

Teaching note for  
Philosophical Ethics or Moral Philosophy Class

**Possible course materials and assignments  
that could connect this course with business education and  
with Catholic Social Teachings**

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### **Examples, Cases, Guests**

If the course is being taught specifically for students majoring in business, examples can be drawn from many of the cases suggested by others working on this project. See, for example, suggestions from Gene Lacznik and Patrick Murphy. Bringing in guests from the business faculty or from the local business community can enrich the class.

When the course is taught for a broader group of students, assignments can be designed so that each student works with examples selected in relationship to his or her major or career plans.

### **Quick Writes**

One way to maintain a focus on issues central to the Catholic intellectual tradition while meeting the disciplinary requirements of the course is to use the technique of quick writes. At the beginning or end of class students are asked to reflect on a prompt question. They write for only 2-3 minutes. For example, at the beginning of a class on utilitarianism, students might be asked to reflect on whether or not they think utilitarianism has a concept of human dignity. At the end of a class, students can be asked to reflect on what has been discussed in the class in a way that will have them leave class with something further to discuss with each other. After studying Aristotle, students might be asked what virtue they think is most important for them personally and for the global human society.

### **Electronic Discussions**

In a class that has students from many part of the university, one way of getting specific groups of students to focus on issues central to their own majors is to divide the class into electronic discussion groups. Questions posted for discussion can then focus on examples or cases that are most pertinent to that major. If this is done, it is important that some discussions be designed so that students understand that moral issues have to do with how we live together. Those who are

not in business are impacted by business decisions. Everyone wants to live a good life, which is more than being good at a profession.

### **Argument Papers**

Students need to develop skills in explaining, critiquing, and developing arguments in this course. Short papers that require students to summarize arguments are a helpful way of beginning this process. Students need to learn to read carefully before they offer critiques and counter arguments. These can be 2-3 page explanation papers. An assignment that builds through the course of the term can be designed to guide students through a thought process. For example, students could write short papers on particular thinkers' arguments about what is the good for human life. Then they could write a longer paper that incorporates this work and takes a position on the strengths and weaknesses of each thinker. They might also be asked to think about which concept or conceptions most inform contemporary business (or education, or medical, etc.) practices and to provide an argument that supports their claim. A follow-up paper could ask them to develop an argument about the conception of the good that they think should guide these practices, and why.

### **Project Assignments**

Project assignments that are individual or group assignments can also be used to incorporate materials from the Catholic tradition into the course. Service-learning opportunities are available on most campuses. Students can be asked to engage in a project and then carry out an analysis of the particular situation. They might be asked to focus on human dignity and explain the extent to which this is important in the particular situation or the understanding of dignity that seems to be operational in the situation. They might look at the people involved in the work and ask about the virtues that they exhibit, or fail to exhibit.