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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

PHI801: Ethics in Global Society is a Term 3 course that prepares students for ethical decision-making in their research and dissertation work. As stated in the syllabus, its goals are to help scholars understand various ethical theories and the challenges associated with postmodern society. Furthermore, this class aims to grow students’ ability to read and digest literature, considering the moral implications of both spoken and unspoken worldviews. Ultimately, the student becomes not only a better researcher but also a better writer.

PHI801 is placed in term 3, just before a student begins their Action Research Project (ARP). It is placed there as a primer for some of the discussions that will occur on the Institutional Review Board (IRB). When conducting sociological research, ethical considerations must be made. Besides evaluating the appropriateness of the research methodology, students need to consider the moral implications of the types of research they are doing. Specifically, the kinds of research and methods for gathering social data are paramount.

# Personal Growth

This course was stretching. It forced me to consider and research areas I would not have looked at naturally. Before this class, I would not have gotten excited about the topic of ethics primarily because it felt too political. OGS has forced me to look at sociological issues ethically, and by doing so, I’ve recognized that there is value in the science and study of what is typically considered secular. Admittingly, even though OGS taught students that “all truth is God’s truth” and “all things are sacred,” I was biased against what I thought to be secular. I don’t believe that is still true for me. I can look at all things through a spiritual lens and discern what is true and not true. PHI801 helped solidify these changes within me.

I also realized that ethics were another way of looking at situations through the lens of Biblical love. Initially, it wasn’t apparent to me that by evaluating problems from an ethical perspective, we align ourselves with the commandment to love our neighbor. This class caused me to slow down and consider other perspectives.

Considering ethical issues was particularly challenging when researching locally mandated reporting laws and victims of domestic abuse. The laws were in place to protect people; however, research showed that sometimes they did the opposite. Law requirements often outpaced actual support programs, which left some victims hanging. Other times, laws were too strict and didn’t consider the individual’s situation, causing victims to be revictimized by the systems that were supposed to protect them. I would not have bumped into these dilemmas without taking this class.

# Reflective Entry

When it comes to contextualizing this material, the challenge lies between three things: the role of the church as outlined in scripture, the church as it stands in America today, and the legal system as defined by state and federal regulations. I spent time researching these areas and have come to a few conclusions. Firstly, child maltreatment and trauma are rampant problems in America. Unsurprisingly, the recently debuted movie “Sound of Freedom” emerged. Human trafficking, coupled with COVID and the breakdown of families, has devastated our young people. Secondly, the church, up until recently, has generally ignored such heinous things. I don’t believe this is because the church doesn’t see them as wrong so much as it hasn’t known how to respond. With sociological research progressing as much as it has recently, we now have data to support the scope of the problem. Thirdly, the church has wrestled with the sacred/secular debate. For years the church has left science to the scientists and, in doing so, has relegated its responsibility and influence to the secular world.

Armed with research, I can now see the enormous job at hand. The church must become trauma-informed and reclaim its calling to be salt and light. Secular science cannot solve the spiritual problems of man’s heart. Instead, we must demonstrate how Jesus can be the healer, deliverer, and provider for all things. Before becoming influencers in society, though, we must deal with the issues in our house, the church. Research shows that abuse is happening in Christian churches and homes. Besides simply becoming trauma-informed, we must change our mindset of “once saved, always saved” to “faith without works is dead.” (I’m not talking about salvation status, but understanding that we all need to grow and heal continually. No one can become comfortable and complacent in their walk with the Lord.) I believe the American church has been comfortable for a long time, so we’ve stuck to talking about certain sins without addressing our heart issues. This needs to change.

As I reflect on my Action Research Project and the epidemic of childhood maltreatment, I believe the solution begins by raising awareness. As we talk about taboo subjects within our households, the church will be awoken from its comfortable slumber and forced to deal with what has been there for a long time. As we personally begin to grow and heal, that’s when I believe we will begin to regain our influence in society. Once we conquer our personal demons we can help others to do the same. Furthermore, the church needs to take on the attitude of “partaking in other’s sufferings” and not be afraid to get our hands dirty by working with other people’s messes. After all, we all have messes that need to be dealt with.

# Future Expectations

Currently in the OGS DSL program, and after I finish PHI801 and SR950, I only have two more classes left. I’m excited to take my next class SR890 Research Project Prospectus, to learn how to design my ARP. Then in October, I will take my final OGS class before I start my dissertation research at the beginning of next year. This has been a long time coming, and I’m so excited to be where I’m at in the process!

Regarding questions and concerns, I have many regarding the specifics of how to go about planning for, researching, and writing a dissertation. Specifically, what does it look like to do an Action Research Project? How do I select a group of people to partner with and research? What are the data points that need to be collected? I assume that the Research Prospectus class will help me answer these questions. Regarding this class, I do not have any further questions at this time.

# Conclusion

This class challenged me to get outside of my intellectual comfort zones and consider some real-world topics. It helped me link the non-religious idea of ethics to the Biblical concept of love and begin strategizing how to promote these inside and outside the church. This class showed me the importance of ethical reflection in everything we do.

Ethics in Global Society helped me professionally in my counseling ministry as I met with people of various ages and backgrounds. By considering where people are coming from, their mindsets, religious backgrounds, and life experiences, I can better meet them where they are and help them move forward. This class also helped prepare me for my dissertation research, as ethical considerations are necessary for sociological research.

That said, I do not believe this class met all the course outcomes listed in the syllabus. While I can defend the need for and implementation of ethics in various situations, I don’t feel that we spent much research time on “surveying ethical theories.” We had a quick overview in our orientation week, but much of my work was not geared toward that point. Perhaps this is a minor point, but I believe the andrological approach of OGS makes it difficult for me to feel competent in specific subjects. Instead, it prepares me to be a thought leader and multidisciplinary researcher, much more than a pedagogical model would. That said, the pedagogical methodology is much more apt to students feeling competent through its test-taking and rote memorization. I feel confident that I can research and become knowledgeable in any topic. That said, I think it would take a lot of research and hands-on time to feel competent in a subject. Admittedly, this might be my issue.

Lastly, I would prefer more student/group interaction. I felt sharpened and intellectually challenged when we had those discussions in class. They provided a rich experience in orientation, one that I wish we could have had again during the course. There is some learning which only occurs in a group setting.

Thank you for your leadership, Dr. Schmidt!

WORKS CITED