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.

The main thing I miss about this graduate program is coming to campus. The ready availability of professors and staff is priceless, and I feel compelled to start Core 7A for this upcoming Spring term. The pandemic truly threw off my focus, and I underestimated the demands of home life when trying to be a part of Core’s to only find myself take them over again. This course has further exposed the gaps that need to be filled addressing the completion of my dissertation moving forward.

This is really “the” transition course needed from Core 5 to Core 7A because I need the guidance of a dissertation chair, CSSO, or CAO. Dissertation Foundations is self-explanatory in its title, which serves the goal of establishing a foundation to start the dissertation. I would even encourage the next CSSO to lead this class in preparation both before and after Core 5 to propel students for one-on-one attention that this class warrants as the dissertation comes into effect.

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.

This course was challenging for me because I did not get the support I sought out, and I did take this course four times. Every time I re-took the course there was an amendment in attempts to make the course better. Either, I did not adapt to the change so well, and/or I just didn’t really grasp the full scope and understanding of the course. Some of the content explains that more will come once into Core 7, which I believe. However, trying to fulfill the assignments seem to be open-ended.

I do plan and look forward to Core 7. I will need to go back and re-read some items as I need to remove myself to be reconnected with the course content. Seeing the light “at the end of the tunnel” of doing this course is an indicator to myself as to the consistency and commitment I need to implement in my day-to-day operations. Though, I am very excited I have finally gotten to this juncture, due to the journey it took to get here.

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?

When I began this program, I wanted to extend my New Testament Master’s thesis into a dissertation seeking to identify a slave revoltist as a reconciliation theologian oppose to a Black Liberation theologian in order to tackle the issue of systemic racism. This program has developed and evolved my research into assessing the capacity if racial reconciliation is even possible, which takes a deeper dive and more critical assessment amidst America’s social realities. I look forward to sharing a new concept to contribute to the greater academic society, and identify how the strengthen the potency working definition I have set in place.

I am further grateful to the OGS alum that not only encouraged me to attend, yet take on the similar challenges they endured at a different time. This OGS alum also has been of great assistance, where to fill in the blanks about understanding social research guiding my reading quest. Presumptively, this person will be on my dissertation committee renewing not only his commitment to me but OGS learning, of dare I mention the Oxford Model of Educating Graduate Adults.

This program has been added bonus for me to engage more conservative academic spaces that brought a more informed perspective looking at the world wholistically. I can detect and locate where people are sociologically that further informs their theology, which was one of my greatest challenges being a part of this institution.

As a seminarian from two liberal graduate institutions, I often am reminding myself of the theological breadth that my classmates did not either share or know even exists. I have a greater appreciation for difference even more, and I wholeheartedly look forward to financially benefiting from utilizing this skillset of engaging who/what is different. Along with, identifying how persons get to their respective end goals, but going very different routes.

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

The questions and concerns have been quelched considering the recent Academic Dean change. I was concerned about the life circumstances that pulled the Dean away from student demands, and how I often found myself overlooked. Not that I felt as if I was stigmatized or maligned, but there were major family and personal circumstances that carried overwhelming implications. Though, the outgoing Academic Dean presumably took on the most challenging of feats that OGS remains indebted to their work, which is ensuring the security of OGS’ accreditation. – All to say - to God be the glory.

Thankfully, the current Academic Dean has been the most proactive with me anyway coming from Tutor role. As the Tutor, I would be questioned, challenged, and encouraged to finish assignments and be updated on announcements. God saw fit for me to go through OGS having three new presidents, and now I will close out my student tenure with a third academic dean. This has all been through the last 7 years, which I am encouraged on this last leg of the journey.

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

Professional – I can now start applying for more jobs toward directorship, post-doctoral fellowships, and professorships that significantly pay more than what I am currently making as far as income is concerned. I have been overlooked, discriminated against, and undervalued simply because excuses were made not to hire me; even though I was very qualified in my current academic status. These limited hirings would also hold me back from getting my tuition paid on time, which further held me back from advancing to 3 separate cores.

These past seven years have been a struggle between deciding on whether to seek my ambition or navigate how to fully be present to and for my family. In attempts to moving out of the state I currently live in for a better professional life, it would have benefited me but not my family in the name of more compensation. I find a sense of satisfaction standing on principle to know what is important. I believe from my family values and my work in hospice has served as significant contributors in making hard decisions.

Trying to walk the tight rope between integrity and being hungry kept morality hanging in the balance. I do recall a professor from a statistics class I had to take over once sharing that being in the program calls for students to write out our professional ethical standards that come with the responsibility of gaining this degree.

Religious – I am looking forward to immersing myself in better service to my congregation with the weight of this doctoral program outside of course work. I could only be so present to the church because of my financial limits and the church being a plant startup.

I look forward to being more present to my denomination, which my denominational region has requested for me to present on my academic pursuits this coming May. A goal for me by that time will be to have completed the second or third draft of three dissertation chapters. I look forward to my study now to be more of devotional time rather than always trying to hit a deadline.

Educational – This class being the main culprit of transitioning into Core 7 milestones, I am very much reminded I need to work on Excel, Statistics definitions, and understanding the story board. I stumbled significantly through the 60- and 100-day assignments because I was confused as to what was being asked. I felt only limited to provide an updated funnel and the copied rough draft of chapter 2 from my dissertation template. Regardless, the dissertation template is highly encouraging and motivating in nature because this is what doctoral students seek to get the candidacy/ABD status.

I feel like the hard part is behind me, and the cruise control is about to take set.