Taking the Challenge of the Sacred Seriously in Teaching

Themes and Teaching Implications

Introduction (Ralph Hancock, Political Science)

- Much depends on the way we separate the sacred from the "secular."
- The ongoing process of scientific separation and specialization issues from a modern strategy to neutralize the sacred.
- By allowing our profession to be framed by the separation between sacred and secular, teaching and scholarship, we risk abetting this neutralization.

The Challenge of the Sacred to Compartmentalization (Ed Gantt, Psychology)

- Students need to be made aware of not only the fact that they often compartmentalize their religious beliefs off from their professional/scientific beliefs, but also of some of the concrete (though often hidden) ways in which they do so.
- Instructors need to be willing to address and discuss actual instances of compartmentalization at appropriate times in class to help students identify compartmentalizing and work through viable alternatives to it.

The Challenge of the Sacred and the Myth of Neutrality (Jacob Hickman, Anthropology)

- We need to identify—and help our students identify—the implicit and explicit assumptions that underpin our practices and interpretations of data.
- If we present our disciplines as neutral enterprises, we set our students up to imperialize those assumptions in every other aspect of their lives.
  - i.e.: "we have no need for a soul".

The Challenge of the Sacred to Naturalism (Brent Slife, Psychology)

- Students may need some of the philosophy behind science (e.g., epistemology) to fully understand course material in which science plays a large role;
- Given its prominence in science, instructors should consider the role of naturalism in interpretations of information and their discipline.

The Challenge of the Sacred to Thinking and Learning (Stan Knapp, Sociology)

- Recognize the Unavoidability of the Sacred
- Be our Full Selves
- Give Place for the Sacred in our Teaching
- Use the Sacred to Enhance Learning and Critical Thinking