COM 803 Hermeneutics and Communications

Steven Mills

Omega Graduate School

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Professor

Dr. James Strecker

# 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.

**Introduction**

According to the syllabus for COM 803 – Hermeneutics and Communications, the primary outcomes of the course are to distinguish between Biblical hermeneutics in spiritual formations, general hermeneutics in academic disciplines, and social science research hermeneutics. As part of core one in the curriculum, this course provides a foundational framework for students beginning to research for their doctoral projects or dissertations. The importance of this course lies in its ability to equip students with essential reading and interpretive skills, enabling them to navigate and apply hermeneutical principles in various contexts. Key components of the course include specialized reading techniques for scholarly research, faith-integrated hermeneutics that engage with worldview perspectives, interpretive methods used in social science research, and advanced academic writing skills, specifically in APA format. Each of these elements plays a critical role in helping students understand the significance and scope of hermeneutics as a field of study, especially in relation to academic research.

Furthermore, this course challenges students to move beyond their preconceived ideas and limited understandings of hermeneutics and research methodologies. By engaging with the course material, students learn to broaden their perspectives and sharpen their ability to critically interpret texts, data, and scholarly works in a meaningful and disciplined manner. The strategic placement of this course in core one of the OGS doctoral programs is no coincidence, as it is designed to serve as a foundational cornerstone for students, preparing them for the rigorous academic journey ahead. Without this solid grounding in hermeneutics and its application to research, students would struggle to develop the analytical and interpretive skills necessary for producing high-quality, impactful research projects.

**Personal Growth**

I first encountered the concept of hermeneutics during my initial year at Bible College. I was enrolled in a Biblical hermeneutics course, and at the time, I understood hermeneutics as the study and interpretation of the Bible. It was a narrow field that applied explicitly to scripture and theological studies. Yet, this course shaped my career trajectory and personal development in ways that I did not fully appreciate at the time.

For the past 40 years, I have been privileged to serve in ministry and teach in Bible schools across Africa. During this time, I taught the subject of hermeneutics in many of my courses, always focusing on the biblical applications. I adhered to the traditional understanding that hermeneutics provided the framework for interpreting scripture faithfully and accurately. However, my view of hermeneutics was primarily confined to that particular context. I was passionate about helping others explore scripture through this lens, yet I needed to grasp the broader applications of my teaching principles.

It wasn’t until more recently that my understanding of hermeneutics deepened. This shift occurred during thia course, which helped me realize that I had been using the principles of hermeneutics all along, not just in biblical interpretation but in every subject I studied throughout university. Hermeneutics, I now understand, is not just a tool for interpreting scripture but a method of interpretation that can be applied to various forms of text, communication, and even life experiences. It is about understanding the meaning behind the words and the context in which they were spoken or written. Whether studying history, literature, or even philosophy, I employed hermeneutical principles without consciously labeling them as such.

This new understanding has been transformative for my personal growth. It has broadened my intellectual horizons, and I have become more aware of how interconnected different fields of study can be. Recognizing that hermeneutics applies to more than just biblical texts will allow me to engage more deeply with various subjects and to teach with a greater appreciation for the universal nature of interpretation. Whether in ministry, education, or everyday communication, hermeneutics equips us to dig beneath the surface to ask questions about context, intent, and meaning.

I have learned that personal growth is not about reaching a destination but continuously expanding one’s understanding. Each step, whether in the classroom or in my studies, has contributed to my ongoing growth journey. This recent realization about the broader application of hermeneutics is yet another step forward in that journey. I am excited to continue personally and professionally growing as I incorporate this newfound understanding into my life and work.

**Reflective Entry**

As a result of this course, I have started to rethink and rework my teaching notes, mainly focusing on incorporating hermeneutical principles beyond just the study of Biblical texts. Previously, I limited the application of hermeneutics primarily to the Bible, assuming that its principles were most relevant within that context. However, this course has broadened my understanding, highlighting that hermeneutics—the theory and methodology of interpretation—can and should be applied to any topic or text we study.

This realization has led me to expand the scope of my lessons, ensuring that students grasp the universality of hermeneutical tools. For example, the principles of context, historical background, language, and authorial intent are not just helpful in understanding scripture. Still, they are critical when examining literature, research materials, or cultural and societal texts. This has prompted me to start reworking my notes, embedding a more comprehensive approach to teaching interpretation.

In this light, I’ve begun demonstrating how these principles can deepen understanding in fields outside of theology, such as philosophy, literature, and even science. With this shift, I aim to equip my students with interpretive skills that they can apply in a wide range of disciplines, fostering a more critical and thoughtful approach to all areas of study. Hermeneutics, as I now understand, is not simply a tool for explanation but a framework for enhancing our comprehension and experience of any subject matter. By integrating these insights into my teaching, I believe my students will gain a more holistic, well-rounded approach to learning.

**Conclusion**

The study of hermeneutics, as presented in COM 803, extends far beyond its traditional association with Biblical interpretation. It is a crucial framework that enhances understanding across various academic disciplines and social science research. This course equips students with essential interpretive tools that they can apply to scripture and any text, communication, or data set they encounter. By emphasizing the importance of context, authorial intent, and historical background, students develop the capacity to engage with a wide range of materials critically.

This course has expanded my understanding of hermeneutics, prompting me to fully integrate its principles into my teaching. The realization that hermeneutics is not confined to theological studies but applies to various fields of inquiry has been transformative for my personal growth and professional approach. As I continue to rework my lessons, I aim to provide my students with the skills to approach their studies—and life—with deeper insight and understanding. Ultimately, this course reinforces the value of hermeneutics as a universal tool for interpretation, making it an indispensable part of academic and spiritual development.