

Teaching Note for
Distinctive Imperatives for Teaching Marketing
in a Catholic Business School

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The preferred approach to implementing CST into a marketing course is to spend part of a lecture discussing the principles discussed above and shown in [Exhibit Two](#) of the Overview paper as background for the course. The first section of this paper provides the “essentials” for such a lecture. One method that we have used is to incorporate the CST principles with a discussion of other philosophical ethical theories (Murphy et. al. 2005). Most Principles of Marketing texts have some (if only rudimentary) treatment of the major ethical theories coming from philosophy—utilitarianism, duty-based ethics and the ethics of virtue. The CST principles build on these theories and represent a logical extension of them. (For one specific discussion of the relationship of ethical theories to CST in marketing, see Lacniak 1999.)

If students understand the key principles of Catholic Social Teaching early in their marketing studies, it is much easier to refer to them during the appropriate sections of the principles class and other marketing courses. For example, if students have a grasp of the CST principle of common good, the discussion of the societal marketing concept, which states that long term societal welfare is an important consideration for the marketing manager, will become clearer to them. We strongly advise marketing colleagues to discuss the “societal marketing concept” early in the course even if it is not covered in the text that is being used. The concept is explained in any of Philip Kotler’s principles or marketing management books as well as in a recent article published in the academic marketing literature (Lacniak and Murphy 2006). Without an appreciation that marketing has a larger societal role early in a student’s examination of the marketing field, the later discussion of CST or ethical concepts are lacking context.

Not all the topics that appear in the syllabus necessarily need to be discussed by the instructor. However, some CST principles strike to the heart of marketing ethics such as the treatment of market segmentation and its connection with “the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable”. Demographic information contained in any principles of marketing textbook can be used to illustrate this point. Virtually all marketing instructors discuss “vulnerable” segments in their course. Children, older consumers, market illiterates and handicapped individuals are commonly examined in this part of the course. The debatable aspect of CST is the emphasis on “preferential” treatment. From our experience, even students in Catholic universities are reluctant to argue that these groups should be given favored treatment. What should be communicated to students is **not** that such favoritism will always be regularly accorded, but that managers that profess to be Catholic should give strong consideration to these groups. The “base of the pyramid”

emphasis by some multinationals, which commonly lowers initial profitability hurdles, represents an illustration that this CST principle is gaining more favor in recent years.

The second principle that should be always covered is “stewardship” in view of the growing emphasis on sustainability in marketing. While some of this activity is related to economic and cost saving considerations, the greater emphasis on sustainability by most corporations signals that this topic is going to be a factor that virtually every business executives must cope with in the future. A point of emphasis for students in Catholic universities is that paying more attention to climate change, waste created by consumer packaged goods, pollution that is caused in the manufacture of products is related to the “stewardship” notion from Catholic social thought. Being a good steward goes beyond the natural environment and may be a topic that some marketing instructors want to address, but this appears to be a place where CST and current business practice are converging.

The third essential principle to marketing is “dignity of the person” that is sometimes violated in advertising of products. The use of strong sex appeal advertising is an objectification of women and represents a classic criticism that has plagued advertising for some time. Any type of advertising that stereotypes racial or ethnic groups also goes against the basic tenets of CST. As mentioned above, all persons (“created in the image of God”) have inherent worth regardless of race, color, gender or creed. Although much more sensitivity has been demonstrated by advertisers and agencies in recent years toward steering clear of such stereotyping, this is a topic about which students and future business managers must constantly be on the alert to avoid.