Cross-Cultural Dynamics

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Date: May 25, 2024

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***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.

 The digital connectedness of people from around the globe and the transportation mobility of many people from various states and countries and continents increases the likelihood of interacting with people from different cultures and cultural reference points making it a daily occurrence for many. Because of this reality, what is needed is more than simply “awareness.” Skills are needed for healthy and progressive, relationally constructive interactions in both the micro and macro cross-cultural dynamics in which we find ourselves. From ordering coffee at the local bistro, to Zoom business meetings, to participating within the broader Christian church culture, understanding, communicating and developing quality skills to properly interact across cultural lines is essential in today’s world.

 As OGS continues to build out a multimodal educational experience undeniably attracting fellow students from around the world, the cross-cultural dynamics course is essential for developing the awareness for cross-cultural dynamics, but also practically valuable for each student to ensure that the scholarly work produced as a result of the program is maximumly perceptive of the multi-cultural, global environment in which scholastic work is available for review. Simple tweaks in language can assist a paper or project to reach more populous when cross-cultural dynamics are considered at the outset. Likewise, as the aim of most scholarly endeavors is to make a difference within the discipline addressed, any skill that can eliminate the unnecessary alienation of groups, mindsets, or cultures is desirable for effective community enhancement.

 My area of project development for DSL invariably interacts with various streams and cultures within the Christian faith. The principles of cross-cultural understanding, communication, mission, and community development have served as a refresher from some previous coursework years ago. The reminder has been helpful. The ongoing need to make room for varying, and even divergent, views and experiences even within Christian faith expressions yields tremendous fruit. In fact, given the Biblical mandate to pursue “unity” within the Body of Christ, the clarion call for all Christians to increase sensitivities and abilities to navigate differences of Christian praxis, doctrine, and experiences cannot be overstated.

 My readings and journal enhancements lead me to rehearse a common conclusion within many interdisciplinary fields. Although the conclusion is common, the practice still leaves much to be desired. In short, there is simply no graduating from the need for dialogue as the principal skill necessary for enhancing one’s (or a groups) understanding and communication of differing cultural dynamics. Only through dialogue can a new and dynamic communal experience be achieved; an experience that takes into account cultural differences, makes room for those distinctions, and yet still finds common ground for community growth.

 My readings from the disciplines of sociology, psychology, social media engagements as well as the current buzz trend of DEI standards all rely heavily on the need for healthy dialogue to foster unity amongst diversity. I find this practically encouraging. As technical and as virtually disconnected as our world can seem, there is a simplicity in acknowledging that we as people still grow best person to person, community to community. The skills of learning to communicate one’s own particular culture as well as learning to listen effectively to some else describe theirs is not only the starting point, but appears to be the most crucial element in crossing cultural barriers. Without skillful communication and understanding, there simply is not a mechanism for achieving quality community development with a cross-cultural dynamic. However, when the skills are applied, the results are themselves dynamic. What can be observed is the power of unity within diversity, without necessarily needing to seek for uniformity, thus allowing for cultural distinctions to remain while still achieving the full benefits of healthy community engagement. I have seen these essential elements in practice for the duration of my own facilitation of Christian intrafaith dialogue over the past four years. There is beauty and simplicity in allowing the “give and take” that occurs in communication and understanding. It truly is a beautiful event to watch take shape.

 This course is my first experience of an Asynchronuous course at OGS. Although by now I am fairly comfortable working independently, I find that I truly missed the initial instructor connection during the first session. Although the video was helpful, I found that the syllabus contained a wonderful outline of thoughts that likely would have been discussed in a Core session, giving a flavor of the instructors head and heart behind the intent of the course. It was still discernable, but I feel like I missed something essential. This is meant to be a compliment to the structure of the program and the value of instructor and student interfacing. I also realize that opportunities are available for ongoing, progressive zoom meet ups, which I was unable to take advantage of this quarter. All in all, I see the value of the initial interactive session that I missed during this course. I am hopeful that subsequent courses will be within the weekend residency structure.

 This course had direct implementation to my current field of study and facilitation of intrafaith dialogue and I am grateful for the timing of it.