

Dear Dr. Oster,

Gary Altman expressed some concerns about the course content and textbook, *The Global Diversity Desk Reference: Managing an International Workforce*, by Gardenswartz, Rowe, Digh, and Bennett, used in OLAM 400 Diversity. My considered response is both general and specific to this textbook. It represents a working document for communicating and developing a mentoring process for OLAM course developers and instructors.

### **General Comments**

Professor Altman does raise some serious and important issues. I personally thank him for his inputs. I see one of my major responsibilities as being to check and ensure that we are teaching according to God's truth.

In the extant world of academics, especially in the social sciences, the prevailing paradigm remains one of seeking value neutrality, although commonly the actual perspective is that of secular humanism, too often with an anti-Christian bias. The worldview adopted is likely to be materialistic and relativistic—definitely this is the case in the text by Gardenswartz et al.

**At Regent, our instructional materials and instructor's teaching guidance should frame the courses we teach from a deliberately Christian world and life view.** This is to be a major epistemological emphasis in the course introduction, the course wrap-up, and throughout. Achieving this will often require our adding spiritual dimensions to models and raising additional questions and issues about the text materials, including illustrations and cases. Because texts often omit or even deprecate the Christian perspective and even the objective reality of any truth statement, this will require our careful attention to assure that in each and every course the materials required and recommended to students are supplemented in support of our spiritual mission.

However, the academic reality is that in many areas, including that of Diversity Studies, there are few if any available textbooks written from a deliberately Christian perspective. Even if there are some respectable texts by Christian authors, the generally acknowledged literature of a field often includes secular sources, some with an anti-Christian bias. **To properly educate our students in such a discipline, it may very well be necessary to require that they read and apply knowledge from such secular sources. The course materials and instructor should have the ability and commitment to point out biblical perspectives and facilitate the students' assessments and applications of the materials from a Christian worldview. If such texts were banned from the curriculum, we would not only be depriving students of some of the outstanding sources and insights of the discipline, we also would be failing to teach the students to assess their discipline or application areas from a true biblical point of view. We should seek to do neither.**

**Moreover, if we are to increase the internal (e.g., from Regent graduate programs) as well as external respect for our program, we must seek academic excellence taught from the truth of our Christian perspective.** We at Regent are to integrate faith with learning. One helpful classification of integrative approaches is that of Wolfe and Nelson (1987):

- a. Compatibilist—the discipline (or aspects of it) and the Christian faith are largely complementary or overlapping;
- b. Transformationalist—the discipline lacks beliefs, perspectives, and insights which are valuable to him or her as a Christian, but there are legitimate and important insights in the disciplinary assumptions but Christian scholars need to remake or transform the discipline (or text) into one with a Christian orientation;
- c. Reconstructionist—the discipline is seen as fundamentally at odds with the Christian faith; the discipline should thus be rejected and radically reconstructed on a sound biblical foundation.

Course developers and instructors need to evaluate the texts and materials and then accept or reject and present them most appropriately. For example, it is important when assessing a textbook to distinguish between descriptive and normative claims or statements. Note that the statement, “Same-sex partners given an international assignment may be acceptable in one’s home context, tolerated in another, such as the United Kingdom, and persecuted in a Middle Eastern environment” (99) can be interpreted as descriptive of the current situation or as a declaration of a normative goal or value. A biblical presentation should not consider it as normative but should recognize it as descriptive, and thus one that itself can be tested empirically. The relativist interpretation is not to be accepted as desired, but acknowledged at least as the considered judgment of the secular textbook authors.

In the case of the text under question (Gardenswartz et al), the Transformationalist strategy seems appropriate. It should be retained subject to the following. After further discussion with OLAM faculty who teach OLAM 400 Diversity, we will continue to use it in future sessions only if the course materials and actions of the instructor can and do frame it so as to counter anti-Christian (and anti-American) bias and to reflect a positive Christian orientation that draws on biblical insights and worldview presuppositions.

### **Responses to Gary Altman’s Specific Objections:**

1. Diversity is a subject that has much to do with business leadership, and increasingly so in the global economy.

The quote from page 99 is meant as a descriptive statement.  
Its truth can be tested empirically and debated as to how well it actually

represents reality. It is best not viewed as a normative statement; the textbook authors personally may indeed have a pro-gay bias, but this itself does not support a gay agenda to critically-thinking adults (which we are attempting to educate). At Regent, we need to present an approach to diversity that is grounded in Christian worldview principles, including the fact that God established marriage as between one man and one woman.

The student's charge that "the whole feel of the class is amoral, lacking any standard of truth," is a serious one, if supportable. I will follow up with instructors.

As noted above, the instructor is to frame the class to present the discipline from a Christian perspective. We must work to ensure this is the case for every instructor and course. For instance, that sexual orientation is included as an internal dimension, over which one has little or no control (26), is a debatable presupposition. The instructor should note that scripture condemns homosexual practice as sinful and that sin is due to one's lust rather than to be blamed on God (James 1:13-14).

Homosexual practice is sinful and no one is condemned by genetics to practice it; i.e., the text's presupposition is mistaken.

2. Silence regarding a student's comment can imply approval as well. Moreover, should students expect comments on every statement they make in every discussion? Busy instructors can be expected to focus on management or comment by exception.
3. The statement assessed as "US bashing" is a descriptive statement. Any anti-American bias should be addressed as a framing issue, like anti-Christian bias.
4. The textbook (Gardenswartz et al) does promote a relativistic and materialistic approach to diversity issues. This is a major issue that the course and the instructor must correct and transform, pointing out that there are objective and universal truths that are grounded in a biblical Christian worldview. A Christian true to his or her faith cannot consistently hold to cultural relativism. This means that the framing and presentation of the course must carefully consider how to counter the tendency of secular social science toward a relativist view. This may require adding some Christian essays and philosophical discussions at the outset of the course.

My current response is to continue to support use of the textbook in question, at least in Session A. I will encourage the continued search for new and improved ones, especially those from a Christian perspective.

I intend to discuss this analysis for the edification of all of our instructors, getting their inputs. I am especially concerned that we frame our courses so as to integrate our faith with our learning, an area to be a focus of our mentoring. Your further comments will be appreciated and reflected.

In Christ's service,

Tom Whetstone  
Chair, OLAM