COM 803- Hermeneutics and Communications

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March 7, 2025

Professor

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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.

# Course Learning Journal

COM 803 - Hermeneutics and Communication provides students with a strong foundation not only for understanding the interpretation of academic content but also for considering the role of communication in conducting social research. The course intentionally guides students through the elements of interpretation and comprehension that are necessary in framing how one pursues doctoral-level studies. By defining, contemplating, and valuing the role of hermeneutics, students are better equipped to engage in scholarship in a way that considers the value of their work and its impact on others.

As a part of the Ph.D. in Social Research program, COM 803 - Hermeneutics and Communication builds an essential framework for students before they explore countless pieces of research and create original work of their own. As a foundational course in the program, it is strategically placed at the beginning of the sequence to help students not only ask “what” but, more importantly, “why.” By engaging in deep reflection, students consider the larger implications of interpreting research and writing before undertaking their own academic work.

# Personal Growth

This course challenged me in many meaningful and transformative ways. As an individual who was unfamiliar with the definition of hermeneutics before taking this course, I gained an essential and foundational understanding of the discipline. I especially resonated with the concept of hermeneutics as both an art and a science, integrating the ways in which our interpreting is both an intentional assertion of thoughtful reflection as well as an unconscious act influenced by our own experiences and personal worldview.

My academic background centers around the social sciences. In my graduate work thus far, I have focused on research as an inherently objective and regimented process. Throughout my master’s programs, there was a strong emphasis on setting aside personal interpretations for the sake of research. However, this course challenged this notion, as I wrestled with the reality that, like all researchers, I am inherently unable to separate myself from my research. In fact, this course has stretched my thinking in such a way that I now feel passionate about purposefully and responsibly integrating my experiences, faith, and understanding of the world into my research in an intentional and scholarly manner.

Further, this course provided a strong foundation in the practice of developmental reading. As a student unfamiliar with hermeneutics and faced with seemingly unlimited resources on the subject, I had to approach my readings tactfully and strategically. I practiced the skill of searching for content specific to my knowledge growth and study within our course. By employing discernment in my reading, I am better equipped to engage in developmental readings throughout the remainder of our coursework.

# Reflective Entry

As a sociology instructor, this new interpretation of the role of personal experience and subjectivity in research methods has been formative for the way I teach the social sciences. Previously, when covering research methods in my Introduction to Sociology course, I largely emphasized objectivity, neglecting to acknowledge that students’ interpretations of research will inevitably be shaped by their experiences. This course has encouraged me to reconsider that approach and to recognize the value of subjective engagement within social research.

Going forward, I feel prepared and encouraged to help my students explore how their interpretations of the social world fuel and enable the possibility of constructive social change. I anticipate guiding students in understanding the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in social research, helping them see the ways in which their experiences influence their academic and professional pursuits.

I also expect that my own academic journey will continue to be shaped by this understanding. As I progress through my doctoral program, I will have the opportunity to grow as a scholar-practitioner. Specifically as a scholar-practitioner who values both the rigor of methodology and the impact of personal perspective in social research. To conduct research that truly contributes to meaningful and constructive change, I recognize the importance of continually evaluating the intersection between objectivity, interpretation, and human experience.

# Conclusion

I believe this course has successfully equipped me for future studies by providing a strong foundation in hermeneutical understanding and skill. While I am still becoming accustomed to the tutorial method of learning and have much to refine in my approach, this course has given me confidence in my ability to learn within the Oxford model material through purposeful reading and meaningful reflection. I am confident not only in my ability to comprehend challenging concepts but also in my capacity to do so with thoughtfulness and integrity.

Additionally, this course has instilled in me a deeper appreciation for the interpretive nature of research and scholarship. As I continue on my academic journey, I intend to apply the principles of hermeneutics not only in my own work but also in my role as an educator, encouraging my students to engage critically and thoughtfully with the material they encounter. The insights gained from this course will serve me well as a foundation for my future studies and professional growth.