I. COURSE PURPOSE

This course will provide an analysis of the Scriptural roots and historical tradition of Catholic social ministry as well as of the last 100 years of modern Catholic social teaching. Drawing upon Scripture, the papal encyclicals, and the pastoral statements of the Catholic bishops of the United States, it will explicate several foundational values from which religious thinkers have developed moral guidelines to address critical politician and economic questions that affect social policy. Concrete issues related to the alleviation of poverty, the strengthening of the family, the well-being and development of children, and the empowerment of the oppressed populations will be addressed. The course will also describe the development and contemporary role of religious sponsored agencies in the delivery of social services and social advocacy. Issues relating to the role of mediating structures in society and church-state interactions will be addressed.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

1. Learn the history of Catholic social teaching as it is presented in Scriptures and the Church’s historical tradition of charity and justice-related activities as presented in the modern papal encyclicals and pastoral statements of the Catholic bishops of the United States.

2. Learn to analyze, from the perspective of Catholic social teaching, the impact of social policies on poor and vulnerable groups in society.

3. Become familiar with the role of church-related, not-for-profit sector in the delivery of social services in the United States and other parts of the world.
4. Learn how government, economic institutions, and the not-for-profit sector have traditionally formed partnerships to deliver health, education, and welfare in the United States and become familiar with some of the contemporary challenges to this partnership.

5. Learn to develop a critical approach, informed by Catholic social teaching, to welfare reform, immigration reform, and some of the other policy debates currently being conducted in the United States.

6. Grow in compassionate concern for the plight of the poor and vulnerable people in the United States and throughout the world.

7. Learn to appreciate the interdependence of persons in society.

8. Learn how to integrate religious beliefs with social justice concerns.

9. Gain insight into some of the narcissistic tendencies in contemporary American culture and develop a spirituality of compassionate concern for others.

10. Appreciate the integrity within the charity-to-justice continuum.

11. Learn to analyze social policy from a normative perspective that is based on Catholic social teaching.

12. Learn how to respond to the direct and immediate services needs of the poor and vulnerable by becoming involved with social service agencies and other community-based efforts.

13. Learn how to become part of coalitions which advocate for social policies and work toward structural change by engaging oppressed populations to participate more fully in the decisions which affect their lives.

14. Learn how to build consensus on policy issues and to resolve conflicts which arise from competing value systems.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Readings

B. Recommended Readings


“Human Dignity, True Community: Catholic Social Teaching” (1997).


Vitillo, Robert J. “Catholic Social Teaching: Hearing the Cry of the Poor: Service and Advocacy” (1997) Keynote address at New England Conference of Social Ministries, Naragansett RI.


C. Other Recommended Resources and Media


D. Course Assignments

Final Paper
The final paper for this course should be 6-8 pages in length, double-spaced (not including bibliography), APA style. The student may choose any contemporary social policy issue (e.g., immigration reform, relief of international debts for developing countries, welfare reform, health care, transfer of manufacturing operations to developing countries by U.S. corporations, etc.) Utilizing the pastoral circle methodology, and citing some references which you have consulted (required or recommended readings or others), examine the factors related to the issue you have selected by answering the following questions:

1) What is the experience of those most directly affected by this policy debate, i.e., the persons who are poor and vulnerable?
2) What objective and scientific factors underlie this policy debate; what objective implications can be projected from one or another action being proposed?
3) On what values and teachings of Scripture, the practical social ministry tradition of the Church, and modern Catholic social teaching would you rely on to enlighten and inform this debate?
4) Based upon your reflection above, what actions/positions would you, the student recommend to resolve this current policy debate?

Paper is due within two weeks following the last session of the class.

E. Grading Policy
Students are expected to attend the scheduled classes and to participate in class discussion. Grading will be based on the following: class participation (20%) and final paper (80%).

F. Course and Instructor Evaluation
NCSSS requires electronic evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, the evaluation form may be accessed at http://evaluations.cua.edu/evaluations using your CUA username and password. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to requests.

IV. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

A. Scholastic Expectations
Please refer to NCSSS Announcements or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements, including scholastic and behavioral requirements. All written work should reflect the original thinking of the writer, cite references where material is quoted or adapted from existing sources, adhere to APA format, and should be carefully proof read by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.
B. Academic Honesty
Joining the community of scholars at CUA entails accepting the standards, living by those standards, and upholding them. Please refer to University Policy and appropriate Program Handbooks.

C. Accommodations
Students with physical, learning, psychological or other disabilities wishing to request accommodations must identify with the Disability Support Services (DSS) and submit documentation of a disability. If you have documented such a disability to DSS that requires accommodations or an academic adjustment, please arrange a meeting with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.
Class Schedule

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