

Hannah Harrington
Religion 342-50
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Summary Reflection

When enrolling in Religion and Literature, I expected to read and discuss Christianity on a base level. I thought that we would read parts of the bible or some stories of saints. Never did I think the class would go deep into existentialist thought and allow me to rethink the actions of my daily life. This class offered me the chance to think introspectively, while also reading dense materials and engaging in class discussion every single day.

Over the course of the semester, I enjoyed many of the readings and discussions. Some may have been harder than others, but I most enjoyed Leaf by Niggle by J.R.R. Tolkien. Many of the readings for this class were dark and dense the entire time. While this short story began bleak and ended bleak, the story made me feel warm and happy as it continued on. The story of Niggle felt easy to relate to as a reader. Niggle's ambitions were not understood by many, and he never felt that he could complete them. He knew in his heart that he needed to help others even when he would much rather be following his dream to complete the painting. In the end, his good deeds were recognized by one of the voices, when the first voice felt he did not succeed. Niggle's connection to nature and ambition on the surface seemed selfish, but I feel that this experience is something we all feel. This relatability made me enjoy the story thoroughly.

One thing I will take away from this course is a changed idea of religion. In modern society, as Kierkegaard believed, religion has gotten easy. People seem to blindly follow and not truly believe what they are preaching and sometimes use religion as a weapon. The philosophers we discussed gave me a new sense of what religion is. Not all people that follow Christianity follow blindly or use their beliefs against others. They have a deep connection with God and are

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willing to share that with others because they wish to help those around them. This truly surprised me and I am grateful that I can now look at religion differently.

The lesson I will carry with me would be the This is Water speech we listened to on the very last day of class. While I enjoyed almost all of the lessons in class, this speech touched me greatly. As humans, we only see the world through our personal lens. We get caught up in this lens and forget that every other person is existing in a world we are unaware of. Everyone needs to be reminded of this. By keeping this speech close to heart, I hope to remember to be kind to everyone around me, as I never know what someone may be experiencing. Every day, I want to remember to consciously chose how to think and perceive others.

Another thing I want to take with me, is the device free practices. I tend to get caught up in my day-to-day activities and am glued to my phone or laptop. I fear that being disconnected could mean I miss an important email or I miss a call from a friend. While being device free, I have a freedom to do nothing but be with my thoughts and be present. I can open my eyes to take in the nature around me while on walks or take in every sentence I read in a book. These practices greatly relieved my stress this semester and I will continue to stay device free during leisure activities in the future.

Overall, I would not change a thing about this course. I believe some of the readings were dense or difficult at times, as stated previously, but I believe that they challenged me to open my mind and grow as a person. It can be easy to be caught up in schoolwork as a student, but this class allowed me to be challenged in a way that did not destroy me as a student. I felt capable and acknowledge my growth as a reader and a person. I greatly appreciated every lesson I sat through and enjoyed all the discussions. I am excited to take my new skills with me into my senior year of college.

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