

Mentoring Adjunct Christian Teachers

One of the major, and most humbling, responsibilities as a faculty department chair at a Christian university is to ensure that we are teaching according to a biblical worldview. This is an epistemological challenge because, in the extant world of academics, especially in the social sciences, the prevailing paradigm remains one of seeking value neutrality. The actual perspective often is that of secular humanism, frequently with an anti-Christian bias, certainly in textbooks and academic journals which often are materialistic and relativistic.

At Regent University, our Christian mission statement and calling require the integration of faith while maintaining a high standard of academic excellence in our curricular offerings. We require each of our instructors to be fully qualified as academics, meeting accreditation standards, and also a committed Christian by profession of faith as demonstrated in life. Most also have substantial professional experience in applying his subject in the workplace. Each teacher is committed to the Christian mission of Regent University and to our undergraduate program, but often lack formal education in how to integrate her faith in her teaching.

After being challenged by sincere Christian students and teachers as to why we adopted certain secular textbooks for our Leadership and Business courses, it was apparent that we needed to explain why we required such sources to educate our students properly in certain disciplines. We also needed better to communicate and guide our instructors in how to educate students using non-Christian sources, while themselves growing as mentors for interpreting and applying such knowledge from a Christian worldview perspective.

In our department, the chair and other full-time faculty supervise course development and mentor one another and part-time adjunct faculty to encourage biblical perspectives and applications as integral components of each course. Without promoting any denominational or sectarian position, we include discussion questions and analysis of case situations faced by believers in business and other leadership roles. Students write thoughtful essays developing their personal philosophies and approaches for leading and managing according to a Christian ethic, as they work them out according to their worldview. Our academic dean teaches orientation sessions for all full-time faculty during their initial year and hosts an annual faculty workshop, covering all transportation and other expenses, that brings adjunct instructors to a two-day gathering to build faculty unity, administrative training, and pedagogical dialogue on teaching methods and faith integration.

Today, I present to you one of the PowerPoint presentations developed to mentor and stimulate conversation at a faculty workshop. It seeks to inform and challenge adjunct faculty to grow in their understanding of a Christian worldview, and in how to test and teach even secular material in a manner consistent with and supportive of biblical Christianity. It includes a portion of a second presentation that probes into the question of how to interpret and transform a particular course, *Systems Thinking*, that is based on a text written by a secular author (Senge, 2006). The resulting interactive dialogue stimulates and challenges our faculty as they return to their students. May we join in further assessment and dialogue today. Admittedly, we have much to learn as we continue our journey and sincerely hope to profit from your feedback critiquing this approach and sharing some of what you do at your institutions.

300 word summary:

Mentoring Adjunct Christian Teachers

One of the major, and most humbling, responsibilities as a faculty department chair at a Christian university is ensuring that every instructor is teaching according to a biblical worldview. This is an epistemological challenge in the extant world of academics, where texts often espouse value neutrality, but actually presume materialism and relativism. At Regent, after being challenged by sincere Christian students and teachers as to why we adopted certain secular textbooks for our Leadership and Business courses, it was apparent that we need to explain why we require such sources. We also mentor our adjunct instructors, all committed Christians but many lacking formal education in faith integration, in how to educate students using non-Christian sources, instilling confidence in them for interpreting and applying such knowledge from a Christian worldview perspective.

In our department, the chair supervises course development to encourage biblical applications as integral components of each course. Without promoting any sectarian position, we include discussion questions and analysis of case situations. Students write essays developing their personal philosophies for leading and managing according to a Christian worldview and ethic. The academic dean hosts an annual faculty workshop, covering all transportation and other expenses, bringing adjunct instructors to a two-day gathering to build unity and promote pedagogical dialogues on teaching methods and faith integration.

Today's presentation was developed to mentor and stimulate conversation at a recent faculty workshop. It seeks to challenge adjunct faculty to grow as Christian teachers. It includes an example of interpreting and transforming a particular course, *Systems Thinking*, one based on a text written by a secular author (Senge, 2006). Adjuncts and full-time faculty have been encouraged to continue such conversations as they return to their students. Admittedly, we still have much to learn, sincerely hoping to profit from your critiques and suggestions.

(297 words)

J. Thomas Whetstone, D.Phil.

Regent School of Undergraduate Studies

75 word abstract:

At Regent University, department chairs are responsible for ensuring that adjuncts effectively implement the Christian mission. Presentations at workshops encourage continuing conversations among adjunct faculty on faith integration as part of a deliberate mentoring process. One such presentation is offered for dialogue and critique at this conference. This presentation features an example of interpreting and transforming a particular course, *Systems Thinking*, one based on a text written by a secular author (Senge, 2006),.

(73 words)

J. Thomas Whetstone, D.Phil.

Regent School of Undergraduate Studies