PHI 805-22 Faith-Learning Integration and Interdisciplinary Studies

Obed Alcime

Omega Graduate School

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Professor

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**Assignment #2 – Developmental Readings 1. Create Developmental Readings from seminal sources and scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles. Review instructions for Assignment #3, the course essential elements, and course readings to identify selections of books and journals to create entries.**

1. **Refer to the "Student Guide to Developmental Readings" in the General Helps folder for updated information on sample comments, the grading rubric, and key definitions related to developmental readings.**

**Source 1**: Skulsuthavong, M. (2025). Enhancing luck in the digital age with Thai auspicious smartphone wallpapers. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 12*, [Article ID]. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-04499-3>

**Comment 1:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** "Thai auspicious smartphone wallpapers are more than digital decorations; they are imbued with spiritual significance that claims to attract wealth, success, and personal fulfillment. Vendors on Instagram promote these wallpapers as modern amulets that blend ancient beliefs with digital technology. This phenomenon reflects a transformation in religious practice where spirituality is commodified yet remains deeply influential in everyday life. The practice demonstrates how digital media can serve as a vehicle for social and cultural reform in a rapidly changing technological era." (p. 8)

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element Learning…to Change the World.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is additive to my understanding in that it reinforces the undeniable truth that digital items can change the world. It shows that ancient cultural practices can be reinterpreted and repackaged in modern digital forms to influence social behavior and outcomes. It also redefines how religious ideals can be expressed and impact society. This perspective enables us to continue to adapting to technologically-driven ways that are faster and more effective than historically conventional ways.

**Contextualization:** Reflecting on my own experiences with digital media, I’ve seen firsthand how online trends can suddenly shift public attitudes and even spark community initiatives, especially as one who constantly posts original inspirational and philosophical think pieces on social media. At the university where I teach, social media campaigns have often been used to unite the most diverse of groups in pursuit of commonality. This quote resonates with me because it validates my belief that modern reform can occur through innovative digital practices. It inspires me to continue to use technology in my leadership, using digital platforms to reach societal groups; even those that are far beyond my local community.

**Comment 2:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**This study reveals that the commodification of religious symbols through digital platforms creates new sacred spaces that redefine traditional spiritual practices. By embedding spiritual significance into everyday objects like smartphone wallpapers, vendors offer users a tangible connection to ancient beliefs. This process challenges established cultural narratives by integrating modern technology with age-old rituals. It thereby reconfigures how individuals construct and negotiate their worldview in a digital era.” (p. 10)

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element Worldview Literacy in Research

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is additive to my understanding of worldview literacy by demonstrating that digital artifacts can alter the way we perceive and internalize spiritual concepts. It challenges the traditional view that sacred symbols are best confined to physical religious spaces, and are suggesting instead that they can be dynamically reinterpreted online. These digital expressions invite a re-evaluation of cultural norms and values, pushing the boundaries of how worldviews are formed. Moreover, it reinforces the importance of critically engaging with digital media as an important component of contemporary worldview research.

**Contextualization:** The COVID pandemic was pivotal in reshaping the American church’s understanding of impacting culture and spirituality. When digital church services became the only option for corporate worship, I was forced to rethink what it means to be connected to my faith in a modern context. Especially, as a teaching presbyter in my church, I had to quickly learn to navigate the reconciliation of traditional beliefs with contemporary digital experiences. It motivated me to be more critically aware of how online environments influence my worldview and to use that knowledge to create well-informed, faith-based discussions.

**Source 2:** Hill, R. J., Djokic, M. A., Anderson, A., Barbour, K., Coleman, A. M., Guerra, A. D., & Allison, S. D. (2024). From Ridge 2 Reef: An interdisciplinary model for training the next generation of environmental problem solvers. *PLoS ONE, 19*(12), e0314755. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0314755>

**Comment 3:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**: “Evaluations of the Ridge 2 Reef program highlight significant gains in communication, data analysis, leadership, mentoring, and interdisciplinary collaboration. These results demonstrate that exposure to multiple disciplinary perspectives enhances not only technical competence but also the ability to integrate diverse viewpoints into a coherent whole. The program’s structure encourages students to critically examine the interplay between scientific inquiry and social context, thereby developing a richer, more nuanced worldview. This transformative educational model sets a new standard for training in the 21st century." (p. 7)

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element Interdisciplinary Research.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is variant to the typical understanding that expertise in a field should be isolated, as in some sort of a “stay in your lane” attitude. Rather, it emphasizes that enhanced learning occurs when technical and humanistic perspectives are merged, challenging the notion of singular disciplinary expertise. It encourages the use of multiple and intersecting lanes designed for various aspects of society to reach a common destination. This changing of lanes can make use of ethical and moral values that are used to signal movement from one lane to another.

**Contextualization**: When I have combined principles from different fields, my professional influence improved dramatically. It reminds me of faith-based principles that I am able to (sometimes stealthily or subtly) use when teaching my healthcare students about the issue of euthanasia. Although some students always end up disagreeing with my expressed Christian bioethical beliefs, students become prepared to engage varying viewpoints, and they may even decide to adopt a new school of thought by the end of the course.

**Comment 4:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** "The Ridge 2 Reef program was designed to break down disciplinary silos by fostering an environment where students from diverse fields collaborate to solve complex environmental challenges. Through a culture of improvement and continuous feedback, trainees develop transferable skills that extend beyond technical expertise. This interdisciplinary approach not only prepares students for real-world problem solving but also instills a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of natural and social systems. The program’s success is evident in its ability to cultivate confident, broadly trained problem solvers capable of leading change in various sectors." (p. 5)

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential elementInterdisciplinary Research.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is additive to my understanding in that it shows how real-world problem solving requires an intersection of diverse perspectives, which mirrors the holistic approach of faith-learning integration. This technological program’s success lies in its ability to create collaboration and adaptability across a variety of sciences and among varieties of people. It is also important to note that the addition of ethical and religious values to this interdisciplinary approach would make it far more impactful to society.

**Contextualization:** I have long believed that no single discipline holds all answers to today’s social problems. This quote reminds me of times when I engaged in cross-disciplinary collaboration that led to innovative solutions in my own work. I currently work in academia, healthcare, and religion, which makes me very familiar with the power of interdisciplinary work. This daily navigation of various skills reinforces my commitment to seek learning opportunities that bridge technical skills with broader but integrative perspectives. Embracing interdisciplinary research has not only enriched my academic journey but also increased my resolve in uniquelyunifying typically parallel and usually non-intersecting professional fields.

**Source 3**: Rine, P. J., Wells, C. A., Braxton, J. M., & Acklin, K. (2021). At the intersection of institutional identity and type: faculty codes of conduct and isomorphic pressures in faith-based higher education*. Journal of Academic Ethics, 20*, 169–190. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-021-09403-7>

**Comment 5:**

Quote/Paraphrase: "Faculty codes of conduct serve as an important mechanism for maintaining academic quality and public confidence by establishing norms of ethical behavior within institutions. These codes articulate the expectations for professional conduct and serve as a safeguard against practices that might undermine the integrity of academic work. By enforcing standards through both formal regulations and informal cultural norms, institutions create an environment where ethical practice is the norm. Such codes are critical in aligning faculty behavior with the broader mission and values of faith-based higher education." (p. 174)

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element Faith-Learning Integration.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is additive to my understanding in that it describes how formal codes and informal cultural pressures work together to define what is acceptable within an academic community. These norms are not static standards but evolve as institutions adapt and respond to internal and external pressures. Human resource departments and executive leadership can strategically use these pressures to strengthen moral codes, rather than to regress them. This dynamic process offers a strong perspective for understanding how academic institutions can integrate faith-based ethical worldviews into their overall culture.

**Contextualization:** Every year, as an educator, when New York state requires for University faculty to complete sexual harassment training, I encounter the various review questions of title ix law, which has provisions for students and faculty to voice grievances and official complaints of abuse or harassment. These ethical guidelines not only clarify expectations but also renew my sense of purpose and belonging within an institution. It is my duty to enforce morality and clarity through our institutional code. It motivates me to consistently contribute to environments where ethical practices are rigorously maintained and continuously improved, especially in the classrooms where I teach.

**Comment 6:**

**Quote/Paragraph:** "Teaching codes of conduct delineate specific behaviors that safeguard student welfare and ensure that academic interactions remain respectful and constructive. These codes are not only reflective of institutional values but also serve to integrate professional ethics into the daily practice of teaching. They function as both a guide and a benchmark for ethical behavior in educational settings, thereby promoting an atmosphere of trust and accountability. The adoption of such codes can significantly enhance the overall quality of academic engagement in faith-based institutions." (p. 178)

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element Faith-Learning Integration.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is variant to my understanding because it shows that faculty and students should adhere to shared norms. Yes, an entire academic community can benefit from increased cohesion and mutual respect. However, it is important to note that although students and faculty should have shared norms, the ethical standard should be greater on the faculty and staff because of their given influence, authority, and oversight in classrooms.

**Contextualization:** Classroom environments improve dramatically after the introduction of codes of conduct. This quote reinforces my belief in the importance of aligning teaching practices with faith-based principles. When I review the syllabus with my students at the beginning of each course, I also implement in-class rules that are Christ-centered although Christ isn’t mentioned. It allows me to operate with ethical and moral policies that not only enhance academic quality but also nurture a sense of community and shared purpose, regardless of the discipline being taught. This experience has shaped my approach to both learning and leadership.

**Source 4:** Munir, F. (2025). Humanities Education for Engineering Students: Enhancing Soft Skills Development. Societies, 15, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc15010012>

**Comment 7:**

**Quote/Paragraph:** "Humanities education plays a crucial role in developing soft skills among engineering students, such as communication, critical thinking, and empathy. These skills are essential for designing solutions that are not only technically sound but also socially responsible. The integration of humanities into engineering curricula enhances students' ability to understand the broader impact of their decisions on society. This holistic educational approach is key to preparing engineers to become effective leaders and change agents." (p. 2)

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element Learning…to Change the World.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is variant to my understanding in that it challenges the typically narrowed focus of only learning technical competencies. It forces an expansion of learning that integrates soft skills training for more impact to social groups. Effective social transformation in the 21st century needs effective problem-solving that requires both hard and soft skills in tandem. This integration ultimately produces leaders who are not only technically proficient but also ethically and socially aware.

**Contextualization:** As a career multi-disciplinarian, I have had to balance technical demands and interpersonal skills daily. From conducting classes on zoom, to engaging in empathy for international students who struggle with the English language and American culture. Furthermore, my work with children with autism firstly requires soft skills, in order to create a comfortable space for teaching intellectually challenged individuals hard skills. Continued exposure to humanities courses as a student at OGS will transform my approach to problem-solving, strengthening my balance between empathy and innovation.

**Comment 8:**

**Quote/Paragraph:** "The aim of this study was to promote soft skills among engineering students. For this purpose, the students were introduced to the concept of soft skills needed for engineering professionals. They were divided into groups of five students each. First, they were asked to read the novel individually and were provided with questions based on the novel that they were required to answer in groups. It is important to note that the groups were formed alphabetically by the researcher so that the students would not necessarily only work with their friends. This would be similar to real-life interactions in their professions where they need to work with people who are not of their own choice. The objective of working in groups was to encourage the development of the students’ own soft skills while evaluating the soft skills of the different characters portrayed in the novel." (p. 2)

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element Worldview Literacy in Research.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is additive to my understanding in that it illustrates a scientifically structured method for developing soft skills through controlled group assignments. Grouping students alphabetically minimizes bias, mirroring real-life professional diversity. It also integrates literary analysis as a tool to evaluate interpersonal communication skills. This approach proves that structured, diverse interactions are essential for both technical learning and moral growth.

**Contextualization:** This study’s approach to developing soft skills reinforces the process of how we see the world; engaging with diverse perspectives, practicing empathy, and cultivating a reflective mindset. It reminds me that true leadership is about analyzing the research and then integrating it with compassion and empathy. This perspective doesn’t only help with intersection of disciplines, but the worldview involved in these disciplines. In my line of work, teaching in healthcare, I have not always been able to teach hands-on work due to University budget issues, however, I have been able to ensure that integrated into my verbal lectures are practical tools on how to use interpersonal skills with clients to enhance their practice when they graduate.

**Source 5:** Ward, D. C. (2014). Interdisciplinary faith-learning integration for social change. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, 26*(1/2), 29–56. <https://10.5840/jis2014261/22>

**Comment 9:**

**Quote/Paragraph:** "A promising approach to interdisciplinary faith-learning integration for social change originated at Oxford Graduate School in Dayton, Tennessee. The graduate program developed a faith-integrated approach to interdisciplinary social research refined since the mid-1980s. This process provides the logic for a doctoral studies program, but it is adaptable to secondary school, undergraduate, and professional levels. It is applicable for interdisciplinary research involving the spectrum of disciplines from the natural and social sciences to the humanities and applied fields." (p. 33)

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential elementFaith-Learning Integration.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is variant to my understanding of conventional academia, which usually focuses on one discipline at a time. OGS demonstrates that faith-learning integration provides a unifying framework for addressing complex social challenges. OGS also challenges the traditional compartmentalization of fields by advocating for a holistic approach that combines diverse disciplines to create more meaningful change. Furthermore, this learning method is extremely unique in that it is transferable to all levels of education from grade school to terminal degrees.

**Contextualization:** As a current student of OGS, I am experiencing firsthand the unique academic framework that this school advocates for. Prior to being accepted, during my search for doctoral programs, I was specifically looking for the convergence of disciplines as a reason for me to apply to any program. OGS was one of only two programs to have this approach. However, the other prospective program, although it was a Doctor of Education in Interdisciplinary Studies, did not have the faith-based approach that I preferred.

**Comment 10:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**While leadership studies is a vast field, Robert Banks (2006) finds that theories dealing with servant and transformational leadership integrate well with faith-based approaches for groups, organizations, and society. Servant leadership focuses on the style of impact of change agents who put the needs of those they serve and seek to influence ahead of personal power and ambition. Transformational leadership focuses on the kind of change which leaders seek to influence. Such leaders show a willingness to model the change needed and lead groups through processes that alter the status quo for the better in constructive ways.” (p.51)

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element Learning…to Change the World.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is variant to my understanding in that it not only integrates leadership theories with faith-based principles but also challenges conventional leadership models that rely solely on individual authority. It presents a technical framework by contrasting servant leadership's emphasis on ethical service with transformational leadership's focus on initiating constructive change. This approach proves that ethical leadership is best served in multiple dimensions; personal humility and strategic vision. Incorporating these theories into any context produces an incredibly nuanced approach to leadership that is both ethically sound and technically rigorous.

**Contextualization:** I have seen leaders who embody these principles by putting the welfare of others at the forefront. I recall working under a senior manager who, although very strict, consistently placed team needs above personal gain. This approach taught me that effective leadership is about making intentional value-driven decisions that can reshape even the harshest of professional environments. The best aspect of this environment was that this manager still found ways to reward, even in a team-driven environment.

**Source 6:** Schmidt, A. J. (2004). How Christianity Changed the World. Zondervan.

**Comment 11:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “The historian Will Durant described early Christianity as offering itself “without reservation to all individuals, classes, and nations; it was not limited to one people, like Judaism, nor to the freedmen of one state, like the official cults of Greek and Rome. This openness, of course, existed not just relative to those whom the church sought as members, but also in its educational activities. Unlike the Greek and Roman practice of teaching only boys from the privileged segment of society, Christians taught individuals from all social classes and ethnic backgrounds, especially in preparation for church membership. There was no ethnic or bias. In fact, for the longest time, the poor and lower classes made up the majority of the church’s members, although there were always some who came from the upper echelon as well. The Acts of Peter (second century), for instance, lists some Roman senators, equestrians, and women of high social standing as members who reportedly belonged to the Apostle Peter’s congregation.” (Chap. 7)

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element Learning…to Change the World.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is variant to my understanding in that it reveals a technically novel approach for the time, challenging Greco-Roman norms that restricted formal learning to elite males. This perspective shows us how inclusive educational policies not only expanded religious membership but also laid a framework for more equitable social structures. Furthermore, this historical insight emphasizes that faith-based teachings, when combined with broad-based education, can systematically dismantle barriers of class and ethnicity.

**Contextualization:** For 4 years, I ran an internship program that produced inclusive educational outcomes. I provided collegiate level social and life skills courses for individuals with autism over the age of 21 years old. This program proved instrumental in bridging divides between the neuro-typical and intellectually disabled population. Furthermore, we became deliberate about integrating intellectually disabled participants from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds, prompting all individuals to share equally in group learning. These moments taught me that true social unity comes from actually crossing barriers rather than just making theoretical superficial declarations of social openness.

**Source 7:** Zimmermann, J. (2015). Hermeneutics: A very short introduction. Oxford University Press.

**Comment 12**:

**Quote/Paraphrase**: “Science seems to offer us the simple and certain facts of reality, while artistic, religious, and philosophical views about life are mere interpretations of the world. Science, we have learned in school, rests on strictly empirical observation, on accurate measurement, and on the exact verification of its results. In contrast to religion, art, and literature, scientific knowledge is independent of received opinion, personal bias, and the vagaries of language. In short, it would appear that all the elements we have outlined as intrinsic to hermeneutics do not apply to science. Scientists know facts, while philosophers, artists, and theologians peddle matters of personal taste…” (chap. 7)

**Essential Element**: This quote is associated with the essential element worldview literacy in research.

**Additive/Variant Analysis**: This quote is additive to my understanding in that while faith-based texts are interpreted through spiritual values, they must be balanced with critical thinking and empirical evidence. Interpreting with this balance eliminates any personal biases that can restrict proper worldview. In secular environments, interpretations of fairness and responsibility may come from codes of conduct rather than religious texts. Ethical principles may still exist but are tied to professional standards and societal expectations rather than spiritual values.

**Contextualization**: I have been in situations where evidence-based decision-making conflicted with personal faith-based values. Though continuing to maintain my personal beliefs, this was resolved by prioritizing the empirical findings. Any biases that influence my decisions may render ineffective outcomes. For both current and future work, I recognize that ethical values may sometimes be grounded in professional standards rather than religious beliefs. My goal is to respect diverse worldviews while ensuring that my leadership continues to promote integrity and fairness across different professional frameworks.

**Works Cited**

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