

Hermeneutics & Communications

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Professor

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## **Course Learning Journal**

### **Assignment #4 – Course Learning Journal**

The journal is a written reflection of your learning journey while working in 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.
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 field as a result of your study?
4. Conclusion – Evaluate the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional, religious, and educational goals.

As Christians, we strive to live by biblical principles, doing good works as a response to a transformed heart. One objective of this hermeneutics course is to teach students to use a multifocal lens to analyze situations, recognizing when Christian values can persuade a more positive biblical perspective. In addition to the Christian worldview, hermeneutics applies social science (i.e., study of people, groups, and behavior) methods to conduct research, review literature, and interpret results. This multifocal lens facilitates the integration of theology with social science and enables the scholar to interpret the biblical text, literature, and/or cultural phenomena.

Beyond critical thinking, Hermeneutics is the study of interpretation. How one interprets and subsequently communicates to others is influenced by their experiences, education, and cultural knowledge. The inverse is also true with respect to how others interpret what is being communicated to them and how they form their response. This can result in controversy, which happens when two or more opinions differ and the parties involved strive to communicate their perspective, hopefully in a civil manner.

Today's world is full of controversy, with many questioning the inability of people to have a rational conversation. Christians, however, are to respond to controversy with truth based on biblical principles, which is more difficult than expected. Those not rooted firmly in the Word, will find it more difficult to stay on course. Zimmermann (2015) points out that "not only does the Christian interpreter have to reconstruct God's own self-interpretation..., but he also has to translate what the text says into his own life context determined by modern preconceptions and concerns" (p. 79). Christians rely on scholars, elders, pastors, and bible study leaders to help them grow in their faith and mature in their response to the secular world.

Christian scholars can use Hermeneutics to respond to others, especially those in the secular world. The OMEGA Graduate Program has rightly placed Hermeneutics as a first course to teach students how to read, write and to understand that interpretation is influenced by various factors. Student worldviews are broadened through exposure to indepth research and a new awareness of contextualization. This course, refines reading and writing skills to a level necessary to flourish in a doctoral program.

Dr. Schmidt's Hermeneutics course was interesting and revealed my own analytical and writing shortcomings and motivated me to do better. In addition to considering the multifocal lens we use to formulate opinions and ideas, Gadamer's horizon concept helped me evaluate my own analytical process. I also achieved a deeper understanding of the skills necessary to conduct quality social research.

Personally, the study of Hermeneutics has revealed my own narrow focus. As a grant writer it is important to convey ideas with precision and few words. Over the years, working on this skill set affected my ability to convey my beliefs to others in conversation. In perfecting the craft of my own ability, I often lost sight of the other person and that we were having a conversation where both parties contributed valuable thoughts. Realizing I had become hyper focused on making my point and trying to persuade others to see my point required that I alter my approach to be less reactive and more understanding. Asking questions has been extremely helpful in retraining myself to be a better conversationalist.

Professionally, using Hermeneutics helped refine my thesis question, identified industry concerns and resulted in new research ideas in the Christian community, and BAM.

Zimmerman's comment quoted earlier resonated with me. The struggle is real for Christians living by biblical principles in this controversial world, where most people (even

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Christians) look the other way at sin. Thinking about this drives me to prayer. As a solutionist, I want all church communities to provide their flock with fellowship, support, and to teach biblical principles. How can the Christian community (i.e., scholars, pastors, churches, and congregants) better support and encourage its flock?

The application of Hermeneutics gave me new insight regarding the church not being equipped as a business. Booker (2021) identified challenges church leaders had because they were not trained for business. Growing up attending church, it wasn't until studying BAM that I saw the church as a business. Clearly a career program or creating a position(s) within the church hiring college students studying business should be considered to alleviate some challenges.

Statistics indicate youth fall away in the greatest numbers transitioning to college and again when they leave college to start their career. Creating jobs at Christian companies or churches could encourage a wider acceptance of BAM through jobs creation and student support during these critical years. Having studied at both a Christian and a secular university, I experienced classes with and without scripture. Classes that integrated scripture provided greater depth to scholarly topics and built my ability to effectively engage in conversations from a biblical perspective. I believe God wants us to encourage youth and their parents to choose Christian colleges. Thankfully, there are Christian groups at secular colleges and universities.

Business As Mission (BAM) is an emerging field within the Christian community that focuses on the Entrepreneur/Business Owner. Another concept gaining momentum is Faith At Work (FAW) which focuses on employees, as well as the business owner. Another way churches can support the flock is to see BAM and FAW as support for the congregation and the local

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community. However, it will be key to develop a position using hermeneutics to be able to address church leaders to consider these options.

The course in Hermeneutics exceeded my expectations. Honestly, prior to this course I had never heard the word “hermeneutics”. The readings, assignments, and research unlocked several new areas (e.g., churches supporting BAM & FAW; and churches & schools actively focusing on BAM & faith at work). Beyond academics, I feel God’s presence as I think through the programs I’ve envisioned to address the problems of the world. Lastly, I might have pursued a career in research had I studied Hermeneutics and attended a Christian college as an undergraduate. Thankfully, God’s timing has brought my career full circle with me at OGS preparing for a career in social research. I look forward to working with the Christian community to expand the discipline of BAM and FAW making the world a better place.

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