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**120 Day - Course Learning Journal**

The journal is a written reflection of your learning journey while working on each course. It 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, incorporating 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 due to 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– 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 because 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** – 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.

Research Design and Methodology 1 is a course designed to familiarize you with the expectations regarding writing your dissertation. It helps you to develop an understanding of the importance of research design in social research. While I did not have a weeklong residency for this course, I was able to meet via Zoom with my professor several times during the timeframe of this course, and each of the meetings proved invaluable and extremely helpful. Research Design is a multi-core course in Core 4 after Dissertations and Foundations in Core 3. In this course, you will be researching dissertations about your subject matter. Then, you examine each dissertation chapter to familiarize yourself with the format. Research Design Methodology is an essential course in the graduate program as it offers the importance of research design in social research as it relates to the sociological integration of faith and society.

**Personal Growth** - Describe your 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.

Where do I begin? This course was highly challenging for me. I initially struggled with the various components because I had yet to settle on a subject of interest. However, it allowed me to delve into the importance of each dissertation chapter. I could break down the various elements, and my comprehension grew. Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5 came together for me most effectively during this course. I now understand and can identify what each one represents. Chapter 1 outlines the research question, Chapter 2 reviews related research literature, Chapter 3 sets forth a research strategy that includes validity and reliability issues, and Chapter 5, or the final chapter, provides research interpretation (*Course Resources - Google Drive*, n.d., p. 15).

As I read numerous dissertations regarding my subject matter, I could see the importance of the purpose statement, problem statement, thesis, and significance having a connection that ties them all together. I stumbled upon a theory and began doing more research based on the idea. I was not convinced my approach would surface through the study, but it did, and I became excited.

My critical thinking skills proliferated as I read to be able to distinguish between qualitative and quantitative research designs. Once I decided upon an area of interest, I could read to discover where there were gaps in the research. This helped me to understand how to narrow the scope of my research. As I looked for relevant sources to support my purpose, I would immediately read Chapter 5 to determine what the authors thought needed more study. Then, I read more dissertations until I could understand the importance of the literature review, Chapter 2. I could analyze resources for their relevance to my topic, which led me to a probable thesis statement that led me to the significance of the research. I had read so much literature about my topic that I understood why you became the expert. It was challenging, exciting, and aggravating all at the same time. During this process, I felt like my head would explode. All of these pieces are necessary before you begin writing about your subject. You need to know the issue inside and out and the importance of each chapter.

**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 because of your study?

This section is compelling. My topic concerns the pedagogical approach of the Montessori Method. I am a certified Montessori teacher, and I taught her method for grades 4, 5, and 6 for about 15 years. I have read several books regarding her method, but only a few books regarding Maria Montessori, the person. I found her to be a most extraordinary individual. I learned more about her brilliance as well as her fearlessness. Nevertheless, most importantly, I knew she advocated for children. She used the scientific method to observe them in ways other educators had not done. I also learned that her approach was pure. Meaning she was learning about children for the sake of learning about them. She was not a broken person or someone who had a horrific childhood. She did not grow up poor or disenfranchised, but she had compassion for children who were defined as broken.

Once she embarked upon her method, she began to work with the children of blue-collar workers who had no one to watch their kids while they worked. She helped them reach their most significant potential, which became her passion until she died. Afterward, many people were amazed and wanted their children to learn using her method. It became so popular that only the elite could afford their children to be taught this way. Then, the Montessori Method became known as a teaching method for students of high intelligence. Although I learned the technique and my children were taught this way, it was only when I began the research that I realized this method would help low-income children, often children of color, reach their potential because they were a part of Maria Montessori’s original design. I see the importance of my research and the benefit to my school district; to improve the academics of elementary-aged students. However, I am facing how best to integrate my faith. I know that we live in a fallen world and that God did not intend for children to be sacrificed due to discrimination. Most people believe that, ultimately, it is the responsibility of the children’s parents to educate them. However, if the public school system offers free education for its citizens, why not provide one of the best methods backed by research to all children? Why not allow parents to have options and more opportunities to choose this method? They need to remove the federal mandates that are in the way. I am hoping that my research will be able to make a difference.

**Future Expectations** - Continue the journal by addressing your questions and concerns about the graduate program expectations.

I am exhausted. I have stretched myself this term, and I have learned so much. I still feel like I need to process everything, but there is no time to do it. Now, I would like to know how to proceed with my research in a manner that will allow me to use a quantitative method. I am also challenged with how best to integrate my faith. I am taking the faith-learning and integration course, but I still need to have the faith portion of my research flushed out. Maria Montessori was Catholic, and I have found some research on Christian Montessori schools, but they are private. I am also still learning about the various instruments that will support me in measuring my hypothesis. As I get closer to my goal, I am not taking steps backward, but adding steps that still push me away from the goal. I also understand that OGS prefers dissertations that use a quantitative method, which I support because I am not interested in using qualitative. I am figuring out how I can be successful.

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

In conclusion, I am in a doctoral program. I appreciate the support and patience I have received from the entire faculty at OGS. I also believe this is the program God chose for me. I am still determining if my subject matter for this course is what I will use to complete my dissertation. However, I understand better what is required after going through this course. My health has physically attacked me during this time; I also had several work-related challenges and comprehension roadblocks. I appreciate the tutorial method that OGS embodies because I could meet with my professors and read through my various supplemental guides to obtain understanding. I also prayed quite a bit. I know that God can do exceedingly abundantly above what I can ever think or imagine.

WORKS CITED

*Course Resources—Google Drive*. (n.d.). Retrieved July 27, 2023, from https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UzKHh\_C5\_JePWDfa642qO0QYh93SHTzN