LDR 810: Cross-Cultural Dynamics

Richard F. Gamble

Omega Graduate School

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Professor

Jared Sorber, PhD

**Assignment #4 Instructions from LDR 810 Syllabus**

***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.

**LDR 810: Assignment 4 Course Learning Journal**

According to the LDR 810 Cross-Cultural Dynamics syllabus course description, the course is designed to aid graduate students in developing cross-cultural skills and strategies that help build personal and professional intercultural relationships (Omega Graduate School, 2024, p. 2). The essential elements of the course include, “cross-cultural understanding,” “cross-cultural communication,” “cross-cultural missions,” and “principles of community development” (Omega Graduate School, 2024, p. 2). Thus, the intent of the course is to build the students’ cultural intelligence (CQ) so that they can beneficially relate to people from other cultures and communicate, from a Christian worldview, in an intercultural context to lead constructive social change.

There exist four different course types within the doctoral programs (PhD and DSL) at Omega Graduate School (OGS): social research, leadership, philosophy, and communication. LDR 810 falls into the leadership category. The leadership courses are an essential complement to the social research and philosophy components of the program. It is ineffective if a researcher conducts a transformative research project (social research) and analyzes it from a Christian worldview (Philosophy) if they then cannot lead and influence teams to enact the recommendations of the project. Without the leadership component, the results of the project remain only a good idea. However, if the researcher can lead a team effectively, then constructive social change can occur. If the research is done in a cross-cultural context, or if the researcher wishes to communicate or apply the results of the study in another cultural setting, then they must learn to lead and communicate with CQ. LDR 810’s placement in Core 4 is appropriate as a follow-up to the philosophy course PHI 923 Contextualization for Social Change. In PHI 923, students are given the intellectual tools to contextualize a message so that it is understandable in various cultural and social settings. LDR 810 complements PHI 923 by helping the student learn how to understand how to communicate the contextualized message effectively to people from another culture as well as lead the change in the cross-cultural setting.

**Personal Growth**

Coming into the OGS doctoral program, one of my goals was to broaden my training, especially in the areas of communication, social research, and leadership. My academic background was in humanities and theology. Because of this, I came to the program with a more advanced understanding of the Christian worldview and how to analyze different schools of thought. On the other hand, in my bachelor’s and master’s degrees, I did not take any practical courses that would help me put my ideas into practice. LDR 810 is exactly the kind of course that I was hoping to take while in the program at OGS. Coming into the course, I only had a very basic knowledge of cross-cultural principles (mainly taken from a “Cross-Cultural Perspectives” class that I took in college).

But now, after taking the course, I believe that my knowledge and skillset have expanded in the following areas. First, I am more mindful of my approach when dealing with international students (IS) at OGS. I desire to approach my interactions with IS with humility, non-judgment, and curiosity. Many of my sources emphasized the importance of asking open-ended questions and active listening. I truly desire to show respect and care to IS by asking them about themselves and their cultures. I want to ask about their experiences in their classes and discuss roadblocks that they have encountered. With the new skill of intercultural listening, I feel better prepared to engage with IS. Second, the course reinforced the importance of cultural relativism. I often fall into the temptation of believing that the way I see the world is the *correct* way and that those who see the world differently from me are *wrong*. This course has encouraged me to view every encounter with IS as an opportunity to grow in my understanding of the world. Often other culture’s perspectives can help one to see a facet of truth (about God, the world, etc.) that one would not have seen before being exposed to the alternate perspective. I hope to dig up many nuggets of truth in my dealings with international students. Third, I have learned how to tailor my teaching practices to better communicate with IS. I can do this by slowing down my speech, not using in-group or culturally specific language and idioms, and using visual aids.

**Reflective Entry**

In assignment #3 for this course, I laid out some ideas toward an international student success plan for OGS. I argued that faculty and staff need to be trained in CQ and cross-cultural communication techniques so that they can better serve the IS in their courses and tutoring cohorts. I also suggested that OGS academic affairs staff team up with the admissions staff to host an informational/orientation session specifically for international students. This session will go over, in detail, the academic policies and procedures of OGS and tips for international student success. We would also involve current IS and alumni to share their experiences and ask the prospective IS about themselves and their cultures so that faculty and staff could better understand them. I realize that I need to ask IS about this plan and request their feedback regarding what they think could make OGS better. Also, I intend to work my way through Elmer’s (2002) “Cultural Adjustment Map” (p. 72) to reflect on previous experience and refine my approach to IS.

Personally, my academic area of research centers around the theological and psychological ideas of calling, career anxiety, and work. I have mainly been focusing my research on American Christian college students. However, this course has caused me to question how the experiences of IS at American Christian colleges with these topics differ from domestic students. I sometimes wonder if the idea of discerning one’s calling is a very American concept that may not translate well into other cultures with different socio-economic systems. I want to pursue these questions further.

**Conclusion**

The course has been effective for my professional goals because it has given me the tools to more effectively serve IS at OGS and Cleveland State Community College. It has met my religious goals because it has increased my curiosity to learn about IS’ perspectives on God and the world and has forced me to think about calling and vocation from a non-American perspective. Finally, the course has met my educational goals by introducing concepts and skills that will help me put my social research into practice, namely CQ and cross-cultural communication.

**References**

Elmer, D. (2002). *Cross-cultural connections: Stepping out and fitting in around the world*. InterVarsity Press. [Seminal]

Omega Graduate School (2024). *LDR 810 cross-cultural dynamics syllabus*. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cvqLrEzufj0BdyUblCdXl8Omyr2KAN1t/view