resources provided significant access to seminal works and produced content for the research areas I am studying. Furthermore, the LOC’s access to digital content, often fully accessible journal articles and books, were critical in finding current work in one’s field of study.

Beyond simply having access to content, the trip stretched my ability to find sources and make cross-resource connections rapidly. The X-Ray ability taught early on in the OGS curricula was essential for quickly finding what one needs and getting your hands on it. I was able to identify more keywords and themes to be able to start thinking about my doctoral storyboard.

My reader card number is R5662625.

# Personal Growth

This trip proved to be helpful and yet unexpected in many ways. The number of “gotcha’s” from busses not picking us up when they were supposed to, to show tickets being for the wrong day, etc., were numerous. While the students could have become derogatory about these items, we responded joyfully instead. I recall one student talking out loud to God, saying, “What are you trying to teach me in this?” all the while smiling. Joy and laughter, which bonded the diverse group, were the most memorable things about the trip.

I grew both in confidence and in wisdom. I was surprised to see all my anxiety wane before I arrived onsite. It seemed the Lord gave me a supernatural purpose and told me this trip wasn’t entirely about me. This helped set the tone when I felt caught off guard or put out. I could encourage and advocate for other students while still completing my work.

Secondly, I grew in understanding my topic’s broader reach and scope: Inner-healing prayer. I was surprised to see how much material is available in books and scholarly work. Dr. Ward significantly helped me by introducing me to the Desert Fathers and how they would “read hearts” toward “soul care.” I have my work cut out for me, but I now have greater clarity, understanding, and confidence in the journey. The need for healing is growing more evident, and the tools to heal are also.

# Reflective Entry

While I haven’t really begun digesting the materials I found at the LOC, I started to see that my intuitive research components were those I’m supposed to be looking at. Leadership, healthy communities, group dynamics, and culture all relate to inner healing and the Church. My desire to see the Church become healthy and reach greater maturity can be accomplished by growing in these areas. By blending what has already been discovered in the medical and social sciences with those from faith perspectives, we can create training programs to help believers move forward in their sanctification journey. In some ways, I am rediscovering the ways of the early Church, healing by community in community. My work is new in other ways because I’m seeking to apply those discoveries to our current American context.

I’m learning there is already a lot of overlap between the mental health field, psychology, and the faith-based inner-healing perspective. Modern psychotherapy utilizes a truth-based mindset where the goal is to root out common misconceptions. What they cannot do is add the spiritual component where the creator himself does the connecting and reframing. Beyond just helping people, I believe my research will encourage people to seek the Lord for themselves and learn to walk by faith and be obedient to the Holy Spirit.

Regarding further questions, I don’t have many at this time. I was able to identify many new key terms like “reframing,” “transformational communities,” and “cure of souls.” The work ahead of me now is to begin digesting this mountain of material to begin developing a road map for my dissertation.

# Conclusion

This trip provided me with over 450 resources, not including those Dr. Ward found. I’m also bringing home fond memories and a renewed excitement to move forward. I wouldn’t say the finish line is within sight just yet, but it won’t be long until I can perceive its end.

In light of the course objective to utilize academic research tools to identify, select, procure, and organize materials for my research, this class was a complete success. There is no question that what I found will help me reach my next milestones.

For recommendations or areas of improvement, I’d like to see future classes have more discussion about their storyboard map before the trip. Currently, OGS is transitioning and moving away from the “funnel” model. This sounds like an improvement. However, much of the discussion until this point focused on the funnel, so I felt unprepared to talk about the storyboard methodology.

Logistics on the trip were difficult. We often referred to the group as a “herd of cats.” Some of this is just the nature of having a group of leaders in the room simultaneously. However, logistics could have been met better by having a two-person team for every 5-10 students. Dr. Ward was clearly in charge of the overall plan, but there were too many interpersonal details to be managed effectively by one man. Having an assistant to address some interpersonal logistics (like dietary needs or medical concerns) would have freed Dr. Ward to stay focused on supporting student research, which is his “sweet spot.” I believe this would have helped everyone feel more “seen.”

I suggest that a Zotero training video be required methodology for students before the LOC trip. One student didn’t even have Zotero installed on their computer! Zotero is necessary to capture the volumes of materials the LOC can provide. Having a prerequisite “watch this” video about Zotero would ensure students were ready to hit the ground running. Furthermore, a quick overview of how to conduct research and request books before the trip could help us be more prepared (or even request books before arriving.) Perhaps Darren could help us with this? I am open to discussing if there are ways I could be supportive in this area as well.

This trip was significant and valuable for what God is teaching me in my doctoral work. I’m very grateful. Lord willing, I hope to return to the Library of Congress sometime next year once I am a little further along in writing my dissertation. I believe a second trip could narrow my research even further.