

Executive Summary:
Innovative Entrepreneurship Education Course

University of St. Thomas

Christian Faith and the Management Professions:
An Entrepreneurial Perspective

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Purpose of Course:

Who is a good entrepreneur? Can entrepreneurship be a vocation for the Christian? How does the entrepreneur contribute to the common good in his or her work? How does an entrepreneur share the wealth of the enterprise through wages and ownership in light of the social teaching of the Church? How does one integrate the intensity of an entrepreneurial lifestyle with the radical demands of the gospel? Is creating wealth a virtue? What is the proper role and meaning of spirituality for the entrepreneur? *Christian Faith and the Management Professions: An Entrepreneurial Perspective* addresses these questions as a course that fulfills the third required Theology for undergraduate students at the University of St. Thomas. It is team-taught by Jeffrey Cornwall (holder of the Sandra Schulze Chair in Entrepreneurship) and Michael Naughton (director of the John A. Ryan Institute for Catholic Social Thought).

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Course Objectives:

1. This course serves as a *signature or capstone course* for students' whole university education. Through the interdisciplinary engagement of organizational thought and theological resources, students can begin to participate in a powerful integrating experience of liberal and professional education.
2. To understand the theological reasoning behind the Christian tradition's understanding

of work and leisure as the basis to faith-filled response to entrepreneurial life. This course helps students integrate their faith and work. By engaging in an interdisciplinary conversation between Catholic social teachings and entrepreneurship, the course takes on a mode of discourse that can be described as “middle level thinking”--examining the linkages between faith and work, spirit and matter, theory and praxis, and virtue and technique. Table 1 displays the theoretical model for this that is a foundation of this course.

3. To apply philosophical and theological knowledge to entrepreneurial issues and problems.
4. To help students understand the importance of leisure in the intense work pressures of the entrepreneur.
5. To engage in dialogue with those of differing opinions in an open, critical, and creative way. “Our purpose in life is indeed ‘not to win arguments,’ but to be wise. For this latter, we cannot neglect study or prayer, or especially that openness to existence about which we must learn even if we learn nothing else, or even if we learn all else. We must seek out where the important things are taught if the ‘seriousness of action’ is to be intelligible, however long we may live” (Schall).
6. To have an impact on students that lasts beyond the end of the course.

Principal Students in this Class: Enrollment in this course is limited to Entrepreneurship Majors in undergraduate program at the University of St. Thomas. Catholic Studies majors can take the course with permission of instructor.

Abbreviated Description of Course:

- Although technically not a new course per se, as it has been taught for several years without the added hyphenated descriptor, the goal was to redesign the content to speak directly to the unique challenges faced by entrepreneurs from the perspective of the Christian intellectual tradition. Course development began in the spring of 2000 for the course that was to be offered the following fall.
- Enrollment capacity: 15 entrepreneurship majors
- Enrollment Fall 2000 – 20 entrepreneurship majors; 1 Catholic Studies
- Enrollment Fall 2001 – 16 entrepreneurship majors; 1 Catholic Studies
- Course is marketed through e-mail sent to all entrepreneurship majors. Students admitted with permission of instructor. Students are given a brief face-to-face interview to assure they understand the purpose and demands of the course.

Unique Aspects & Features:

- Team-taught

One of the most important marks of a course like faith and entrepreneurship is the dimension of it being team-taught. It is a powerful experience for a student to walk into a classroom and see a theology professor and an entrepreneurship professor (who ran his own company for many years) in front of the room discussing, debating and integrating components of Catholic social thought and entrepreneurship. This integrating experience is difficult to create since it requires a mastery in more than one discipline, which makes the team taught approach critically necessary for such a course. It is precisely this integration of disciplines that helps to move students to a “unity of knowledge” that serves to see that they themselves can have lives of integrity.

- We know of no course like it in country.

Sources of Funding:

- Because the course serves the mission of the university in a unique and special way, the administration provides full teaching credit for both faculty members.

Course Outcomes:

- Short-term:

The overall rating of the course in the class evaluations was a 4.53 on a five-point scale. The instructors received an overall rating of 4.44 on a five-point scale. The students reported that they averaged about six hours of work per week outside the classroom (three hours of preparation per class) and that the course was fairly rigorous. The specific instructor items were all high ratings as well.

One of our assignments is designed to assess short-term outcomes from the course. Students complete a self-assessment that takes the form of a vocational autobiography early in the course. They are asked to cite and trace the main influences and motives that have shaped their decisions for a career in entrepreneurship. The purpose is to encourage some self-reflection so as to see patterns and influences that operate in their life choices. The paper ends with a one half-page mission statement describing the purpose of their work. At the end of the course, the students submit a revision of their vocational autobiographies. They are instructed not to just revise and edit what they wrote in the first draft. They are told to make sure to reflect on material covered in class, especially the materials on spirituality and liturgy at the end of the course. They also include the graded copy

of the first draft from the beginning of the course to help the instructors evaluate the impact of the course materials on their thinking.

- Long-term:

To assess the long-term outcomes of the course, we conducted a brief follow-up survey five-months after completion of the course. Students were asked to respond to items related the impact that the course had on seven areas. Eleven surveys were returned (52.4% response rate). Table 1 displays the results of this follow-up. The highest impact from the course was reported on how the students define being a “successful” entrepreneur (4.27 on five-point scale), on their personal goal for wealth from their business (4.18), and on their priorities in life (4.0). Although the survey did not ask the nature or directionality of the impact, the written responses on the survey indicated that the impact was in the desired direction of the course objectives. That is, success is measured more broadly than just by financial measures and wealth was more balanced against other outcomes from their business aspirations and other priorities in life. Results of the survey are summarized in Table 2.

Course Benefits:

The students own words in their evaluations of the course speak to its benefits.

Throughout the course students often expressed this desire for wholeness or integrity. As one student wrote in his or her evaluation:

The course taught us how to integrate both work and faith. It opened our eyes to the separation that one can make between spirituality and ‘reality.’ We have come to a better understanding of what the reality really is; we have been exposed to the Truth of who we are and we are to be fully-integrated humans.

Both instructors found the course extremely gratifying in helping not only the students discern their life direction, but also their own vocation. As one student explained in his or her evaluation:

The instructors have done a fabulous job in presenting the material but also in applying it to our lives. They showed us the way in which spirituality is fully embracing reality and it is being attentive to this world. They opened up to us the realization that spirituality is concrete and not something that is not part of being truly human. They showed incredible passion for the class and were vulnerable in their sharing. This vulnerability really helped us to see the Truth about human life and helped banish the façade most people have – that they are perfect. No, they are in need of redemption.

Some additional selected student comments follow:

This course exceeded my expectations by far, and I believe they were high to begin with. The ideas we learned about and were exposed to are invaluable and will certainly make a great influence on some very important decisions I will be making and am currently making.

This team did a tremendous job at presenting the ideas in a way that was relevant to our lives. The dialogue that they shared in class was a major factor in the success of the course. They would each challenge each other and agree with each other, which added a very valuable dimension to the course. Well, well done.

This course did a good job of putting everything in perspective. It was good to see how you could better integrate the Christian world into the business world.

The course objectives were clear and essential to complete a liberal arts education.

One of the best courses I have taken, just way too much work.

Table 1

Theoretical Framework for the Course

WORK	LEISURE	INTEGRATION
<i>Vocation</i>	<i>Contemplation</i>	<i>Real Integrity</i>
Career	Instrumental	Accomplishments
Job	Amusement	Pleasures

Table 2
Results of Five-month Follow-up Student Survey
(n=11: 55% response rate)

Impact on:	Mean	Standard deviation
Definition of success	4.2727	0.7862
Wealth goals	4.1818	1.0787
Income goals	3.8182	0.9816
Growth goals	3.8182	0.6030
Likelihood of being an entrepreneur	3.0909	1.0445
Priorities in life	4.0000	1.0000
Type of business preferred	3.0909	1.3003