Hermeneutics and Communications

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09/30/2023

**Assignment #3 – Essay on a case study**

1. Write a 5-page paper on a specific event or phenomenon (e.g., a historical event, a cultural practice, a legal decision) and interpret it from a hermeneutic perspective. This would involve understanding the event within its context and recognizing the role of your prejudices in shaping your interpretation. The student should direct developmental readings from Assignment #2 on the hermeneutic issue for this assignment.

2. Paper Outline

a. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.

b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.

c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.

d. Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two

**Pandora’s Box in Public Schools and Society At Large**

As a result of biblical principles being removed from the public school system, a Pandora's box was opened to allow other ideologies and religions to permeate public schools, affecting society at large. The Humanist Manifesto I, II, and III replaced the Bible as the moral authority in public schools and, in turn, in America. In the early 1930s, a small group of humanists made it their mission to eradicate the Christian influences in America’s public schools and replace them with a new religion—humanism. Additionally, humanistic tenets like the Humanist Manifesto I, II, and III are now evident in many areas of public education, including instructional content, policies, and culture. More humanistic headway was gained when nonprofit organizations made it their mission to cleanse public schools of Christian influences as a means of upholding the First Amendment (e.g., American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU], Americans United [AU] for Separation of Church and State, and Freedom From Religion Foundation [FFRF]) (Marker, B. K., 2020, p. 2-3).

**Waning Christian Influence**

As these organizations continue their fight to eradicate Christian influences, controversies have increased over what should be taught to American students. JoelSpring’s work concludes that American schools are plagued with controversy over content and purpose. Spring points out unanswered questions leading to controversy, such as, “Should there be a consensus of political values in the United States, and should public schools develop that consensus? Should public schools develop emotional or patriotic attachments to symbols of the state through songs, literature, and history? Should the purpose of teaching history be the development of patriotic feelings? Does the teaching of patriotism in schools throughout the world increase the potential for international conflict? Who or what government agency should determine the political values taught in public schools?” (Spring, J., 2019).

Other writers are trying to provide answers by bringing back America’s Christian heritage in their work. A project by Peter Marshall and David Barton aims to ensure that textbooks teach that the United States is a Christian nation. In addressing the California wildfires and Hurricane Katrina, Marshall gained some notoriety by claiming they resulted from God’s punishment for tolerating gays. Peter Marshall Ministries’ website declares, “There is the urgent necessity of recovering the original American vision and the truth about our Christian heritage. How can we restore America if we do not know who we are?” (Spring, J., 2019).

**Ongoing Racial Divisiveness**

As Americans look for answers, extremism and divisiveness are on the rise. The division during COVID-19 was a good illustration. Hyper partisanship and ultra-conservatism sparked contentious behavioral responses during the COVID-19 epidemic, which decreased Americans' belief in science and scientific knowledge (Baker, Perry, and Whitehead 2020a). Conservative Christian groups, often called Christian nationalists, claim to be God’s chosen and divinely protected people (McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle 2011; Whitehead and Perry 2020). These groups have connected themselves to Donald Trump (Baker, Perry, and Whitehead 2020b; Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018) and reject information from mainstream news media (Thomson, Park, and Kendall 2019; Perry, S. L., et al., 2020). In one national survey, more than a quarter of American adults (27%) said that unfavorable remarks on the nightly news regularly offended them, and more than a third (35%) said that cable news had offended them in the past. The authors of the survey argue that “scholarship has a greater urgency for understanding how individuals internalize religious messaging on the news and how such socialization manifests in behavior, given the influence of Christian nationalism in the recent presidential election (Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018), the emergence of “fake news” and new forms of media (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017), and the rise in religious violence, especially that committed against minority religious groups (Abdelkader 2016)” (Thomson, R.A., et al., 2019).

 Contrarily, another scholarly work refers to various facets of the critical racial tradition. Tanya Golash-Boza, Maria Duenas, and Chia Xiong highlight the experiences of three migrant women whose lives are all affected by the intertwining systems of white supremacy, patriarchy, and global capitalism. They do this by drawing on the CRT legacy of counternarratives that stress the voices of people of color. The authors broaden the scope of critical race analyses by tying the migration experiences of women from Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Laos to the racialized, gendered, and classed transnational dynamics that influence these women's migration experiences and their integration into American society. Using counter-narratives and a comprehensive intersectional study, these authors demonstrate how various sociological factors affect people as individuals (Christian, M., et al, 2019, p. 6).

According to researchers who study intersectionality, it is crucial to consider how racism interacts with other forms of oppression, such as patriarchy (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Romero, 2018). The groundbreaking statements, writings, and deeds of Black women like Maria Stewart, Anna Julia Cooper, Sojourner Truth, Mary Church Terrell, Frances Beale, and the members of the Combahee River Collective served as the foundation for these researchers' studies (Romero, 2018). To understand how modern racism is created for diversely racialized and gendered bodies, it is crucial to record how multiple patterns of domination manifest and alter the lived experiences of women of color (Christian, M., et al, 2019, p. 4). In John 17, Jesus prayed for believers to demonstrate and model unity. Jesus prayed, “That they all may be one, as you, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that you sent me.” (John 17:20).

**Breakdown of Parental Authority**

Divisiveness continues to permeate America’s education system and society regarding parental rights. Do parents have the right to homeschool their children to educate them according to their own beliefs? Chris Lubienski attacked homeschooling from the perspective of being against the common good. Lubienski attempts to educate the reader on the private and public ends of education. “Traditionally, education has served both private and public ends. For example, schooling aids the individual in employment potential and provides private businesses with trained employees. However, schools also embody democratic ideals of equality and are used to promote civic values, such as sorting people in the interest of "social efficiency" (Labaree, 1997b). As people increasingly configure publicly funded education to meet the needs of their children, homeschoolers proceed from the insight that the institution of public education cannot adequately serve their children in the ways they want them served” (Lubienski, C., 2000).

Americans around the country are fighting for parents to have the right to control what their children should and should not learn in school. The Meyer and Pierce cases were about children, parents, and the state, as well as intellectual or religious freedom, and posed the question, "Who Owns the Child?" The questions latent in these cases are still with us. “Who owns the child? What are the interests of the community in the child? If not a resource of the state, is the child a private asset of the parent? What, then, is the nature and origin of a parent's title? If not property, is the child an extension of the parent? Or is it an individual with its own rights and its own voice? Are these substantive rights to a safe and nurturing childhood or merely negative liberties? Who speaks for the preverbal or the immature child? What happens when a child and parent are at odds? What does it mean to privatize the family? And how does our individual investment in the private child affect our communal stake in the public child?” (Woodhouse, B. B., 1991; Ross, W. G., 2001). Believing their children are being influenced and wanting to teach their own morals and values to their children, parents have been fighting against trends to let children make life-altering decisions without parental consent. Working against these parents is the Equality Act, which would extend Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) as protected classes. The Equality Act would lead to changes to curricula in public schools, requiring texts to affirm and promote views on gender and sexuality (Jones, A., & Kao, E., 2019).

**Pandora’s Box Remains Open**

The deliberate attempts we reviewed are not only to eradicate Christianity but to replace it with other religions. Brown’s work discusses how Christianity is losing its dominance in America and how more people sympathize with other religions. Until the late twentieth century, many Christians viewed yoga and meditation as ungodly Hindu and Buddhist practices. As these practices entered the United States, Asian and European promoters downplayed the religious background affiliated with Hinduism, Buddhism, and even the New Age movement. Instead, the promoters used science to gain public acceptance by highlighting the mental and physical benefits of reducing stress. The promoters strategically used tactics to move yoga and meditation more systematically into institutions and schools by secularizing them and downplaying them as Hindu and Buddhist practices. (Brown, C. G., 2019).

Today, many people refer to themselves as spiritual, as people of all persuasions are bringing these mindsets into our schools and society. The perceived problems in our schools have opened the door for yoga and mindfulness to become acceptable practices. Brown’s work explains that while eradicating Christianity remains incomplete, other varieties of religious practices are being established, and public schools are crucibles for this change (Brown, C. G., 2019).

President Bill Clinton invited James Davison Hunter, an American sociologist, to the White House to ask how America could solve cultural wars. Hunter said it is impossible to solve because these cultural worlds are built on fundamental beliefs and assumptions that do not allow compromise. “From prayer in the classroom to “multiculturalism” in the curriculum, Hunter warned, our “school wars” reflect incompatible belief systems” (Zimmerman, J., 2022, pp. xi). As Christians, we are to live peacefully (Romans 12:18) and model the love of Jesus Christ (Luke 6:27–38). Non-Christians are increasingly becoming moral leaders in America. The Word of God is a compass for the believer (Deuteronomy 4:2; II Timothy 2:15; 3:16–17; Psalms 119:105), and Christian fellowship will be essential in strengthening our faith and allowing the Holy Spirit to love God’s creation through us as we see the day of Christ approaching (Hebrews 10:24–25; Romans 12:4-5; Matthew 18:20; 1 Corinthians 3:9; Acts 2:42).

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