

Culham St Gabriel's Short Courses: a Review

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Over the past few years I have made the decision to develop my skills outside of the classroom so that they will enhance my time in it. Part of this was motivated by the time that we spent in lockdown and wanting to re-engage with the Religion and Worldviews community. For me I had become inward looking and only focusing what was happening within my department's classrooms. Now I decided to look around the community for new ideas and visions that could help me become a better practitioner but also improve the quality of our curriculum.

The subject is in an exciting position; transforming and flourishing into a subject that reaches every part of the curriculum. Part of my own learning over the past few years has been to gain an insight into other teachers' curricula and engage in the research that shapes their ideas. The widespread use of online seminars and CPD has led to teachers rubbing virtual shoulders with academics, a cross pollination of ideas, views and opinions that were not as visible in the past. One shining light in this area is the work of Culham St Gabriel's and the online short courses they have developed.

These short courses have been a great help to me when I have been trying to get my head round some of the developments in the subject. The four strands reflected in the short courses are Subject Knowledge, Curriculum, Research and Religion and Worldviews. Each course can be completed in 90 minutes, uses simple enough language to take in after a busy day teaching and planning. The fact they are free of charge is a gamechanger. Selling to Senior Leadership was the easy part.

The courses are also easy to access, another selling point. Whether offering a step-by-step guide in shaping a curriculum, planning a research project, engaging with the different forms of knowledge within the subject, each dimension as helped me gain a better understanding. This year I have gained a place on the CStG Leadership Programme and the short courses have offered invaluable guidance and direction.

I have found the Introduction to Research Course especially useful. As an emerging leader my focus is on engaging with research but sometimes this is a tricky area to navigate. Articles and blogs are written with different purposes, reflecting various biases and opinions and the research that is supporting them is compelling in its own right. The Research course presents me with two pieces of research about the same subject, coming from two very different points of view, inviting me to discern and think for myself. I have found this process particularly enlightening, showing me as a professional that I can and should make sense of research for myself, including what I choose to adopt for my own practice.

Research aside, the courses have also given me a better grasp of the debates that are going on in the Religion and Worldviews community. These courses are

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designed not only for teachers, but anyone who is involved in our community and therefore I signpost people to these courses. They are a great tool for giving us a gateway into thinking about the purpose of the subject as it evolves.

It seems to me that although it's early days for these courses they will be with us for a long time. To be able to dig deeper into them and beyond is of great benefit to the subject in general. Go and have a look at them if you haven't done so already. I just need to find some time to look at the Primary Teacher courses. They look fascinating.....