

**Dialogue and Discernment:
Creative Approaches for Teaching
Catholic Social Justice**

**對話和辨別：
教授天主教社會正義的創意方法**

Marianne FARINA

[ABSTRACT] Christians believe that God continues to speak in and through human history and that there are signs of God's presence in, and plan for the world, especially in human interactions and formation of our societies. Thus, we believe we have a duty to scrutinize the signs of the times from our local contexts and to interpret them in light of the Gospel (Lumen Gentium #4). This is the dynamic central to the Church's understanding of social justice. It is also true that programs and courses focused on teaching Christian social justice fail to represent this dynamic. This is especially true in the presentation of the social justice encyclicals of the Catholic Church. Often these letters are taught as lessons from history rather than encounters in "reading the signs of the times" capable of serving as critical "conversation starters" for our own reflection, decision,

and actions for justice and peace in Church and society. This article describes a course design that has developed a dynamic process for study and analysis of the encyclicals. The course presents the encyclical tradition as a discernment model for addressing social justice concerns. Through the use of the pastoral spiral/social analysis as a method to study these letters, students/participants move beyond historical factual knowledge about Catholic social teaching to fuller engagement with the social wisdom of the Church.

Introduction

Christians believe that God’s Mercy is continually present to all creation. We realize this especially as we address the social questions of our times. As Christ’s disciples, we “read the signs of the times” and interpret them in light of the Gospel call to justice and peace.¹ Catholic social teaching identifies the historical developments of the Church’s response to this call. Too often, however, these accounts have become a “best kept secret” in academic theological study, the faith-life of Catholics, and the public square.

Despite the effort to promote this history by identifying key social justice themes or principles to motivate deeper reflection on the call to seek justice, the Church’s social teaching remains primarily a focus for parish social justice committees or course requirements for those obtaining a Master of Divinity degree. The teaching has had limited effect on the daily lives of most Catholics.

¹ Documents of the Second Vatican Council. *Lumen Gentium*, accessed May 24, 2017, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_t_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. See especially paragraph #4.

Likewise, Catholic social teaching remains the subject matter for courses in ethics or pastoral studies but not always considered relevant to systematic theological studies. Walter Kasper's recent book *Mercy*, draws these points out clearly, especially when he urges theologians to explore deeper connections between "Church doctrine about God and the practical implications that derive from it"² and identifies the need for a renewed dogmatic and ecclesiological theology in order for all Catholics to promote "a culture of mercy."³

As a faculty member of the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, I designed a graduate seminar on Catholic social teaching that addresses these concerns through developing an engaging pedagogy as a foundation for theological ethics and civic education. The social encyclicals of the Catholic Church are central to the course serving as critical "conversation starters" for engaging the social teachings of the Church. The students focus on how these letters and exhortations represent a theological ethical basis for Catholic social justice action. This article will describe this method used in the seminar to present the social justice vision of Catholic Church as a dynamic process of discernment that differs from historical surveys of the encyclicals. Dividing the article into four sections begins with a definition of *Catholic Social Teaching* and explanation of the encyclical dynamic. The second section describes the syllabus for the course based on these foundational interpretations. This part includes specific details about the content and pedagogical plan of the course. The third section discusses the experience of the course through presenting the results of course surveys and evaluations. The fourth section offers further reflections on these results and identifies critical aspects for improving the

² Walter Kasper, *Mercy*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2013), xv.

³ *Ibid.*, 181 and 203-204.

course and translating its successes into forums for teaching social justice in the classroom and in faith communities.

Part One: Catholic Social Teaching

The title of the graduate course “Catholic Social Teaching” focuses on the Catholic Church tradition of promoting justice and peace in the Church and society. Through the perspective of the “Romans Catholic” tradition, the seminar seeks to help students realize the far-reaching nature of the “catholic” social teaching. “Catholic” comes from *katholikos*-- two Greek words: *kata* or *kath* (“through” or “throughout”) and *holos* (“whole”). Thus the meaning is universal in that “throughout-the-whole” indicates no “notion of boundary or lines drawn that demarcate those who are *in* and those who are *out*.”⁴ Synonyms that deepen this understanding are comprehensive, all-encompassing, all-embracing, and all-inclusive. It is possible to say that persons possess a very catholic social concern, even when they are not members of the Roman Catholic Church. The course title refers to both descriptors: the universal nature of social teaching and the social teaching of the Roman Catholic community.

The words “social teaching” point to the Church’s dynamic response to social justice concerns in the society. They represent more than the official letters and statements of the Episcopal college and the magisterium. In fact, as the course demonstrates to understand more fully the message of the encyclicals, we need to consider processes used to compose them and the responses of

⁴ Daniel P. Horan, OFM commenting on Walter Ong, S.J. *America Magazine* article about the meaning of Catholic, accessed May 23, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-p-horan-ofm/catholic-doesnt-mean-what-you-think-it-means_b_1978768.html.

communities that received them. They emerge from the entire enterprise of inquiry, discernment, decision, and action that is the social wisdom of the whole Church. In their formulation, content, and dissemination, these circular letters serve as entry points to the social wisdom of the Church, i.e., the fuller theological heritage of Catholic social thought that continually renews the Church's social justice action.

The course draws from the long and deep tradition of Catholic thinkers, leaders, and communities contributing insightful ideas to the history of political, economic, and cultural thinking. These writings from Tertullian through Jacques Maritain, from Dorothy Day, Paulo Freire, to contemporary theologians, many of whom are the authors of texts used in the course, exemplify Catholic thinkers who in addressing social questions provided important developments in studies such as philosophy, theology, and the social sciences. They represent an all-encompassing praxis capable of addressing unjust structures and the urgent needs of Church and society.

To speak of social teaching also means that we recognize how the Church's social justice vision and action benefits from research in social ethics.⁵ Ethical research focuses on systematic investigations in order to develop theories about moral action or ethical categories, i.e., deontology, virtue, consequentialism etc. Papal and Episcopal teaching has a different intent. Though processes formulating these teachings require rigor of study and deliberation, the intent of these writings is to enlighten, inspire, and to guide moral reform on social matters.⁶

⁵ Kenneth Himes, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

Rooted in Catholic social thought and theories of social ethics, Catholic social teaching investigates the evolving social message of the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, the title represents a methodology that integrates convictions expressed in these teachings with the liquidity, reflexivity, and creativity needed to address many social concerns in varying contexts. Thus, Catholic social teaching is not “Catholic Social Doctrine.” For though the Church has produced a *Compendium of Social Doctrine*⁷ differences between “doctrine” and “teaching” remain. For as M.D. Chenu notes, doctrine means an ideology and abstract theory universally applied regardless of inductive methods and empirical evidence that contradicts the theories.⁸ Social teaching he believes emphasizes the organic and dynamic methods of “reading the signs of the times” and meaningful deliberations in seeking justice. In fact, when John Paul II spoke of a social doctrine he did so only to emphasize the continuity of the social teaching.

The genre that best captures the depth and the dynamism of Catholic social teaching is the encyclical. Typically, when discussing the encyclicals educators and leaders name fourteen major documents beginning in 1891 with Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum novarum* to 2014 with Pope Francis’ *Laudato si*. In the course, these letters are explored along with the various responses from regional and local groups receiving these letters. We include in these expositions an understanding of the context, process of writing the letter, core insights and recommendations, along with the regional and local responses to these letters that occurred in both Roman Catholic groups and other secular experts or organizations. The course design,

⁷ Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005).

⁸ Himes, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 4.

described below, parallels the “circular” or “spiral” dynamic of the “encyclical.”

Encyclicals get their name from the Greek word for circle, or circular. Important letters from the pope would be forwarded to bishops and local churches. Pastors would copy and forward them to other bishops and local churches, until the entire Church received the message.

The word also depicts actions of reception and response to these letters and therein represents the evolving nature of the catholic, that is, “all-encompassing” communication. The encyclical letters become “a call to action” for “people of good will” to social justice. Though commemorative occasions are often the impetus for the Pope or Bishops to write encyclicals, the goal of these letters is to address difficult situations around a number of concerns, e.g.: labor, just wages, duties of the state, poverty, human development, peace, human rights, the family, and the environment. It is this perspective that carries forward the social wisdom of the Church to each age and particular context. When we bring the tools of social analysis to the reading of these writings, we recognize that the encyclicals are more than mere opinion or pious exhortations they reveal the dynamic praxis of the Church’s response to social questions.

Thus, Catholic social teaching, especially in the encyclical writings, communicates a social wisdom that serves to inspire Catholics to see connections between the intent, development, and authority of these writings and the possibility for developing programs and action plans to address social justice concerns. In this way, regional churches, local communities, and believers strive to live fully their vocation to Christian Discipleship. It challenges the Church to see, judge, and act in ways that promote a social justice vision in the wider society. The encyclicals illustrate the importance

of ongoing renewal within Church and society. As Paul VI, wrote in *Ecclesiam Suam*,⁹ the Church continually engages in the world in which it exists through commitments to deeper self-knowledge, renewal, and dialogue with all people. Guided by the social encyclicals of the Roman Catholic Church, the students are co-creators of these encounters. Their research, writing, presentations, and discussions examine in greater depth the social wisdom of the Church manifesting God's vision of justice and peace for our world today.

Part Two: Catholic Social Teaching Syllabus

Built on the dynamic of the encyclical tradition in Catholic social teaching, the seminar course provides a focused study of the historical, theological, and philosophical development of the Catholic social vision represented by these circular letters. The course design has three movements: identifying resources for Catholic social teaching (vision), study and analysis of the encyclicals and documents they generate (witness), investigating new developments and possible movements in Church's commitment to social justice (promise). Dialogical methodologies provide opportunities for students to enter into the dynamic of the Church's response to the social questions throughout history. Processes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation of the encyclicals are the critical pedagogies of the seminar. Course goals and objectives aim to facilitate students' development from factual to procedural knowledge of the Church's social wisdom. As Catholic Christian scholars and leaders, this study

⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, accessed June 5, 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html.

hopes to generate new responses from them concerning crises faced by civilizations east and west. The course syllabus outlines the requirements, resources/material, and planned class sessions guide students toward this goal.¹⁰

Course Requirements

The four major requirements of the class come together in modalities of participation, presentation, and writing. The integration of these aspects also fosters a dialogical approach to the study. Student participation includes weekly class attendance, contributions to class discussions, and timely completion of assignments, which include course readings, written reflections, and data-news collections. At the beginning of the course, students divide themselves into four groups. These groups are responsible for class presentations that begin mid-way through the course. However, forming these groups early creates peer-support that has proven to be a motivation for completing weekly reading assignments and contributing to class discussions. Group discussions often occur within the class-time, followed by class-wide exchanges. The dynamic from smaller group to full-class discussions allows the introverts and those not fully comfortable in English to “try out their ideas” before sharing them with the entire class.

The Graduate Theological Union Technology Services provides the “moodle” electronic platform for each of the courses it offers. Moodle allows faculty and students to design a type of “website” for the course. In addition to course materials displayed on this page, students and faculty place various supporting documents, notices of

¹⁰ Marianne Farina CSC, *Catholic Social Teaching (CE 3050)* last modified February 24, 2017, https://www.dspt.edu/files/S17_CE3050_Farina.pdf

events, and other items for further study on the topics covered in the course. One of the elements of moodle allows students to post their reflections and to interact with one another's entries. The students complete a weekly reflection based on course topics and class discussions. The students then respond to one of the posts written by their classmate. The dialogue between students helps them to consider varying viewpoints raised by classmates. Additionally, these *blogs* serve as conversation starters for the weekly seminars. They also provide an opportunity to learn respect on-line exchanges. Periodic evaluations about these posts take place in the classroom and with faculty assessment of students' work. This activity thus aims to introduce best practices for communications via internet and other social platforms.

Another element of the course draws from class readings and research and seeks to sharpen critical thinking and writing skills. Each week students collect two different articles from newspapers or the internet about class topics. They create a media-portfolio of these items along with a report on these stories. The guide sheet provided for this task asks students to state reasons for each of their selections, analyze the articles' content and tone, and add their own editorial concerning the articles' subject matter. This assignment targets the need for students to become discerning readers/viewers of media and to recognize connections between their studies and contemporary social justice concerns emerging from local, national, and global contexts.

The research papers' requirement seeks to enhance the students' ability to analyze and evaluate the topics studied during the course through completing two research papers. The first directs students to integrate concepts, themes, historical developments, and approaches of the Church's efforts to address social questions. The second paper

seeks to encourage generative thinking about social justice concerns. Students formulate their own ideas about social justice research and praxis through investigation a specific topic. In recent years, the final paper assignment offered an innovative option to the research paper. For example, this year's syllabus invites the students to:

Imagine you have been asked to edit a volume/book on environmental justice based on *Laudato si*. What types of chapters would you plan? What authors, or even faith traditions, would you solicit? Give an outline and rationale for your project (Research component). Then write your introduction. In your introduction give reasons for why Pope Francis' encyclical is the inspiration and basis for the book.¹¹

Before each of these writings assignments occur, students share the plan for their papers in a class discussion. I also encourage them to read drafts of one another's papers. The sharing provides additional resources and insights as well as improves the student's writing. Moreover such consultation mirrors the process of the writing of the Church's social encyclicals.

Course Resources / Materials

Materials covering various topics and approaches guide the study of the course. They primarily consist of the social encyclicals, regional documents of the global Church and project reports of grassroots and Non-Government Organizations (NGO) social justice initiatives. However, four additional texts offer critical information, unique perspectives and methods for engaging core materials. *Social*

¹¹ Ibid., 5.

*Analysis: Living Faith and Justice*¹² by Joe Holland and Peter Henriot is a guide for the dialectic that animates the entire course of study. This approach overcomes academic vs. pastoral divisions when exploring the social teachings. Course readings that explore sacred texts, virtue ethics, and social science provide a crucial foundation for this social analytical process.

*Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretation*¹³ edited by Kenneth R. Himes and others guides the students in a deep analysis of the Church's social encyclicals and not simply the history of these letters. For each of the encyclicals the text includes: a description of its ecclesial and social context, the history of the encyclical's formulation, general analysis of the letter and excursus offering further examination of a crucial aspect of the letter's content, reactions to the encyclical, and finally a selected bibliography on the social concern addressed by the encyclical. In addition to these important elements woven into each essay, I chose this text because these elements align well with the course pedagogy. In fact, each chapter serves as a model for student presentations, with the excursus sections demonstrating how scholarly study and critique contributes to understanding the world of the encyclical and the social justice concerns of the world. They are fine examples for students own writing and class contributions.

The third text, Thomas Massaro's *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*¹⁴ supplements the Himes' book. This text provides an alternative and updated presentation of the critical

¹² Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, S.J. *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1980).

¹³ Kenneth R. Himes, ed., *Modern Catholic Social Teaching* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005).

¹⁴ Tom Massaro, *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, 3rd Edition (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

studies that serve as a resource for social encyclicals. Massaro's book includes charts and models that summarize key questions about the role of the Church in society and outline the history of ideas imbedded in the encyclical writings. These are valuable resources for students as they expand their research for presentations and writing on the Church's social teaching.

Each year's iteration of the course, I select a text that illustrates the breadth of Catholic social teaching as it relates to ecclesiology, spirituality, or systematic theology. Some of these texts have been: Bernard Prusak's *The Church Unfinished*,¹⁵ John Kavanaugh's *Following Christ in a Consumer Society*,¹⁶ or biographies and writings of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. Since 2013, Cardinal Walter Kasper's book *Mercy*¹⁷ serves this purpose. Kasper's exploration of God's Mercy as fundamental to understanding God's nature draws out important aspects of the Church's commitment to Gospel call to justice and love.

In addition to these texts, information and resources gleaned from field work, guest speakers, and community or academic events augment the course study. For example, one year, students conducted interviews of social justice experts and leaders who work in parishes, diocesan offices, or non-government organizations. The reports described this work and identified the particular approaches and challenges each faced in this service or ministry.

Guest Speakers also offer class presentations to illustrate ways their programs try to address the complexity inherent in many social

¹⁵ Bernard Prusak, *The Church Unfinished: Ecclesiology through the Ages* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004).

¹⁶ John Kavanaugh, *Following Christ in a Consumer Society*, 25th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

¹⁷ Walter Kasper, *Mercy*. Translated by William Madges (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014).

concerns, e.g., economic development, immigration, and new justice programs, such as *Pax Christi's* non-violence peace initiative.¹⁸ The class has benefitted from new research conducted by doctoral students at The Graduate Theological Union. One year, Elias Bboloka Bubala Nchimunya, S.J., a doctoral student presented his research that investigaten children's right to education in Zambia as a human right.¹⁹

Additionally, students attend campus-wide or civic events centered on social justice themes. In 2009 the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology organized a semester long study of Human Rights. The program called "Faith in Human Rights" included lectures by prominent Christian, Jewish, and Muslim ethicists, panel discussions about human rights conventions, and a human right film series. Students from this course and other social justice courses of the GTU attended many of these events.

The comprehensive and eclectic nature of these course resources/materials along with the course requirements support students' understanding of facts, concepts, and processes integral to recognizing Catholic social teaching as wisdom for Church and society. During the seminar, faculty and students alike come to realize the enormous challenge present in this approach and the various activities guide classroom experiences toward a deeper appreciation of this wisdom.

¹⁸ Catholic Non-Violence Peace Initiative, accessed June 5, 2017, <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/>.

¹⁹ Elias Bboloka Bubala Nchimunya, S.J., *Rights of a Girl Child: The Significance of the Zambian Humanism and the Catholic Social Teaching for a Girl-Child Education in Zambia* (Ph.D Dissertation, Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University, 2016).

Part Three: The Experience of the Course

In order to examine the faculty and students' experiences of the course two elements of the course design need further explanation: general division of the weekly sessions and the pastoral spiral process that animates them. These elements integrate course goals, requirements, and materials in order to guide students' in their study.

General Division of the Weekly Sessions

As noted in the previous section the course design has three movements consisting of 4-5 week sessions entitled *Vision*, *Witness*, and *Promise*. To speak of these as “movements” means that the topics covered in each set connect to general course goals. The first set concentrates on the foundations of Catholic social teaching. Students examine the sources of sacred revelation, natural law, virtue, and ecclesiology with methods that help them to view these as “fonts” of knowledge that animate social analysis and in turn inform the Church's social teaching. These studies seek to help students realize that the social teaching is more a *vision* of human flourishing as God intends than an application of principles, the deontological approach characterizes by representing the social teaching as seven basic themes or ten building blocks. As Walter Kasper states in his book *Mercy*, justice, love and above all God's mercy is the vision that must become concretely realized in Church and society.²⁰

These studies lead to the next set of sessions in which the students study the social encyclicals using the rubric of the pastoral spiral. Though the writing of the encyclicals followed other

²⁰ Kasper, “*Mercy*,” 169.

discernment processes, the pastoral spiral model creates an opportunity for the students to read these encyclicals in a dynamic ways, thus enhancing possibilities for their message to speak to contemporary social concerns and not simply historical ones. Using the term *witness* for this block of classes has theological and epistemic import in that the evolving social message is a praxis that gives witness to a Kingdom ethic. Inaugurated by Christ, these letters illustrate how the Church continually strives to, as Joe Holland states, “[L]ink faith energies with energies of justice and peace in service of the Living God and social transformation.”²¹

During these weeks, students develop a facility for engaging the pastoral spiral process. The process also weaves together content studied in the first and last sections of the class sessions. The process becomes integral for student research on social justice concerns addressed in the course and in their future ministry. For this reason, a description of the pastoral spiral process used in the course follows.

As noted earlier, the course plan from the goals to the weekly sessions is the *pastoral spiral*, also called *the pastoral circle*. Typically this hermeneutical process consists of a four-step method. However, my research and ministry have led me to see it as a schema of seven steps: (1) experience, (2) social analysis/theological reflection, (3) new vision, (4) planning, (5) action, (6) evaluation and (7) new reality/experience (See Appendix I).

The process helps the faithful to come to a deeper understanding of the social concern, bringing new insights to them through giving them a fuller picture of the situation. The discernment process connects local communities with the knowledge and expertise of

²¹ Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, SJ, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Washington, DC: Center for Concern, 1980), xiv.

persons in social sciences and theology. The process empowers these communities to take responsible social justice action based on meaningful communal deliberation and decision-making. Through addressing questions about the situation and its impact and reflecting on the findings the community gets a clearer picture of the social realities. The method facilitates exploration of the social concern from a variety of dimensions: specific issues, policies, structures of economic, political, social, and cultural institutions. Theological reflection on these critical insights helps the community recognize God's call to embrace a "new vision." In order to answer this call, the community designs action steps to make the vision a reality. In this part of the process, the community identifies specific groups and their responsibilities for executing these plans.

The next part of the process is evaluation. It is a critical component of the whole process. It sets in motion accountability for fulfilling the designated responsibilities and offers an opportunity for further reflection on the concern. This last reflection brings the community to a new moment or a new insight. This knowledge surfaces different questions or dimensions of long-term concerns, all of which lead to new experiences. The pastoral spiral process helps communities to recognize the complex nature and recurring aspects of social justice concerns. Those seeking to promote justice become attentive to emerging developments even as we discover ways to solve problems or adjudicate injustices.

Even though many of the encyclicals have not formally used this process, the pastoral spiral serves as creative approach for the reading and analysis of them. Each of the seven steps of this process bears theological and epistemic aspects. Students learn how the social questions of each age shaped a faith community's self-understanding and apostolic mission. The Church's active engagement with the social, political, economic, and cultural

institutions within various epochs and across the globe becomes more than a history lesson. The pastoral spiral process also points to how certain social problems persist, while others have evolved through changing features of the concern or even adding to it. For example, in 1891 Leo XIII's concern for a just wage, or family wage, and the conditions of labor in the industrial age remains a challenge for today's societies who experience positive and negative effects of human labor and rise of robotic manufacturing in a globalized age. Though we bring new questions to the concerns about labor and just wages, *Rerum novarum* still contains theological ethical import for today's analysis.

The final three weeks of the course, in particular focus on this last part of the process: "new realities." Student groups, aided by guest speakers from various non-government and Church organizations, investigate contemporary social justice concerns such as immigration, human trafficking, and climate change. Research on these topics illuminates the difficulty of these issues and the need for a multi-dimensional response to them. The students recognize that social justice concerns are "wicked problems."

Alan Watkins and international expert on leadership and human performance and Ken Wilbur contemporary philosopher define "wicked problems" as those that are multi-dimensional, have multiple causes, symptoms, stakeholders, possible solutions, and are constantly evolving. They propose that only a multi-tiered, multi-channeled, and multi-organizational response can fully address them. They believe that an integral coherence through the application of the integral theory frame leads to "healthy, functional, and coherent versions of

solutions.”²² Integral frame theory proposes that there are at least four irreducible perspectives (subjective, inter-subjective, objective, and inter-objective) that must be consulted when attempting to fully understand any issue or aspect of reality. Class presentations and discussions by students and experts in the field underline this interdependent nature of the social concern and attempt to identify possibilities for creative responses.

The final sessions of the course discuss how faith development programs in parishes and school curricula can focus on Catholic social teaching. The seminar course goals and the course design itself aimed towards identifying resources and methods for students to link scholarship, pastoral leadership, with social action for promoting justice and peace. The institutional goals, which also serve as a foundation for course goals, summarize well the aspirations of these final weeks of the study. The hope is that the course provided students with opportunities for *Deep Learning and Collaborative Leadership*. *Deep Learning* means knowledge of facts, details, and concepts through *Integrative Thinking*, *Intellectual Humility*, and *Self-Direction* and *Collaborative Leadership* means we become capable of inspiring within others the desire to realize the common good by articulating to academy or society a coherent vision rooted in the mission of the Church, all the while leading by example.

Student and Faculty Experiences

The *Catholic Social Teaching* course has taken many forms over the years. What explained here is its most recent formulation. As a work

²² Alan Watkins and Ken Wilbur *Wicked and Wise: How to Solve the World's Toughest Problems* (Great Britain: Urban Publishers, 2015), 101.

in progress, the course has offered graduate students an opportunity to engage the depth and the breadth of Catholic social wisdom. As more data emerges, this article offers a detailed analysis of the course's effectiveness and include suggestions for improving the course that have surfaced from student evaluations and interviews. Preliminary evaluations of the Spring 2016 and Spring 2017 courses offered critical insights for further development of the seminar.

The spring 2016 course had 16 students and the spring 2017 course had 8 students. These students came from three different continents, Africa, Asia, and North America. The students were enrolled in a variety of programs: Doctoral Studies in Moral Theology (1), Master in Theology (10), Master in Philosophy (4), Master of Theological Study (3), and Master of Divinity (6). There were 21 men (three Lay Students, six Dominican Friars, nine Jesuit Scholastics, three Diocesan [Congo, Nigeria, and Korea]) and three women.

Diversity in culture and programs of study brought a variety of global and academic perspectives into class discussions. It also created a forum for addressing social concerns through social, cultural, national and even religious (ecumenical) diversity. The spring 2017 course had two students from different Christian traditions. One student was an Anglican seminary student and the second a Presbyterian minister. It was often the case, that new information gleaned from the experiences of the students evoked new questions as well as different insights to the topics under consideration.

Student Experiences

In reviewing the course evaluations of these students 84% of the class stated that they would recommend the seminar. Four students,

or 16%, said they would not recommend the course. The reasons they offered were twofold: they wished that the course would have focused on social justice theory as articulated in the *Compendium of Social Doctrine*²³ and that the course work was excessive, especially, as one student stated, "...in light of all the other courses I'm taking." This critique surfaced in the 84% group as well, though they did not see it as hampering the course effectiveness.

Regarding the central focus of the course, the encyclical tradition and pastoral spiral process, 94% of the students specifically commented on how this approach was an effective way to study Catholic social teaching. They also noted how they developed a good facility for this process, and evidence of this surfaced in their final papers. The students did have specific comments and suggestions regarding other components of the course, e.g. *Moodle-Blog Dialogues*, *Media collections*, and *Group Presentations*.

Moodle-Blog Dialogues

As described earlier, each week student's blog entries contained reflections that drew from synthetic insights about the readings and class discussions. Student responses to one another also took on special meaning as they learned the art of hermeneutical companionship. The students rated this activity highly (57.14% [4/5 rating] and 42.86% [5/5 rating]). They stated that the blogs helped them draw meaningful connections between course materials, their own thinking and their classmates' ideas concerning contemporary social justice challenges. Student evaluations indicate that this dialogical activity also helped them in their critical thinking and

²³ Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005).

analytical skills. They did comment that the most challenging part was the “timing,” they needed more time for the posting and writing of a response. Even with such pressure for time, as the class instructor, I did note how these postings displayed a keen grasp of the course topics. Moreover, the openness between the students helped them to recognize differing perspectives. Students were gracious in their comments and measured in their criticisms or posing of challenging questions to one another. It seemed in each aspect students engaged in meaningful discernment before attempting to address the weekly question and/or respond to another student’s entry. The course evaluation also addressed the use of moodle platform itself. Students affirmed that additional postings such as students’ research findings and various supporting materials like videos and websites of organizations assisted them in discovering new resources for their research and study.

Media-Portfolio Collection

The students found this exercise useful in “appropriating social justice teachings,” and “was an excellent way of applying what they had learned to the real world.” In the survey, the highest scores 71.43% (5/5 rating) and 28.57% (4/5 rating) were based on the question, “Did this exercise offer you a way to do critical reading in further ministry and study?” One student commented that she “appreciated the instructor carefully reading and responding to the collections with penciled notes throughout the material.” The students also felt that the exercise gave them a greater sense of the first movements/aspects of the pastoral spiral process (57.14% [4/5 rating] and 28.57% [5/5 rating]).

Group Work

In the course evaluations of 2016, the students commented that they needed more guidance for effective engagement within groups and in preparing presentations. The major concerns revolved around keeping to the time-limit for the presentations and they struggled with various skill-levels of the group members. Students possessed different competencies in language skills and this affected the quality of the group presentations. The 2017 course syllabus addressed these critiques by offering guidelines for group work and making adjustments for the various language skills. As a result, there were improved ratings from the 2016 to 2017 course with a third of the class mentioning that it was the “best part of the course.” The other high scores occurred with the questions, “Did the group research and presentation give you a greater sense of the pastoral spiral process (42.86% [5/5 rating] and 42.86% [4/5 rating]) and “Did it contribute to your understanding of Catholic social teaching (42.86% [4/5 rating] and 28.57% [5/5 rating]).

Final Papers

In addition to these survey results, students’ final research papers drew meaningful connections between the course materials and their own original thinking about contemporary social justice challenges. It was clear that they all had grasped the pastoral spiral process and that the critical thinking, comprehensive envisioning, and responsible planning imbedded in this process brought new questions into their research. For example, at least a third of the papers began their exploration using the pastoral spiral process and then concluded with recommendations for addressing the need for peace-education in local settings on Korea, the Nigeria and East Oakland, California.

The papers incorporated a number of encyclicals in their research and illustrated the comprehensive nature of the Church's social wisdom or they made important theological and pastoral connections between social concerns, e.g. global economy and human trafficking and the ecological crisis and just peace. These papers exemplified the type of integrative thinking about the Catholic social teaching that the course promoted. The "integral vision" of social justice as it emerges from the encyclical tradition was central in students' research and writing.

Student evaluations surfaced areas of the course in need of revision. However, strong evidence suggests that even with these flaws the course facilitated the students' understanding of Catholic social teaching. The comprehensive and dynamic also led to a type of strategic knowledge. The course became a catalyst for further social justice research and ministry. For example, the final paper of the doctoral student developed into his dissertation topic and another student developed his study into a plan to establish a legal clinic for the Oakland Diocese in California, which opened the summer of 2016. Additionally the course helped prepare two students for their lay volunteer ministries: Solidarity for Sudan Missions and Alliance for Catholic Education Teacher Fellow.

The goal of social analysis, as Thomas Clarke states is to "move beyond personal experience of the milieu and to provide us with the empirical and analytical basis for the evaluative judgments and the pragmatic decisions which will represent our response of faith to the needs of our times."²⁴ Engaging pastoral spiral process with the encyclical study provides a way for us to recognize the call to be

²⁴ Thomas E. Clarke, S.J., "Methodology," in *The Context of Our Ministries: Working Papers* (Washington, D.C.: Jesuit Conference, 1981), 7.

witnesses of God's Kingdom as we proclaim in word and deed God's justice and peace for all creation.

Faculty Experience

The student evaluations highlighted important areas for improving the course. Their comments also resonated with my experiences as instructor of the course - but in different ways.

Graduate students of my school prefer that faculty offer lectures. However, this is not the case for all students. So it is a challenge to professors when we try to combine seminar and lecture formats. In response to the need of some want more lectures, I have balanced class time to allow for at least 40-minute lectures. In addition to lectures about pastoral spiral process, economic development, the common good, and human rights, the spring 2017 course features lectures on terrorism, health care ethics, and philosophical and theological bases for moving from just war theory to just peace theory.

The experience with the students in the spring 2016 course helped me to realize that I needed to create better guide sheets for the various student activities and allow more time for their completion of assignments, especially the moodle blogs. The 2017 syllabus reflects these changes.²⁵ Student evaluations surfaced areas for further revision such as spending more time on the social theory through demonstrating how various sociologists and ethicists use historical and contemporary social analysis in their studies. In addition to the Joe Holland and Peter Henriot text, *Social Analysis*, the students

²⁵ Marianne Farina CSC, *Catholic Social Teaching (CE 3050)*. Last modified February 24, 2017, https://www.dspt.edu/files/S17_CE3050_Farina.pdf.

suggested including articles from prominent thinkers for this purpose.

In conjunction with this suggestion, students' evaluation of the course readings will also help future planning for the seminar. They were almost unanimous in appreciating the in-depth reading of the social encyclicals with 92% mentioning these readings as the best material. Students did feel we needed more time with the encyclicals in order to grasp the depth of thought and processes involved in their formulation and dissemination. They also offered reviews of Massaro's text, *Living Justice* and Kasper's book on *Mercy* with 82% and 78% respectively valuing the "solid analysis" and "theological challenges" they offered when engaging the social teaching of the Church. The plan for the fall 2017 course is to keep the same texts, allow more time for reading the encyclicals, and include a few articles to enhance the social theory component of the course.

As noted above, the design of the group presentation component requires more thinkings, I am devoted to keeping this central to the course. As a critical aspect of the course design, the group study and presentation contributes to factual, conceptual and procedural knowledge about Catholic social teaching. The plan will be to have "check-ins" throughout the semester to evaluate in light of course objectives and goals.

I realize that in the various iterations of the course goals, design, materials, research and study will evolve - just as the social message of the Catholic Church evolves. Efforts to foster Christian and civic formation share much in common. The goals of both seek to form persons ready to engage in critical, creative and courageous thinking so that they take responsibility for addressing social concerns in the society. Courses in Catholic social teaching aim to

fulfill this crucial task require approaches to the sharing of the Church's social wisdom in ways that appreciate and participate in the ongoing developments and concerns of a complex and changing global world.

Part Four: Going Forward

Designing a course about the Catholic social teaching or creating programs for parish social justice formation brings to the fore important insights about the Church and its apostolic mission. The first is that we can speak of the Church as a Church teaching (*ecclesia docens*) and a Church learning (*ecclesia discens*). We see this especially in the documents of Vatican II, social encyclicals, and Episcopal regional letters. Committed to “reading the signs of the times,” the Church seeks ways for all Christians to participate in the work of justice. This work formulates the Church's social teaching. As noted above, Paul VI clearly outlines a form for this engagement, calling it dialogue.²⁶ He describes dialogue as an ongoing engagement with one another [Catholics], other Christians, world religions, and all civic groups in society in order to gain deeper knowledge of one another and the world. These dialogues “thrive on friendship, and especially service...” putting into practice the example and precepts of Christ.”²⁷ The course focused on a process that in its investigative, participative, communal and dialogical style became discernment for all involved. Such discernment is central to the Church's social justice mission.

²⁶ Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, paragraph 87, accessed June 5, 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html.

²⁷ Ibid.

Most Rev. Robert W. McElroy, head of the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego, delivered an address to the U.S. Regional World Meeting of Popular Movements in February 2017 that urged them to engage in these discernment processes. Describing how

[F]or the past century, from the worker movements of Catholic action in France, Belgium and Italy to Pope John XXIII's call to re-structure the economies of the world in *Mater et Magistra*, to the piercing missionary message of the Latin American Church at Aparecida, the words "see," "judge" and "act" have provided a powerful pathway for those who seek to renew the temporal order in the light of the Gospel and justice ...[and that] There is no greater charter for this gathering taking place here in Modesto in these days than the simple but rich architecture of these three words: "see," "judge" and "act."²⁸

He reminded them that these words – "see," "judge," act," which are the principal movements of the pastoral spiral/social analysis "carry with them such a powerful history of social transformation around the world in service to the dignity of the human person."²⁹ This commitment, he notes, "must be renewed and re-examined at every age and seen against the background of those social, economic and political forces in each historical moment."³⁰

Bishop McElroy's remarks point to the dynamism of Catholic social teaching. Through such engaged processes the study and

²⁸ "San Diego Catholic Bishop Calls Leaders to Disrupt and Rebuild" - February 18, 2017, accessed May 15, 2017, <https://cmsm.org/2017/02/forum-winter-2017-san-diego-catholic-bishop-calls-leaders-to-disrupt-and-rebuild/>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

analysis on of the Church's social encyclicals creates a decisive framework in which, as Richard Gaillardetz describes, Christian discipleship means submitting to "... the transformative power of the gospel and the distinctive practices of the tradition while bringing that dynamic tradition into critical engagement with the contemporary situation."³¹ In fact, it is as Gaillardetz also claims as a "traditioning" process of the whole Church growing in their understanding of truth and openness to God's call to justice and peace.³² Thus Catholic social teaching means Catholic social - *teaching* that is the verb.

In this way, as William O'Neill avers, "The Church can acknowledge significant innovations or contradictions in the encyclical dynamic."³³ One example of this point is John XXIII's endorsement of human rights in *Pacem in terris*, which reversed the Church's previous position concerning United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.³⁴ Studying these developments using the pastoral spiral process helps students see shifts from axiomatic system of propositions to graced innovation in Church's social thought and action.

The second point that emerges from this course design concerns the Church's social justice vision. The encyclicals draw from human experience, resources of Church teaching and practice, and other fields of learning, that is, philosophy, political, economic, social thought, and physical sciences in developing responses to the social justice concerns. These resources are fonts of important

³¹ Richard R. Gaillardetz, "The Ecclesiological Foundations of Modern Catholic Social Teaching," in Kenneth Himes et al, Kenneth Himes et al, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 87

³² *Ibid*, 82

³³ William O'Neill, SJ, email message to author May 25, 2017

³⁴ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in terris*

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041_963_pacem.html paragraph 11 (accessed May 31, 2017)

knowledge that help the Church addresses social concerns fully. They also inform a deeper understanding of what Pope Francis calls an “integral ecology.” As Pope Francis says in *Laudato si*, “It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected. [F]ragmentation of knowledge and the isolation of bits of information can actually become a form of ignorance, unless they are integrated into a broader vision of reality.”³⁵ Pope Francis called us to recognize that solutions to our global problems and the path to “authentic” development require that we develop the ability to see and understand each problem as it relates to all other issues. For when we look at problems in isolation rather than systemically, we run the risk of missing opportunities or arriving at solutions that can worsen problems in other areas.

Pope Francis analysis model of integral ecology parallels the course design in that it address the need for a holistic approach to “reading the signs of the times” in a comprehensive and integral way. Such an integral analysis requires that we explore four key interconnected dimensions of any problem or justice issue: social (interpersonal and communal relationships, institutions, policies, etc.); environmental (physical surroundings: Earth and human-made); cultural (beliefs, traditions, values, practices); and economic. An integral ecology is also marked by a vision, which includes the ecology of daily life and the principle that the common good extends to future generations. A dynamic reading of the encyclical tradition, that is the pastoral spiral process, can help us see social justice as an integral ecological way of life, i.e., a social vision

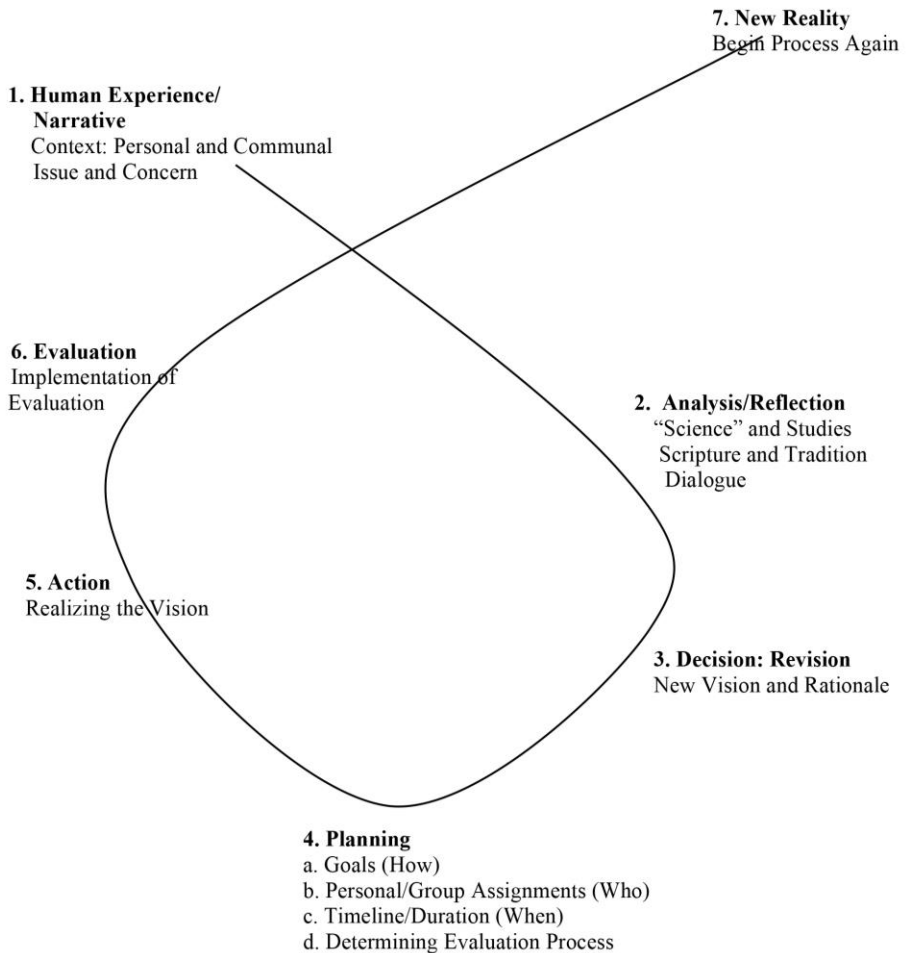
³⁵ Francis, *Laudato si*, accessed May 15, 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html paragraph 138.

of justice capable of fostering flourishing of all creation and thereby revealing God's Mercy.

Additionally, such a vision encourages and empowers scholars, leaders, and communities to address courageously concerns under-identified or disconnected in social teaching documents. For example, Pope Francis has guided the global community to see connections between care for creation and care for the poor. An engaged reading of the encyclicals and exhortations might keep us attentive to the need to promote justice in the Church. *Justice in the World*, the apostolic exhortation pointed clearly to the important roles of women and the laity in the mission of the Church.

What has become clear is that classes or workshops about Catholic social teaching and the formation of parish and diocesan social justice commissions need to find ways to engage in truly participative forums of dialogue and learning. These dialogues will lead to meaningful study and deliberation, especially if the vision at the center of these forums is an integral ecological one. As Christ's disciples we are hermeneutical companions seeking to witness in word and action the Gospel call to justice and peace. Perhaps in this way Catholic social teaching no longer remains our "best kept secret."

Appendix I: Pastoral Spiral



Bibliography

Clarke, Thomas E. S.J., “Methodology.” In *The Context of Our Ministries: Working Papers*. Washington, D.C.: Jesuit Conference, 1981.

Francis, *Laudato si*. May 24, 2015. Accessed May 15, 2017.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

Gaillardetz, Richard, “The Ecclesiological Foundations of Modern Catholic Social Teaching.” In *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, edited by Kenneth Himes et al., 72-98. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004.

Himes, Kenneth R., editor. *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*. Georgetown: University Press, 2005.

Holland, Joe and Peter Henriot, S.J. *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. 1980.

John XXIII. *Pacem in terries*, April 11, 1963. Accessed June 7, 2017.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html.

Kavanaugh, John. *Following Christ in a Consumer Society*, 25th Anniversary Edition. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006.

Kasper, Walter. *Mercy*. Translated by William Madges. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014.

Massaro, Tom. *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, 3rd Edition. Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

McElory, Robert W. "A Call to Disrupt and Rebuild." Public Address to U.S. Regional World Meeting of Popular Movements, Modesto, California. Accessed May 15, 2017.
<https://cmsm.org/2017/02/forum-winter-2017-san-diego-catholic-bishop-calls-leaders-to-disrupt-and-rebuild/McElory>.

Nichimunya, Elias Bboloka Buboloka, S.J. *Rights of a Girl Child: The Significance of the Zambian Humanism and the Catholic Social Teaching for a Girl-Child Education in Zambia*. Ph.D Dissertation, Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University, 2016.

Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam* August 6, 1964. Accessed June 5, 2017.
http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html.

Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace. *Compendium of Catholic Social Doctrine of the Church*. United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 2005.

Prusak, Bernard. *The Church Unfinished: Ecclesiology through the Ages*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004.

Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church. *Lumen Gentium*. November 21, 1964. Accessed May 24, 2017.
http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

_____. *Gaudium et spes*. December 7, 1965. Accessed May 24, 2017.
http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. See especially paragraph #4.

Watkins, Alan and Ken Wilbur. *Wicked and Wise: How to Solve the World's Toughest Problems*. Great Britain: Urban Publishers, 2015.

[摘要] 基督徒相信天主在歷史的進程中持續發言，在人類之間的互動和社會的形成當中，我們可看見天主的臨在和祂對世界的計劃的徵兆。因此，我們相信我們有責任因應不同環境、並在福音光照下辨別及詮釋這些時代徵兆（啟示憲章#4）。這種互動是教會對社會正義的理解之核心。

然而，教授基督宗教社會正義的課程往往未能反映這種互動。尤其是介紹天主教社會通諭（社會訓導文件）時，這些通諭往往被視為來自歷史的教訓，而不是閱讀時代徵兆後，成為富批判性對話的啟動者，從而幫助我們反省、做判斷，以及在教會和社會從事正義和平的行動。本文描述一個採用互動過程來學習和分析社會通諭的課程設計。課程將社會通諭傳統視為一個辨別模式，用以回應社會正義議題。透過「牧民循環／社會分析」的方法認識社會通諭，學生除了認識天主教社會訓導的事實知識外，更可進一步掌握教會的社會智慧。