

Week 1: 13 January 2017

Since this is the first week of class and we are more or less getting to know one another and the course, I found that the most meaningful aspects of the first week were in the video introduction for the course and the reading.

Of course, I appreciated getting to know, who my fellow sojourners are in the class; however, we only introduced ourselves and did not interact with the material or have any discussions about it. I know that more interaction and discussion will follow. I found it helpful to learn about each person's journeys, joys, and struggles. We will all face them in what lies ahead.

Returning to the most meaningful aspects of the first week of class, I think that Dr. Siebold's and Dr. Baumgartner's introduction of the course were very helpful. I have been thinking about the implications of the construct concerning ideas, assumptions, and consequences. As I have reflected (I always think about how things relate to life), I found myself conceptualizing and applying the construct to recent scandals in college football.

Why is the culture of college football such that it enables and allows sexual and physical abuse of its athletes? If I were a leader, how would I confront and deal with the culture? I have thought this through but I will not address it here because it would be too long.

The one aspect of the reading that spoke to me most the discussion on philosophy and most specifically, who I am as a philosopher. I have not really thought of myself as a philosopher as such, but the reading in Chapter 1 really confirmed it. My pattern has been to ask questions instead of seeking answers. I tend to ask good questions that "are meaningful and relevant" (Knight, 2006, p. 9). People have said to me on several occasions that I challenge them to think by asking them good questions.

I want to become better at asking questions. I think that by learning more about my philosophical assumptions, I will become more skilled in teaching about the Holocaust, hopefully "sparking a great public dialogue" as Cremin stated (as cited in, Knight, 2006, p. 4).

Week 2: 21 January 2017

This week, I spent more time in the discussion area and interacting with fellow classmates through the class assignment. I posted on Wednesday morning and began interacting with 5 students. I also interacted with several other student's posts. I do not know how many posts with which we should react in a meaningful way. I spoke with 2 other students individually in 2 separate conversations and found both conversations to be extremely rewarding and connecting. It was a pleasant change of pace to have "real" interaction with my classmates. I learned a great deal about each one, which makes them more "real" as people.

I enjoyed the reading this week and I found it to be useful in understanding the nature of philosophy and its associated assumptions. In the discussions for the week, one student, Tim Ellis, gave a good illustration about how he understood philosophy as being like a "file cabinet." He stated, "Philosophy gave me a bigger file cabinet in which to put my ideas and helped me to learn how to sort out my ideas and put them into files in the file cabinet in an orderly way." I

found this illustration to be extremely helpful in that it is a way to organize philosophical issues that I face in my work.

One thing that I understood from the reading is that I am learning the importance of asking questions so that I can understand the "other," meaning those who are different from me. It is important for me to understand the Jewish perspective and worldview in particular so that I can continue to build a bridge of understanding. I also learned that I have also become quite flexible in my own worldview and philosophical assumptions so that I can interact with and develop relationships with people who have differing political, moral, or spiritual worldview assumptions from those that I have.

I think that up until this point in my work and interaction with the Jewish community, I have done a rather good job albeit, I have done it intuitively, sort of guessing and feeling my way along, as I go. I think by developing an understanding of philosophical assumptions that underlied the Jewish worldview (not necessarily religious, but cultural and otherwise), I will become a better listener and learn to understand from where someone is coming as I interact.

I think as we go forward in the class and once I learn the terminology better, what I have been doing intuitively will become more clear to me philosophically.

Week 3: 29 January 2017

For me this has been an interesting week while I have read, reflected, and interacted with classmates in the forum discussion. Philosophy, as I am beginning to perceive has had and is having a great impact on my research and my dissertation. I am learning to understand and solidify my own philosophical assumptions and their constructs. The language of philosophy is becoming less foreign and less abstract. I have been able to sort out this week where I am in my philosophical journey.

Initially, I believed that I was an idealist with realist tendencies, which I may still be essentially; however, I am realizing that I am more postmodern in my assumptions particularly in my leadership philosophy. I do have convictions and beliefs about truth related to God, Jesus, biblical values, etc. But I realized long ago that these values are "my non-negotiable" but what is?

Since I have been in the leadership program and due to the nature of my work in leading The Matzevah Foundation, I have had to examine what is negotiable without sacrificing my convictions, beliefs, and values.

Tippett (2007) asked, "It is possible to be a believer and a listener at the same time, to be both fervent and searching, to nurture a vital identity and to wonder at the identities of others?" This is a key question for me and extremely relevant as I seek to discover pathways to enrich Jewish-Christian dialogue along with developing a process for reconciliation.

I wrote in this week's forum in response to a question about "how to teach and give evidence?" I stated that Joe L. Kincheloe advances the notion that "students and teachers must learn to

produce their own knowledge" (as cited in, Knight, 2006, p. 96). As Knight points out this consideration leads to constructivism.

John Zahorik advanced three propositions (as cited in, Knight, 2006, p. 96):

1. "knowledge is constructed by humans" -- discovery is the key to knowledge
2. "knowledge is conjectural and fallible" -- knowledge changes and grows
3. "knowledge grows through exposure" -- knowledge is experiential

I think that I am becoming able to flex in my philosophical assumptions toward being a constructionist. My 3 interpretations of the above constructs are how I see myself as a constructionist in practice. In many ways in the work that I do, I am a pioneer seeking to discover and open pathways to dialogue. Whatever I learn along the way, is not static but ever changing – it changes me and others as we interact with what we learn together.

Week 4: 5 February 2017

As the course has progressed to date, I have most enjoyed discussing axiology – values with my classmates in the forum. I have done a great deal of research concerning moral values and their impact on society in general and in my work particularly. I know that I am not yet finished in my pursuit to understand how my own values factor into the work that God has given me to do.

To that end, I reflect frequently, about the concepts and principles that we are encountering in our study of philosophy, particularly how they impact our leadership.

I asked this question to the class: Do we hold any values which we consider to be negotiable? If so, what are they? In our interaction with the world around us, should everything be seen in black and white? Or are there shades of gray? In other words, do we have room to maneuver within the values of the world around us without compromising our deepest convictions and beliefs?

I asked these questions because I tend to think that many Christians live in “Christian Ghettos” and may not have healthy and challenging interaction with the world around them. At least this is my experience and what I have encountered in the literature.

Edward Taylor (2007) in his review of the literature summarizes empirical research concerning the transformative learning theory, which proposes “a theory of learning that is uniquely adult, abstract and idealized, grounded in the nature of human communication” (p. 173). Taylor provides Mezirow’s definition of the concept (cited in, Taylor, 2007, p. 173):

[In transformative learning] learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action.

Taylor further emphasizes one of the “essential factors” found in a “transformative experience” is based upon building relationships with other people, who trust each other (p. 179); transformational learning is not abstract but a rather concrete and mutual experience. It is

through these “trustful relationships” that people are able to engage in dialogue, discuss and share information freely, which allows them to “achieve mutual consensual understanding” (p. 179).

I think for us as students, we should strive to understand the world around us so that we might better interact with it. This is where I am today in my journey to understand how I might more effectively work with people who are vastly different from myself without compromising, who I am in Christ and my allegiance to him.

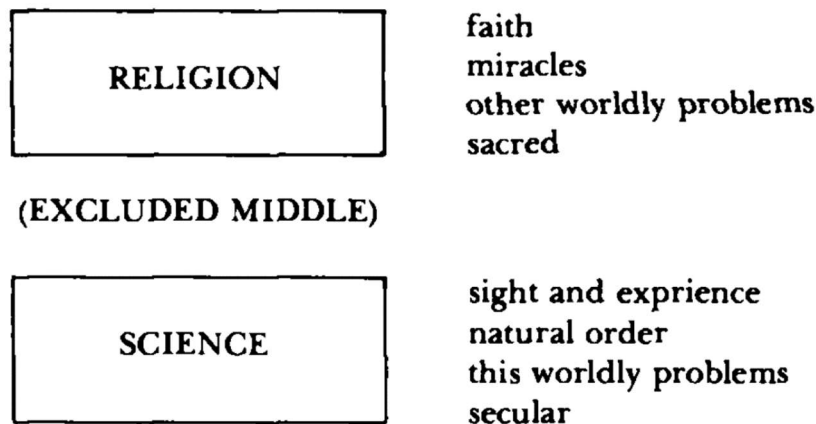
Week 5: 11 February

Over the past few years, I have read several books and articles related to worldview issues. All of us seem to share a Christian Theistic worldview. But how do we deal with cultures and people within those cultures, who do not share our worldview? What do we do?

Hiebert (1982) considers this question and reasons that we as Western Christians have a “two-tiered view of reality” (p. 43). I previously wrote the following:

Due to our Western practice of "Platonic dualism" and our belief in science (or more so rationalism and the exclusion of the spiritual) we do not see the middle as Hiebert (1982, p. 43) characterized it – the world of spirits and how they influence the world around us (See Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3
A WESTERN TWO-TIERED VIEW OF REALITY**



I have come to understand that our Western theological perspective does not embrace the reality of the unseen world of spirits or "the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" Ephesians 6:12 ESV). I have read a book by Alistair Petrie titled, *Releasing Heaven on Earth* (Petrie, 2000), which deals with the excluded middle. I do

not agree with all that Petrie writes (by the way he is an Anglican priest); however, he introduced me to the theology of the land.

Why was this [concept] important to me to consider? I was dealing with unproductive soil as a missionary in Poland. We proclaimed the gospel on soil that was full of rocks and thistles. We needed good soil. How do we deal with issues in the soil such as the bloodshed of the Shoah (Holocaust) in such a way so that we deal with the underlying spiritual issues? Scripture is the answer, which deals extensively with the curse of bloodshed (Please recall what God said to Cain, “the blood of your brother cries out to me from the earth”). On the basis of Mark 4 and many, many, other Scriptures God led me down the path that I am presently on. I have stepped away from the excluded middle and realize that in order to deal with spiritual realities I must trust in the power of God and apply his Word to my circumstances by doing what it says.

For me Hiebert’s article aided my understanding of the “unseen reality” with which I was dealing with my work. I had read previously Alistair Petrie’s book, but Petrie did not deal with ontological issues specifically. Hiebert did. From Hiebert, I learned how my Theistic and dualistic worldviews have prejudiced me from seeing spiritual reality or the unseen world of spiritual consequences.

Again, I think that it is needful to understand our own worldview stance but how do we interact with the worldviews, who do not share a Theistic viewpoint?

Hiebert argues that missionaries need “to develop holistic theologies that deal with all areas of life” and take “seriously body and soul” (pp. 45-46). I would modify the term missionaries to instead refer to Christian leaders. He outlines and explains what holistic theology is (Hiebert, 1982, p. 46):

1. “God in cosmic history: in the creation, redemption, purpose and destiny of all things.”
2. “God in human history: in the affairs of nations, of peoples and of individuals.”
3. “God in natural history - in sustaining the natural order of things.”

Although I do not explicitly deal with spiritual issues in my work, they stand in the background of it. For this reason, I am aware of the impact of the shedding of innocent blood on the land. It is nevertheless in the background.

I am aware of this spiritual reality but I deal with it through speaking against the injustice of the Shoah by restorative works – i.e. restoring Jewish cemeteries in Poland. What I have learned is that the Jewish cemetery is a liminal space in which Jew and Christian can interact, begin to dialogue, and hopefully one day come to terms with the past.

Week 6: 19 February 2017

This week I have dealt personally with the worldview issue of utilitarian individualism from Wilkens and Sanford (2009). Robert Bellah, et. al., posit that American individualism has two forms: “utilitarian individualism” and “expressive individualism” (as cited in, Wilkens & Sanford, 2009, p. 28). Utilitarian individualism is orientated toward “personal achievement and

material success,” while it pursues “the social good,” which flows automatically from “the individual pursuit of one’s own interests” (p. 28).

I have attempted to reconcile my individualistic tendencies in light of the needs of my leadership. In the process of reconciling my understanding and thinking, I found myself returning to some key concepts that I encountered in LEAD645 Ethical Leadership.

As a leader, I see ethical and moral conduct changing due to several factors but I do not think that we are seeing a generational change as it relates to ethics but we are seeing more individual corruption such as in the case of Bernie Maddoff (Johnson, 2012, p. 72).

Do I see the world negatively or positively?

According to Scripture the world is corrupt and condemned already. If I embrace this negative view then I would function without hope and fail to see God’s purpose in this world. However, if I understand that the world system is corrupt due to sin and I realize that God sent Christ into the world to SAVE it and NOT condemn (because it stands condemned already – John 3:17), then I may act according to God’s redemptive plan and become an agent of grace through whom God’s gracious act of redemption moves beyond me and impacts the world around me.

Johnson (2012) discusses the “moral leader,” whose purpose is to “reduce corruption” around them; he also describes the “moral worker,” who “strives for ethical consistency throughout life” (p. 95). I believe that we, as leaders, can become “salt and light” and influence an “evil age” by influencing those around us through biblical and ethical living.

Am I viewing the world through an individualistic worldview lens?

From Covrig (2000), I learned that moral leadership is firstly concerned with establishing “values, practices, and structures deemed acceptable and normal” and then in light of these considerations or “core values” develop a set of routines reflecting these core values (p. 56). Secondly, when these core values are being “marginalized” (set aside, ignored) by the “stakeholders” of the organization (p. 56), moral organizational leadership requires leaders to embrace and create conflict so as to raise “moral awareness of potential moral dilemmas” (p. 55).

Selznick introduced the concept of the “institutional leader,” who is “primarily an expert in the promotion and protection of values” (as cited in, Covrig, 2000, p. 51). Selznick argues that the function of a leader is “to define the ends of group existence, to design an enterprise distinctively adapted to these ends, and to see that that design becomes a living reality. These tasks are not routine; they call for continuous self-appraisal” (as cited in, Covrig, 2000, p. 51).

Self-appraisal then requires for me to consider how I see the world around me.

Johnson (2012) advise leaders to not to project our “internal enemies and selfishness on others” by developing “positive leadership traits or qualities called virtues” (p. 80). These virtues four valuable components: (a) inner life, (b) a way of seeing and behaving, (c) independently operate, (d) assist leaders live a better life. Key virtues are (Johnson, 2012, pp. 80-85):

1. Courage – courage is overcoming fear in order to do the right thing.

2. Prudence (Practical Wisdom) – Prudence is the ability to discern or select the best course of action in a given situation.
3. Optimism – Optimists expect positive outcomes in the future even if they are currently experiencing disappointments and difficulties.
4. Integrity – Integrity is wholeness or completeness.

Week 7: 26 February 2017

In this week's readings, I became more familiar with postmodernism and its pattern of thinking. I shared in one of my responses in the forum that I have never really studied postmodernism; nevertheless, I interact with it frequently.

I had never actually considered how modernism – rationalism, has impacted my thinking until I began to react against it in my practice. I am a classically trained Southern Baptist minister. "Modernism rejects cultural particularities and seeks to absorb unique practices in something that is more universal" (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009, p. 146).

This pervasive mindset essentially indwelt my practice as a minister. I had the truth and I was to conquer others for Christ. My thinking was culturally arrogant. That being an American, classically trained minister that somehow I had better insight and understanding about how to establish and lead a church in a completely different culture.

Once I began to learn the Polish language and culture and I began to encounter and understand a different reality, I began to change my viewpoint and crossed cultural barriers. I began to think like a Pole.

From my readings this week, I see know how postmodernism offered me a useful tool for the "appraisal of modernism" (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009, p. 149).

One day, I met Łukasz for coffee in order to get to know him better. Over the course of our conversation, we discussed many things about life and ministry. Rather unexpectedly, he shared with me that at first he was suspicious of me and added, "You are not like the American missionaries that I have met working in his country."

"You speak Polish well, and I can see that you understand us." He said. In principle, he went on to add that he avoided working with American missionaries because they show up as "the experts" with all the answers and a ready-made plan. The Americans say, "Do step one, two, three and four and then you will get a church." He went on to add, "This will not work in our culture. We tried this type of approach. What happens when the plan doesn't work?"

Łukasz told me that when he first met me, he thought that I was just another one of those American missionaries he had met and with whom he worked previously, and as a result, he wanted to avoid me and not work with me.

However, in time, after observing me, what I did and how I did it, he began to see that I was different and wanted to work with me. He said, "You are not what I expected. You are unusual and exceptional in what you do and how you do it. You do not approach your work with a ready-

made plan with all the answers. I can tell that you listen to us and understand us. You are one of us and I can see that you want to partner with us in our work as we seek to plant this church.”

In that moment, Łukasz affirmed me as a cross-cultural missionary and I knew that something had changed in me.

Here is what I think changed: I realized that “culture provides a way of ordering life” (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009, p. 151) and I learned how to have a “respect for all people” (p. 152). I now realize that when I faced cross-cultural dissonance, my modernistic tendency was “to see cultural variations as deviations that should be brought into conformity with universal truth” (p. 152).

My response became that of preserving the cultural diversity that I had encountered, “because it recognizes that these practices give structure to life’s fundamental functions” (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009, p. 152).

Week 8: 7 March 2017

I am posting my journal reflection later than normal and later than I anticipated. This past weekend I traveled to Nashville, TN for our bi-annual board meeting. At this time of the year in the lifecycle of our non-profit, The Matzevah Foundation, we primarily consider, determine, and finalize our summer project schedule.

Prior to doing this, as CEO, I was asked to the nature of change in our midst (roles, organization, world). I focused on my readings from this past week and shared with my board of directors what I had learned about my Christian worldview.

Essentially, I shared my post that I wrote about how I connected what I have done and what I am doing in caring for and restoring Jewish cemeteries in Poland with the goodness of God – his holiness, or righteousness and his love or loving-kindness for his creation.

A second component of my worldview as a Christian is redemption or transformation, which “is a rearrangement of our identity, convictions, ethics, and actions” (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009, p. 184). Another aspect that I have come to understand is that of being created in the “image of God,” which to my “task of representing God’s interests in creation” (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009, p. 185).

This latter aspect leads me to understand and address an unpleasant situation in my work. Without going into much detail, I face an adversary. I stand between a group of Jewish descendants and a Polish bureaucrat. The bureaucrat is blocking my attempts to assist this group, who has been pursuing the restoration of a particular Jewish cemetery in Poland for 20 years.

The bureaucrat has made some unjust accusations against me personally and the organization that I lead. I am trying to navigate the situation graciously. I learned this morning that this particular bureaucrat is making life difficult for those who work in restoring and preserving Jewish cemeteries.

From my reading I realize that the bureaucrat is also one of God’s creations and for this reason, I understand that I must treat them with dignity and respect. However, what this person is doing is

unjust and punitive. I realize that I am “called by God” and I must “actively represent his kingdom” in this matter (Wilkins & Sanford, 2009, p. 185). I have several options that I am considering; nevertheless, I must first attempt to redeem the situation by allowing God’s goodness, his love to transform the situation.

Week 9: 14 March 2017

This week I am also posting later than I normally do due to the fact that I left for Poland on Friday, 11 March. Since my arrival in Warsaw on Saturday, I have been actively engaged in preparing for lies ahead in my work.

I am staying with a friend, who is a young man who works in processing credit card transactions. He is an advisor on our advisory board and is an important work of what our organization does in Poland. I shared with him what I have been learning about my worldview and how it applies to the work that we are doing with The Matzevah Foundation.

As I shared with him some of my worldview connections, I was more able to verbalize things of which I have written over the past few weeks as a part of my own worldview analysis. What has become clear for me is the fact that God’s goodness is a major driving force behind what we are doing.

One other aspect also expressed itself over the past two days while I have been in meetings with our partners and co-workers. While here I must deal with a very difficult situation, which I will not explain fully but it involves the director of one of the foundations with whom we partner in our work. She has essentially accused us of stealing donors and competing with her organization.

When our board met last week, we considered our options. One option that consistently came to the forefront was that of humility. Sire (2009) posits, I should live out and understand my worldview is “an attitude of humility,” so that I will not be tempted by my own desire of power (p. 281).

In confronting and dealing with this unpleasant situation, I have maintained an attitude and position of humility. Yesterday, I had meetings all day long. One of my last meetings was with the Chief Rabbi of Poland. I met with him to seek his advice and counsel on how to resolve this matter with the director of this foundation. He asked me what I was thinking and I shared with him my thoughts, which basically revolved around communicating directly with the other foundation’s board of directors.

He said that was certainly an option but it may be viewed negatively. Instead he suggested that we consider a more positive solution by meeting with the board of directors and suggesting that our two organizations consider a more formal partnership. The positive aspect would be in his view that the board would communicate we are working with the organization that I lead more formally and essentially state: “Work with them and do not obstruct their work.”

I told the Chief Rabbi that I was his servant and that I would follow his leadership. I have no power here and I do not wish to rule over the situation. In all humility, I am seeking to extend God’s righteous and love into this difficult situation.

Week 10: 19 March 2017

This week I traveled to Poland where I have been meeting with various partners and officials regarding Jewish cemetery projects planned for this summer were discussed. When I travel over extended periods of time, as when I am in Poland, I find it difficult to remain focused on my course work like I am able to do when I am at home. Being out of synch timewise and being in unfamiliar circumstances tend to work against me while I am away in Poland. I am also stretched by the intensity of the schedule that I keep and by working in the language.

Despite these influences, I was able to find some time to begin collecting my thoughts on LEAD636 and my reflection paper. I had a free day in which, I was able to read through my forum posts and begin collecting relevant resources for my reflection paper, philosophy, and worldview statements.

As I wrote last week, I have spent the first week of my time in Poland living in the home of a young man, who is a member of the advisory board of The Matzevah Foundation. As I indicated, I have been sharing with him some of what I have been learning from my studies from time to time, and this time was no different.

I shared with him how probably for the first time, I had been able to connect my Christian worldview with the work that God led me to do in caring for and restoring Jewish cemeteries. Principally, I shared with him that since I understood that God created us in his own image that in my life were mirrored elements of his character.

The major point that I focused on in my discussion with him was that since God loved his creation he acted to redeem it. I shared with him what I wrote in Week 8.

Wilkens and Sanford (2009) conclude that my Christian worldview should be focused on knowing God, which is deeper than knowing the facts about God. My relationship with God and my knowledge of him should change me, transform me literally reshaping, “the rearrangement of [my] identity, convictions, ethics, and actions” (p. 184).

I believe that this latter consideration is a key conceptual link for me and my work because my work is about transformation, literally redemption, or as Wilkens and Sanford (2009) consider that redemption contains within it “the basic idea of restoration” (p. 196). My life’s work is to restore the broken relationship between Jew and Christian “to a new condition” (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009, p. 196).

What will this “new condition” look like? I do not know. What I am learning however at this point is that the work of restoration is a process and not a product.

Ultimately, the work of The Matzevah Foundation is about transformation, meaning changing situations, bringing people together for the purpose of dialogue.

I told him that God has been using my course work to develop my intellectual and spiritual understanding of the work that he led me to begin so many years ago in 2004. I still do not understand it completely but I am beginning to develop an understanding about how he has made me and how I see the world that he made connects with what he has led me to do.

Sadly, many of my Christian friends do not see this connection. Instead they see what I am not doing in “proclaiming the gospel.”

By and large Jews know who Jesus is. They have heard about him for 2,000 years. What they do not know is his love being expressed to them through us, as Christians. I labor to make the love of God known through what I do in leading The Matzevah Foundation.

Week 11: 26 March 2017

Oftentimes the path we walk, is not the path that we would willingly choose. Nevertheless at times we find ourselves walking along less traveled roads, wondering to where we are journeying. The world around us becomes unfamiliar and troubling. We yearn for earlier days in which we felt more secure and less worried about outcomes that we could seemingly control.

Jeremiah, the prophet, tells us that “our lives are not our own. We are not able to plan our own course” (Jeremiah 10:23). My course is not my own and I accept that reality as coming from the Lord. His path has taken me to places where I often wonder to myself, “Why? Why am I here? What does this mean? What am I to do?”

Recently while in Poland, part of my journey through Poland took me to cities and places where people suffered unmercifully due to war. Among them this week, I visited [Majdanek](#), a Nazi concentration and death camp. Of the approximate 150,000 inmates who were interned at Majdanek, more than half, 80,000 including 60,000 Jews, were murdered and their bodies cremated at the hand of their captors.



I am part of a research project to document such [Holocaust killing sites](#). The goal of the project is to determine whether or not the Nazis followed patterns in their mass murder and to learn what factors contributed to not only genocide but cultural genocide.

How does this relate to me and my journey?

It is my conviction that God wishes to heal the brokenness and redeem the tragedy that so many experienced. How? I do not exactly know yet. I only know that he has taken me on this journey.

Week 12: 2 April 2017

This past week, I have been in dialogue with you, Dr. Siebold, regarding the requirements for completing the course. I will submit my reflection paper along with my worldview and philosophy statements in order to complete the course.

I have worked to compete gathering material for my reflection paper and subsequent papers regarding my worldview and philosophical statements. I found it interesting how much writing that I have done over the course of the 8 weeks, as we interacted with the course material in the discussion forums. I clearly have a great deal of material to blend into my reflection paper along with my worldview and philosophical statements.

Regarding the reflection paper, I have read and understood what will be needed to construct it successfully. However, beyond the basic content provided on the course website, I am not certain about how to construct my worldview and philosophical statements. Further instructions were referenced on the course website but I could not locate them.

Each member of our course peer group has completed their course plan for completing LEAD636 but collectively we are somewhat behind where we would like to be at this point due to my travel and Sharon's travel during March. We will have our first peer group meeting this week on Thursday, 6 April at 7:00 PM. We will work to complete our papers and conduct our presentations within the time allotted for the course.

I have been in dialogue with my LLG about presenting my reflection paper and will do so in early May.

Week 13: 9 April 2017

Our peer group met on Thursday, 6 April, and discussed our individual progress. We set a date for submitting our first drafts for review, which will be by 9:00 PM on 13 April. This will give us adequate time to read and review each other's reflection papers and to give feedback so that we can submit it to Dr. Siebold for his review.

During this past week, I have been able to return my focus fully to completing the reflection paper along with developing my personal statements of philosophy and worldview. As I wrote last week, I have a great deal of material to work through; nevertheless, I have developed a way to structure it, use it, and then incorporate the material into my reflection paper. I have found the exercise to be invaluable as it relates to integrating the worldview concepts into my work.

I have begun to gather artifacts and considering how to evaluate and/or verify my ability in this competency. Although, I would like to achieve a 4 or 5 according to the rubric for this competency, I realize that I must complete it and focus my energy on completing my research analysis.

I have set my research aside since returning from Poland on 25 March, so that I could develop my reflection paper and my supporting documentation (worldview and philosophical statements). Once I submit my reflection paper for feedback from Dr. Siebold, hopefully, I will be able to make adjustments quickly so that I may submit it for final evaluation. I will then return to my research analysis so that I may be able to complete it by the time I go to Poland once more in the middle of May.

Week 14: 16 April 2017

This week everything came together and I had the time that I needed to rough out and complete my reflection paper. I had some difficulty structuring it even though, I good resource from which to work. I used the class guide on writing and structuring a reflection paper as a jumping off point. In the end I structured the paper based on 3 major sections: theoretical considerations, applying to practice, and key learnings.

I broke each section into several subsections and wrote accordingly. I attempted to capture as much as I could from what I had written throughout the course from my forum postings. I discovered that I tended to reflect more in my posts than I did describing theoretical aspects of philosophy or worldview.

I think that I approached the class more so in this manner because, I am practitioner. I am always looking to apply good theory to my practice. So, it made sense for me to process the theoretical considerations that I encountered in this manner.

I thought that it was an excellent idea for us to work in small groups. My peer group worked well together and worked efficiently setting deadlines and meeting them. All of us should submit our reflections papers on time.

I learned a great deal about my peers from reading their work. Each of them has a unique set of challenges and their work reflects how they have processed their interactions with philosophy and worldviews.

One thing that I learned this week was how difficult it is for people to shift in their perspectives of how they view the world around them. I was discussing with a Jewish friend what I was learning from the course and about what I was writing in my reflection paper. I told him that I had come to realize how flexible I had become in my worldview in certain areas.

He told me that the reason that I had become so flexible was due to the fact that I forced myself to interact with people who held distinctly different worldviews from my own. He said, "You have had to learn out of necessity. And, now what you take for granted is difficult for other people like you, who share a similar worldview. You came out of a Baptist seminary, but lived and worked in Poland. You speak Polish and you worked with Polish Jews. You had to change."

He said that many people like me, who come out of seminary do not choose to interact with people different from them. They choose to interact with those, who are like them. For this reason, they do not face the need to learn how to shift in their perspectives like I did.

He wants to read my reflection paper. Once I complete the course, I will share it with him. I would really like to hear what he has to say.

Week 15: 23 April 2017

This week I submitted my second draft of my reflection paper. Each member of our peer group reviewed the reflection papers of two other classmates. I found it to be an effective way of working on the reflection paper especially in terms of developing clarity and for catching major errors or on concepts or statements that do not make sense.

I also finalized my personal philosophical and worldview statements. I found that preparing these documents was helpful overall in the sense of providing a foundation structural component to the much broader reflection paper.

Additionally, I spent the week revisiting my artifacts and verification documents that I think may be helpful in documenting my competency in 1A Philosophical Foundations.

One concern that I had in writing my reflection paper was the temptation of making my reflection paper more ethical than philosophical. I really wanted to write about axiology, but I will save that for the reflection paper for competency 1B.

Lastly, I realized that I liked the theoretical ideas that I encountered, but I also realized that I am more of a practitioner than a theorist. As such I am more focused on how philosophical frameworks impact my values, meaning what should be and what is actually present.

Week 16: 30 April 2017

This week did not really go as I had planned. Dr. Siebold returned my reflection paper to me with his feedback last Sunday. It was very good feedback; it was to the point and very helpful. I thought that I would be able to make the revisions very quickly, so I reserved part of Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of this week to finalize my paper.

I am teaching a five part seminar on the Holocaust at one of the synagogues here in Atlanta. I am co-teaching it with a Jewish friend. I am certified via Yad Vashem and have their materials but I also blend in some of what I have encountered in my research. The seminar began on 27 March but took a break for Pesach (Passover). My friend and I had written the first two parts but the third session fell to me, so I worked on it all day Monday.

Tuesday, I worked on my research, which took all of my time, so by the time I got to my papers on Wednesday afternoon, I focused on finalizing my personal statements. Thursday morning, I returned to my reflection paper and I also had to finish session four for the Holocaust seminar, which I worked on briefly and quickly put it away so that I could concentrate on my reflection paper.

As I noted, I initially thought that making these revisions would go quickly, but it did not. I worked through the content of my paper and by the end of the day, I realized that I would not be able to submit it until the weekend.

Why am I sharing this in my journal? I think that it is important to realize that it takes a great deal of mental energy and concentration to write a reflection paper. The reflection paper is an important document that captures how I have linked my learning with my practice, which is a far more complex task than I initially realized.

Honestly, I have feared writing a reflection paper because of its complexity. Ever since I have been in the leadership program I have been uncertain about how to go about writing one. So in writing this first one, I wanted to make sure that I got it right. I think that the process is certainly recursive and takes more time than writing something like a forum post. It is like writing a semester's worth of forum posts.

As I reflect, I think that I have learned the nuts and bolts of what goes into writing a reflection paper. I have the basic elements in my mind of what goes into a reflection paper. I wished that I had taken this class sooner in my PhD experience; nevertheless, I was not able to do so until now.

Thank you for your feedback and for leading us all through this process. I found it immeasurably useful, stimulating, and practical.

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