Course Learning Outcomes for Unit IV

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Evaluate the complex relationship between being and doing.
2. Assess the many issues involved in seeking to live a life that matters.
3. Conceive what it would mean for the student's life to matter.
4. Assess the dialogical character of the student's life.
5. Assess who and what has formed the student's identity.

Reading Assignment

*Leading Lives that Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be:*

Preface

Introduction

Prologue

"Why I Became a Jungle Doctor", p. 29-36

*The Ethics of Authenticity*, p. 49-59

Unit Lesson

Schwehn and Bass address, in their Preface, the problem faced by people from college age to older Americans—the problem of what to do to earn a living. They acknowledge this as a sign of our times—times which are characterized by rapid economic, social, and cultural change, as well as chances of experiencing unemployment and personal and geographic displacement. Our times are giving questions of vocation a certain urgency, but humans have always been asking these questions.

A private foundation, the Lilly foundation, funded a project a few years ago to encourage institutions of higher learning to consider more deeply the insights that the concept of vocation has for life. The writing of the anthology from which you are being asked to read comes as part of that Lilly project.

This work focuses on living “lives that matter” and recognizes that the living of such lives is always a communal endeavor, requiring many voices, hands, hearts, and minds. This anthology assembles just that, a myriad of voices not all of the same opinion, but all intent to make you, the reader, consider what your vocation is and what it means for the living of your life.

The introduction explains that the book has been put together for people who want to live lives that matter, for people who want to make a difference. For most of us the question of our identity and purpose is most deeply considered when thinking about what sort of work we should do. Students in higher education are attentive to these questions but so are millions of people who do not find their work satisfying.

Each of the readings in this work has been chosen because it can assist in thinking with depth and clarity about a life of meaning. These articles will raise questions about the practical issues involved in work and about deep underlying philosophical and religious questions about identity and purpose. Two convictions are at work here. Who we are will direct what sort of work we will do and what we do will shape who we are.

REL 4035, Life, Meaning, and Vocation
Because this book attends to who we are, it gives credence to our American obsession with work, but it attends to the rest of our lives as well.

The readings are both sacred and secular with the intent of not making a culture war but giving each the opportunity to correct the other and as such they create a rich conversation.

This book is not a self-help book with ready-made answers or exercises. Instead, you will encounter the minds of others as they recount their vocational journeys. You will be encouraged to let their stories intertwine with yours. To read this book is to involve yourself in a grand conversation.

The first essay by Albert Schweitzer about becoming a jungle doctor is intended to introduce the second emphasis of the course. This piece raises a host of questions we will deal with through the next five units and many more that will not be dealt with. Schweitzer’s story asks questions of identity what sort of life really does impact the world, who one listens to when deciding what sort of work to do, and a variety of other questions.

Charles Taylor’s piece on authenticity gets at the question of identity and how identity is formed. He begins with the interesting contrast we have all lived with, in that we are told to “do our own thing” and we are offered images of people whom we should emulate. He challenges us to come to terms with the fact that we do not form our identities but they are formed “dialogically,” that is in relationship with others. He makes that case that finding one’s identity is a matter of finding what is significant in one’s differences from others. This should make you re-evaluate what you wrote in your first paper.