



*Journal of
Religion & Society*
Supplement Series

The Kripke Center

Supplement 23 (2021)

Religion and the New Politics

Edited by Ronald A. Simkins and Zachary B. Smith

11. Dignity and Freedom in the Classroom

A Catholic Framework for Navigating Trumpism

Kristin Mattson and Jennifer Reed-Bouley, College of Saint Mary (Omaha)

Abstract

The politics of Trumpism have engendered new norms for public discourse, which affect teaching and learning in higher education. This essay examines resources in Catholic higher education for providing a framework to structure classroom discourse and choice of course texts. By developing a strong liberal arts curriculum and relying on Catholic Social Teaching and the specific resources of religious sponsors such as the Jesuits and Sisters of Mercy, Catholic universities can allow for freedom of expression while simultaneously respecting and protecting the essential dignity of all.

Keywords: Catholic, higher education, Trumpism, pedagogy

Introduction

Trumpism has engendered new norms for public discourse, which affect teaching and learning in Catholic higher education. Mirroring society at large, exclusionary rhetoric – including racist and anti-immigrant views – is increasingly finding its way into the classroom.

Catholic liberal arts universities regularly articulate distinctive values that can protect and promote the common good by attending to the well-being of those groups targeted by harmful, contemporary rhetoric and action. This paper draws upon the traditional resources within higher education, particularly Catholic higher education, to examine the potential these resources hold for inspiring classrooms that lead students to question these illiberal tendencies in modern democracies. These resources, specifically enhanced liberal arts curriculum, Catholic Social Teaching, and the specific resources of religious sponsors such as the Sisters of Mercy and the Jesuits, allow for freedom of expression while simultaneously respecting and protecting the essential dignity of all.

What is Trumpism?

As historian David Greenberg (2016) explains in his excellent examination of the intellectual history of Trumpism, Donald Trump did not create Trumpism; he adopted it and was adopted by it. And then, elected to office carrying its mantle, he became its standard-bearer. According to Greenberg: “The hidden history of Trumpism suggests that [Donald Trump] may be not simply an opportunistic showman but the leader of an at least semi-coherent ideology – a new iteration of the populist and nationalist paleoconservatism that has long lurked in the shadows of American politics.” We see hallmarks of Trumpism (e.g. populism, nativism, and outsider status; see Tabachnick 2016) across American history. There are many clear similarities between Trump’s race-tinged promise to “Make America Great Again,” the platform of the nineteenth century Know-Nothing party (later American party), George Wallace’s “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever” presidential platform, and more recently Pat Buchanan’s anti-immigrant, anti-multiculturalism presidential bids throughout the 1990s. And Trumpism’s link to the Buchanan campaign is more than thematic. Trumpism is simply the name given to the latest and present iteration of this nationalist-conservatism that triumphed with Trump’s election, and whose roots are clearly visible in Buchanan. In fact, Buchanan endorsed Trump calling him the “the Great White Hope” for a “white America [that] is dying” (Tsai and Turbeek 2018).

Trump’s electoral success was a crucial milestone for Trumpism and was facilitated by a number of factors. GOP leaders such as Jeff Sessions and Steve King tried to pick up where Buchanan left off, “working for years to fine-tune the message that became known as Trumpism” (Tsai and Turbeek 2018). Their success in this endeavor was made possible by white anxiety about the rapid demographic shifts currently underway in the United States. In 2020, there are more minority children under 18 than white children; by 2044, no one racial group will be a majority (Montenero 2016). Greenburg (2016) asserts that public reaction to the receding reality of a white demographic majority in the U.S. (combined with the aftermath of the Iraq war and the 2008 financial crash) created the conditions which enabled Trump to ride this formerly scattered and incohesive ideology all the way to the White House. The declining fortunes of the white working class, independent of (but coincident with) the rapidly increasing diversity of the U.S. “opened the door to a populist leader who [drew] the definition of who ‘the people’ are in a way that mobilize[d] resentment and license[d] disenfranchisement” (Lieberman et al. 2017, 18). Trump effectively won the office of president with a frank assertion that white people “make America great.”

While Trump's election did not create Trumpism, Trump's victory at the ballot box legitimized the ideology, rendering it more acceptable in the American mainstream. Consequently, Trumpism's new status has precipitated a shift in the boundaries of acceptable limits of political speech. Its exploitation of white, working class anxieties about the "browning of America" (Montenero 2016) has effectively regularized hate speech, which now flourishes in the United States to an extent we have not witnessed for more than 50 years (PEN America 2019, 14). The public affirmation of this ideology that Trump's election implies has had significant impacts for public life, both on and off campus.

Trumpism on College Campuses in a Time of Demographic Change

Understanding the effects of Trumpism on campus requires an examination of the dramatic changes in higher education that have been precipitated by the rapid demographic transformation of the United States. As Sigal Ben-Porath (2017, 34) demonstrates, the expanding diversity of the United States and the success of related social movements, has led to a shift in the mission of higher education itself. As barriers for underserved groups have been dismantled, colleges and universities have slowly opened their doors and evolved from elite-serving institutions to pathways to the economic mainstream for previously excluded groups. In service to this evolving social mission, colleges and universities have actively recruited members of previously excluded groups and promoted diversity as one of the central values of higher education.

This new social mission of higher education has effected great changes in the make-up of the higher education student body. Between 1996 and 2012, the college student population grew rapidly more diverse. In that 15-year period, the number of Hispanic students in higher education tripled and African American student enrollment grew by 72 percent, contrasting sharply with the relatively anemic 12 percent growth for whites during this same time period (Berhent 2019). And these trends continue. Between 2016 and 2027, the number of white college students is expected to decrease by eight percent. Conversely, the numbers of minority college students are projected to be dramatically higher; six percent increase for Blacks; fourteen percent increase for Hispanics; seven percent increase for Asian/Pacific Islanders (Hussar and Bailey 2019, 27).

This mission shift and embrace of diversity were clearly not welcomed by all higher education stakeholders. Some, inspired by Trumpism, mounted challenges of various visibility, directly questioning the value of diversity. Until the 2016 election though, these critiques operated outside of the mainstream – the white nationalist underpinnings considered beyond the bounds of acceptable critique. This changed with the election of 2016.¹ As it had in the

¹ PEN America's *Chasm in the Classroom* details the rise in hate crimes and hate speech which coincided with the 2016 election. We quote from it at length here to underscore the significance of the Trump campaign and election in legitimizing and spreading hate language and arguably, precipitating a consequent spike in hate crimes: "A wide range of organizations have raised alarms about the rise in extremist groups and hate crimes since 2016. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), hate groups have proliferated nationwide, growing from 917 in 2016 to 954 in 2017, and to a record high of 1,020 in 2018. In 2017, SPLC reported that the number of neo-Nazi groups had 'soared' by 22 percent, while the number of anti-Muslim groups had increased for the third year in a row, growing by 13 percent in 2017 after having tripled from 2015 to 2016. Data from the FBI shows that in 2017 hate crimes rose by 17 percent from a year earlier, showing a 16 percent rise in anti-black crimes, a 37 percent rise in anti-Jewish crimes, a 66 percent rise in crimes against people with disabilities, and a 48 percent

larger political community, Trump's electoral victory emboldened and legitimized Trumpism's rejection of the inclusive mission of higher education. And like in the community at large, the combination of an increasingly diverse student body and veiled white nationalism proved volatile.

Nationally, "in 2017, nearly 280 hate crimes were reported by select campus police departments to the FBI, up from 257 in 2016 and 194 in 2015" (PEN America 2019, 15). Because hate speech is constitutionally protected, there is no corresponding tracking of the rate of occurrence of hate speech. However, quantitative data and anecdotal evidence, reported extensively in the PEN America report, indicate that campus hate speech has expanded in lock step with the spread of hate crime. Since Trump's election, the Anti-Defamation League has documented a rise in white supremacist propaganda on campus, increasing 77 percent in 2017–2018 over the previous academic year and an additional seven percent in 2018–2019 (Strauss 2019). The PEN America report *Chasm in the Classroom* (2019) recounts a great number of hate speech incidents occurring after the 2016 presidential election, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Charting the course for higher education's response to Trump's election and resultant campus tensions is complicated. Academic freedom, freedom of speech and the social mission of higher education are all essential values of higher education, and all potentially suggest different resolutions to these tensions on college campuses today. Should a white nationalist be allowed to speak on campus? If the answer is yes, what, if anything, does the university need to do to protect its increasingly diverse student body from potential harm? What does a campus bias reporting system look like when the illiberal occupant of the White House espouses a philosophy with explicitly racist underpinnings? These and similar questions shape the dilemmas faced by higher education leaders today, both for the entire campus and for individual classrooms.

Navigating the Effects of Trumpism in the Classroom

Managing the classroom in the Trump era presents several challenges which the dominant learner-centered pedagogy often exacerbates. Many faculty report feeling faced with a choice between protecting students' freedom of speech or protecting the dignity of those made vulnerable by it (for example, see Strunk 2018). Some argue that the founding principle of higher education, freedom of expression and inquiry, demands that faculty do little to contain speech in the classroom. The typical argument, consistent with liberal philosophy, is that one best combats offensive speech with more speech. Flooding the marketplace of ideas with the full range of political expression and subjecting all viewpoints to critical examination, allows only the most rational, liberal versions to remain (for example, see Chemerisnski and Gillman 2017; Lawrence 2017; Strossen 2018).

rise in crimes motivated by gender bias. As reported by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), anti-Semitic incidents also surged almost 60 percent in 2017, 'the largest single-year increase on record and the second highest number reported since ADL started tracking incident data in the 1970s.'" (2019, 13–14)

Others contend that the illiberal nature of Trumpism does not allow for the liberal marketplace of ideas approach. Summarizing the unique challenges which Trumpism presents, Joseph P. Viteritti (2019) writes:

With the election of Donald Trump, my approach has now changed. Some things are not up for debate. I am not that comfortable with it, but I feel that I have no choice. Trump does not simply confront us with different political opinions; he challenges and erodes basic American values. There are far too many to list; but here are a well-known few: his undermining of a free press by excluding critics from access to the White House, the prejudice he exhibits when he tells immigrants to go back to where they came from, his open admiration of dictators like Vladimir Putin, his equating of hate speech with rightful dissent, his personal denigration of political rivals with petty nicknames, and the vile way he speaks about women.

Viteritti argues that since Trumpism undermines the basic principles upon which liberal debate is based, it cannot be considered on equal footing with other philosophies in the marketplace of ideas. Accordingly, effective liberal arts education requires that the extremes of Trumpism be expelled from (not interrogated in) the classroom. “In these cases, the obligation to speak out overtakes the instinct to seek moderation or compromise. Those of us who teach politics have a responsibility to enunciate basic values and explain why they are fundamental in a fair and open democratic society” (2019).

So, by one approach, we blunt the exclusionary, incendiary effect of hateful speech by bringing it into conversation with speech that is better informed and more rational. In the other, we banish that speech from the classroom by arguing that it undermines both the inclusive classroom and liberal democracy. While there are merits to both approaches, we argue here that both are ill-suited to combatting the excesses of Trumpism today. As to the marketplace of ideas approach, it requires no more than a five minute clip of cable news to demonstrate that, while the marketplace of ideas approach is entirely consistent with liberal ideals (the founding principles of American liberal democracy), it is completely ineffective in moderating the excesses of Trumpism – in classrooms or in the larger society. In this era of poisonous partisan polarization and “truthiness,” adding more speech to the mix (even better informed and more rational speech) does not moderate the extremes or produce better policy. It just makes it “harder to hear” in that marketplace, as all sides dig in to promote their opinions and extreme polarization prevents any reach toward compromise. Banishing speech to contain its effects is similarly counterproductive. As recent campus eruptions and court cases involving Turning Point USA and Campus Reform demonstrate, expelling this message from campus often serves to embolden the messenger, with claims of discrimination now fueling the fire and amplifying the speech intended to be contained.

In this essay, we attempt to chart a third course. It builds from the civic mission of higher education and the capacity and responsibility of higher education to affect democratic norms. While the two approaches discussed above focus on containing or blunting Trumpism as a manifestation of the breakdown of American democracy, we refocus on higher education’s role in supporting the structures which undergird American democracy itself. To combat the excesses of Trumpism, we argue, higher education needs to play more of a long game – if we

help students build the skills and values that sustain a healthy democracy, we will not be so focused on containing the intellectual products of democratic breakdown in the classrooms of the future.

This civic mission of higher education has received much attention of late, particularly since 2012, when the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement issued its clarion call (“The Crucible Moment”), imploring higher education to refocus on its civic mission and prepare graduates for engagement in America’s troubled democracy. We have written elsewhere (Mattson and Reed-Bouley 2017) about the work of higher education to expand on its civic mission. Here we focus on “A Crucible Moment” simply as a reminder that the university has a civic mission upon which the health of our democracy depends. As Roosevelt Montas (2017) explains: “Liberal democratic societies depend on the open flow of ideas, goods, and people; transparent government adhering to the rule of law; respect for diversity; tolerance of difference; concern for vulnerable members of society; an independent judiciary; a free press – values that are all under threat in our political climate. And there is a case to be made that universities have been not only negligent but complicit in the deterioration of these values and in the parlous state of our public discourse.” When we refocus on the role higher education plays in education for democracy, we shift our perspective on Trumpism and the classroom. We are still presented with the need to provide faculty with the tools to mitigate the effects of Trumpism. But focusing on the civic mission of higher education redirects us from blunting the force of Trumpism to creating a learning environment that prepares students with the knowledge, dispositions, and values that are necessary for a democratic society.

Robust liberal arts curriculum and liberal arts pedagogy can provide essential support to American democracy. Engaging with a carefully crafted liberal arts curriculum, students learn “to think and argue for themselves, rather than defer to tradition and authority” (Nussbaum 2010, 48). Liberal arts curriculum is essential for building this critical consciousness, providing students with many key skills, such as historical perspective, mathematical literacy, and critical discernment. And it is through well-developed liberal arts pedagogy that students gain aptitude for and practice with the knowledge, dispositions, and values of democratic society. Because of the importance of practice to the development of dispositions and skills, our focus here is more pedagogical than curricular.² We explore the ways liberal arts pedagogy in a Catholic context can prepare graduates for critical engagement in democratic society. While our approach does not offer an immediate fix (excesses of Trumpism remain difficult to contain in both classroom and society in the present moment), executed well it offers some promise for lessening Trumpism’s impact in the long run.

Liberal Arts Education and the Inclusive Classroom

Discussions about the role of pedagogy in shaping values and dispositions often raise questions about groupthink, partisanship, and the importance of academic freedom to the central research mission of higher education. While these are legitimate concerns and instruction should never be partisan or based in unsubstantiated opinion, education is always

² For an overview and analysis of democratic practices, as well as a full discussion of the factors necessary to build and sustain democracy, see the work of the Kettering Foundation (www.kettering.org).

undergirded by values which are transmitted to students, whether they are examined or not. As Roosevelt Montas (2017) explains, “To ‘educate’ is to nurture an individual into a particular community. We must recognize plainly that all education is education for citizenship. What we teach, how we teach it, and whom we teach it to necessarily describe a vision of society and of the types of individuals we want to prepare for that society. Values don’t merely infiltrate education from the outside, as ideological add-ons, but are constitutive of the very practice of teaching.” Education is, in part, about the transmission of value. The civic mission of higher education is based in an acknowledgement of education’s role in shaping student dispositions – the health of American democracy rests on the success of liberal education in this endeavor. The advantage of liberal arts pedagogy is that the values modeled are those of critical and independent thought – necessary dispositions to support both democratic engagement and academic inquiry and innovation.

The Practice of Inclusion

While a robust liberal arts curriculum is essential to support the student development necessary to sustain both American democracy and critical inquiry in the academy, values and dispositions are shaped through practice. Clearly what we teach is important, but in sustaining the values of a free democratic society (an endeavor with clear implication both on and off campus), how we teach it is even more central. Consequently, transmission of such central democratic values as “respect for diversity; tolerance of difference; concern for vulnerable members of society” (Montas 2017) requires faculty attention to structuring the classroom and the conversations that occur within it.

Ben-Porath (2017, 86) develops the concept of “inclusive freedom” as a guide for faculty seeking to structure their classrooms in ways which allow students to practice freedom of inquiry and other democratic values. *Free Speech on Campus* is her guide for faculty in structuring a classroom reflective of the modern social mission of higher education – a classroom which balances concern for equity with the protection of free speech. She urges faculty to attend to the ways in which prior exclusion affects both perceived validity and sense of belonging, and to utilize pedagogy focused on assuring all voices are heard and afforded respect. This intentionality in the development of the classroom is, Ben-Porath argues, essential to both the social and the research missions of higher education: “If pedagogy and other campus practices are not expanded in response to a changing student body, many students will feel and be shut out of participating in learning and other activities, which not only is hurtful but also represents a failure to consider new and important forms of experience and knowledge. The suppression of views that occurs when diverse students are not provided with full access to learning and other benefits that the campus offers not only is a social harm but represents a blind side in the search for knowledge” (2017, 45). If the voices of diverse students are not heard, it deprives the academy of the diversity of knowledge and perspective that drives academic inquiry. And it deprives all members of the academic community of an opportunity to develop and practice the skills necessary for a healthy democracy.

The flexibility of the concept of inclusive freedom holds great potential for both mitigating the effects of Trumpism and encouraging the disposition among graduates to resist Trumpism’s illiberal appeal. By focusing on pedagogy instead of “developing a set of stringent and detailed PC guidelines about what should not be said” (Ben-Porath 2017, 102), this

approach discourages dogmatism and involves all in the practice of democracy. However, in the current political climate, even this non-partisan approach is often broadly politicized. While liberal arts education is designed to support liberal democracy and to build discussion from a set of shared values, contemporary political discourse often leads colleges and universities to downplay (or deny) these fundamental agreements to avoid charges of liberal bias. Once noncontroversial values upon which efficient and equitable functioning of the university depend (equality, inclusivity, even respect for scientific fact) have become politicized in the era of Trumpism. While Socratic pedagogy and robust liberal arts curriculum may help students articulate and practice these shared values, financial constraints have led many universities to focus more on the expansion of professional programs (and learning) than on the development of the liberal arts and meeting the civic mission of higher education. We argue here that Catholic social teaching and the specific resources of religious sponsors such as the Sisters of Mercy and the Jesuits may advantage Catholic universities in lessening the appeal of Trumpism through the practice of inclusive freedom in the classroom. Unlike universities which are not religiously affiliated, Catholic colleges do not have to defend the role of higher education in teaching dispositions and values.

A Catholic Framework for Critical Conversations

The missions that undergird Catholic higher education can be articulated in university life in ways that illustrate shared values and provide justification for particular methods of teaching and learning. As Bernard Prusak argues, Catholic universities' mission statements regularly make the bold claim that they will transform students' hearts and educate the whole person. Our distinctively Catholic resources can help us to make good on the promises of Catholic higher education and achieve the lofty goals we claim for student transformation in our current context.

In this second part of this essay, we show how applying some of the principles of the Catholic social tradition offers a way Catholic universities can ground their commitment to teaching students the habits of mind and character that will inoculate them against Trumpism and contribute to building a more socially just democracy. These principles do not yield easy answers or solutions to complex social issues, but they do teach students the shared values and fundamental agreements necessary for both a robust democracy and liberal arts education. Catholic social teaching's (CST) principles can also serve as criteria by which Catholic universities can decide if particular speech cannot be tolerated as part of university dialogue because it undermines the values that undergird the university. There are, of course, limitations to the power of applying Catholic social teaching in university and other contexts: Not every student will share or be persuaded by these values.

Many scholars provide examples of how applying the Catholic social tradition to the issues of our day is a key facet of Catholic higher education that can contribute to educating students' hearts or character (Kammer 2004; Krier Mich 2008; Brigham 2013; Sullivan and Pagnucco 2014). Scholars have suggested that the Catholic social tradition should be scaffolded throughout curricula, and have provided models and rubrics for assessing such work (Hudson et al. 2018), knowing that the final evaluation is who our students become after graduation – how do they use their education to benefit society, enact justice, and diminish human suffering? Nonetheless, it can be difficult for faculty across the disciplines (especially

those outside of theology and the social sciences) to find ways to integrate the Catholic social tradition into their courses without compromising authentic student learning in the disciplines. Therefore, we focus here on another potential and under-analyzed strategy that can complement explicit attention to applying the Catholic social tradition. Instead of focusing on applying CST principles to social issues, we focus here on the importance of faculty in many disciplines and courses shaping norms for classroom dialogue and choosing course resources informed by the Catholic social tradition – specifically through principles found throughout the corpus of the documentary tradition.³

It has been argued that the distinctively Catholic view of the human person is the bedrock upon which Catholic universities' uniqueness is built (Eifler and Landy 2014). This positive theological anthropology is developed within principles found throughout the Catholic social tradition: human dignity, common good, and option for the poor. These three principles, of course, do not fully define Catholicism's theological anthropology; other principles extend and develop the Catholic tradition's view of the person in community and of our social responsibilities.⁴ These principles can be employed to protect students' dignity and freedom in the classroom, while facilitating the kind of reasoned analysis that will contribute to students' abilities to contribute constructively to political life outside the classroom.

Each of the principles discussed briefly here contains a wide and deep body of literature regarding its history, use in various papal and conciliar documents, Scriptural background, meaning, applications, and manifestation by various Catholic individuals and organizations. Here we sketch the basic contours of the principles, using the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' definitions as well as selected scholarship on the Ignatian and Mercy traditions. Then we suggest some potential ways each principle can inform norms for classroom dialogue as well as faculty's choice of resources and assignments.

Human Dignity

The principle of the life and dignity of the human person is widely understood as the foundation of Catholic social teaching. It includes the belief that because we are created in God's image and likeness, our worth directly reflects God's infinite worth. Our dignity derives from our standing as children of God, not our specific or particular capabilities. Human life deserves society's protection. Our sin does not diminish or eradicate our fundamental worth, which is intrinsic to us. Even if society does not recognize a person's dignity, the person's worth is unchanged. Therefore, even those who are persecuted or excluded on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and other aspects of their identities retain their inviolable worth as children of a loving God.

³ This is not to claim that the principles of CST are the preeminent part of the Catholic tradition. We can also look, for example, to the lived witness of holy women, men, and organizations informed by the Catholic sacramental and moral imaginations, and other dimensions of the tradition.

⁴ Further, this does not imply that the principles of Catholic social teaching represent our only resource. Catholicism's rich symbols – such as the image of the holy family fleeing Egypt (refugees and immigrants), Jesus' crucifixion at the hands of the Roman Empire (death penalty), etc. – can guide our moral imaginations, provide a lens for judgement, and inform a felt sense of right and wrong.

Although the Catholic tradition reflects upon the implications of sin for individuals, communities, and societies, it still insists that reality is intelligible using the faculty of human reason (Farley 2006). We are not so flawed that we cannot communicate. Persons may disagree about the causes of, and remedies to, social injustice, but because the Catholic worldview affirms that reality is intelligible, we can agree upon a set of facts based upon empirical analysis. The human capacity for reason makes possible rigorous debate that can be based upon argumentation, not prejudice. Official Catholic social teaching spells out the implications of human dignity for many social and political issues. *Gaudium et Spes*, for example, affirms, “there is growing awareness of the sublime dignity of human persons, who stand above all things and whose rights and duties are universal and inviolable. They ought, therefore, to have ready access to all that is necessary for living a genuinely human life: for example food, clothing, housing, . . . the right to education, and work” (Paul VI 1965, 26).

How can the principle of human dignity provide a lens into, and articulation of, norms for classroom dialogue? Here is one example from our context at College of Saint Mary (CSM): All CSM faculty are encouraged to post, discuss with students, and adhere to a standard “Open Discourse Policy.” The policy explicitly references the worth of each student’s viewpoints, regardless of the degree to which they conform to the views of the rest of the class. It states, “In the spirit of intellectual inquiry, College of Saint Mary is committed to the exchange of diverse ideas and viewpoints. In this environment, honest discourse is valued; demeaning remarks are not tolerated. Each member of the campus community is encouraged to recognize the basis of her or his own assumptions and perspectives, acknowledge the assumptions and perspectives of others, and promote understanding and respectful dissent.” The principle of human dignity, upon which the policy is based, points to the value of inclusion and the benefits of diverse perspectives and identities. It challenges faculty to establish norms that teach students how to engage in rigorous dialogue that challenges ideas rather than people and their identities.⁵

Some questions students could be encouraged to consider as they ponder how to contribute to classroom dialogue include the following: Does my contribution show that I value the immeasurable worth of every student in this classroom and every human being, regardless of their beliefs and background? Does my contribution manifest my own dignity in speaking to my experience as valuable? The principle also implies that claims must be backed up with evidence, in order to respect the capacity for reason held by every student in the class.

For faculty, the principle may also lead to policies and practices that demonstrate to students that their worth persists regardless of viewpoint, and that their dignity should lead them to provide, to the best of their abilities, complete warrants for their claims. Faculty can affirm the importance of disagreement (with the faculty member and with other students) because disagreement can demonstrate respect for another person’s position—that the position is worthy of careful consideration, and the person capable of rational dialogue and

⁵ Applying the policy, or any of the principles discussed here, requires skills that can be developed through ongoing faculty training, which is beyond the purview of the present essay. The student body presidents of Jesuit universities recognize this in their public recommendations for bolstering inclusion and diminishing hate on campuses. One recommendation is to “provide mandatory diversity and inclusion competency training for student groups and organizations, faculty, and staff” (Jesuit Student Government Alliance 2019).

defense of an opposing position. The liberal arts skill of critical thinking complements these commitments because it teaches students that not all positions are equally valid and that facts must be marshalled to support claims.

Another, related way that a faculty member in any discipline can apply the principle of human dignity to teaching and learning is in the faculty's choice of assigned resources for students to study (including how to critique and contextualize each resource). Classic texts that celebrate human resilience and worth, as well as those that disclose humanity's historic and current depravity and failure to protect human dignity, and those that examine various perspectives and diverse viewpoints, would contribute to students' appreciation for human dignity in any academic discipline (Buckley 1999). As Margaret Farley writes, "higher education is surely that realm of society where primary challenges to failures and distortions of thought ought to be taken seriously" (2006, 6).

Common Good

The Catholic principle of the common good complements and extends its positive anthropology. The principle of the common good affirms that human beings are inevitably social, and require communities and society to protect and uplift each individual's intrinsic worth. The individual can only be as healthy as the community in which she lives. As *Gaudium et Spes* states, "The fact that human beings are social by nature indicates that the betterment of the person and the improvement of society depend on each other . . . humanity by its very nature stands completely in need of life in society" (Paul VI 1965, 25). Therefore, the individual and her surrounding community should not be pitted against one another; rather, we must attend to the wellbeing (or good) of both.

How can the principle of the common good be applied to teaching and learning? It is incumbent upon faculty to create a community in a classroom where the goals of learning are not solely individual or built upon the reward system of individual grades. Though individuals' contributions are essential to their learning, helping students to see themselves as part of an ongoing conversation in a community, where everyone can contribute to the shared project of learning, demands development of humility – in which those who find the material easy to understand can assist those who do not. Such a community of learning could go a long way towards helping students appreciate that the goals of education include not only personal benefits but also social benefits.

Course resources and assignments can easily raise questions about the common good and provide an imaginative vision for what the good looks like in various contexts. In his address at Santa Clara, Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., encouraged Jesuit universities to be marked not only by what students know and can do. He wrote, "The real measure of our Jesuit universities lies in who our students become" (2000, 10). Dean Brackley, S.J., (2004) develops this notion by challenging faculty to consider what kind of society they are preparing students to create and recreate, and if they are providing the necessary tools for students and graduates to do justice. For students, the creation of such a society may involve downward mobility. Jon Cortina, S.J., claimed that a graduate of a Jesuit university should seek to be a "liberation whatever," i.e., that every discipline can be populated by students who understand that their role is to contribute to liberation in society through their university education. Contributing to human liberation is not confined to those in the social sciences, theology, and philosophy:

Catholic universities can graduate liberation accountants, health professionals, and others who see that their particular expertise can contribute to reweaving and shaping the common good.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

The third principle we want to address is the option for the poor and vulnerable. As we have seen in the discussion of the common good, the health and suffering of individuals and their communities affect one another. The U.S. Catholic Bishops write in *Economic Justice for All* that “the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community” (1986, 88). With a rich tradition in the Hebrew scriptures, the life of Jesus, and Christian history, the Catholic tradition underscores the responsibility – or “option” – for the poor and vulnerable in contemporary life. Highlighted particularly by Latin American liberation theologians and then extended by feminist, womanist, *mujerista*, disability, and other theologians, this principle focuses on the obligations that both individuals and societies hold toward those who are most vulnerable, particularly the economically poor.

We focus here solely on the epistemological dimension of the option for the poor, which includes, insofar as it is possible, evaluating situations, events, and history from the perspectives of those who have suffered most and those whose stories have been overshadowed. Attaining a more balanced analysis of issues requires magnifying our attention to the perspectives of those whose agency has historically and/or presently been silenced or muted.

Option for the poor presupposes that some groups and individuals possess more power historically and presently in the canon and in the classroom. In facilitating course dialogue, the option for the poor implies that fairness does not demand providing equal time for all perspectives. More time and analysis should be given to the perceptions and experiences of those who are historically and presently undervalued and marginalized. Faculty can elevate and amplify these voices while respecting the fact that those who are numerical minorities or otherwise marginalized have no obligation to represent and speak for their group. As faculty wrote in a journal of the American Association of University Professors, “Some would ask professors to assign both sides equal validity in the service of neutrality. However, that approach *does* take sides; it privileges a narrowly defined version of civility over compassion or empathy for those with something significant to lose” (Schwartz and Ritter 2019). Moreover, empirical studies attest to the increased learning that can occur for all groups when a diversity of voices are included (Garibay 2014, 5). Creating a classroom where historically disadvantaged and underrepresented groups such as first-generation students, economically poor students, students of color, and non-Catholic students feel comfortable to participate requires great skill.

In choice of resources, too, faculty can practice the option for the poor. We provide an example from the discipline of Theology, the canon for which has historically been dominated by white European men. One of many ways to apply the option for the poor to a choice of course resources involves analyzing authorship. CSM’s Theology program assesses our goal that 25 percent of every course’s required resources are either authored by or focus on women’s perspectives – with the same percentage for resources either authored by or focusing on the perspectives of people of color. In light of the analysis provided in this paper, we believe we should work to increase these percentages, because the extent to which we include various voices teaches students about the relative value we place on them. Requiring that our

courses include a greater percentage of authorship by women and people of color would illustrate to students that women and people of color belong as equals in theological discourse. One of the challenges in increasing such authorship is that, of course, there is limited time in any particular course, and adding new texts involves not assigning other texts traditionally considered to be within the canon. However, any canon is necessarily incomplete and necessitates difficult choices. As university demographics change, the canon too must change to give voice to contemporary scholars' expertise.

Ignatian and Mercy Charisms

Thus far, we have attended to principles that can be applied to teaching and learning at any Catholic university. The particular charism of the university's founding order, too, can flavor particular pedagogical approaches and ways of articulating these values. While a charism cannot be claimed as the exclusive domain of a particular religious community, and much overlap exists, ". . . charisms are stabilizing forces for religious congregations. They define and shape each congregation's mission, and they focus the mission on activities that become institutionalized in ministries." Retrieval of a charism in light of the signs of the times can also "effect . . . renewal and change" (Sanders 2010, 6). A specific charism can provide rich context for our work by offering language, a vivid imaginative vision, and appreciation of our longstanding commitments to particular values.

Those committed to Jesuit higher education in the United States (with 27 universities) and internationally have provided a great deal of leadership in articulating distinctively Ignatian pedagogies, including an Ignatian vision for student development and moral transformation. We cannot attend to this extensive body of literature here, but we can briefly introduce the main contours. For those teaching in the Ignatian tradition, the following are several values and principles, congruent with Jesuit mission, that could be instructive for establishing norms for classroom discourse that honor the dignity and freedom of all students. *Cura personalis*, care for the whole person, is an oft-cited principle in Jesuit higher education. Michael P. Murphy claims that Jesuit universities possess particular resources to teach dialogue in our time because "the art of conversation was so dear to St. Ignatius that reference to its mystery, complexity, and charismatic quality appear in many of his personal correspondences and undergird his Spiritual Exercises" (2017, 3). For Murphy, *cura personalis* can become *cura civitatis* if students learn at Jesuit universities how to engage in respectful civic dialogue.

Thomas Curran, S.J., elaborates on the implications of St. Ignatius' attention to the art of conversation: When Ignatius dispatched three Jesuits to the extraordinarily contentious Council of Trent in 1546, he highlighted five principles for them to practice: "be slow to speak; listen attentively; seek the truth in what the others are saying; correct misstatements humbly and gently; and allow the conversation the time it needs" (2017, 9). Grounding in this instruction could provide a firm basis for contemporary conversation in university classrooms. Other principles Jesuit universities integrate into teaching include *Magis*, *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*, Men and Women For and With Others, Finding God in All Things, Faith That Does Justice, and Unity of Mind and Heart. Much more development of these principles can be found in St Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* and other reflections by those who carry forth the Ignatian tradition in Jesuit universities (McQuillan et al. 2018).

The Mercy tradition's pedagogical implications have not been developed as fully as have those of the Ignatian tradition. We therefore draw upon selected scholarship as well as our content analysis of the Mission, Vision, and Values statements of the 17 Mercy universities in the United States, as well as reflections on the Mercy charism, to see how the Mercy charism influences the interpretation and application of the principles. Venerable Catherine McAuley referred to human dignity in describing compassion as a way to teach. She wrote, "Mercy, the principal path pointed out by Jesus Christ to those who are desirous of following Him, has in all ages of the Church excited the faithful . . . to instruct and comfort [others], as in them they regarded the person of our divine Master" (quoted in Sullivan 1995, 297). Compassion towards students and the rest of society constitutes a primary value that can be applied to teaching. The virtue of compassion, as a way of affirming human dignity, can inform how we teach, but does not imply lowering grading or other standards. According to the Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy, "We witness to Mercy when we reverence the dignity of each person." The Mission, Vision, and Values statements of 10 of the 17 Mercy universities refer to the dignity of the person in terms of the transformation students experience as a result of their university education.

Mercy higher education is understood to be transformational in two senses: The first sense refers to students' perceptions of themselves. Many are first-generation college students and do not necessarily arrive at universities with the self-understanding that they can be successful and influence society. Promotion of the students' human dignity requires teaching them that they can be influential agents in society. The second transformation occurs in each student's actual ability to encourage and enact social change towards justice, which matches the responsibilities of students to the common good (Muldoon 2014). These two dimensions of transformation (bringing together human dignity and common good) are expressed in Catherine McAuley's famous dictum: "No work of charity can be more productive of good to society than the careful education of women . . . since their example and advice will always possess influence . . ." (quoted in Sullivan 2006, 21).

Catherine McAuley placed a high premium on the instructor's person as a factor that could facilitate the common good in the classroom. In her Rule, Catherine McAuley quotes Saint Ignatius on the instructor's example as a key to facilitating learning. Catherine McAuley highlighted the importance of the instructor's demeanor, words and faith. According to Sr. Mary Sullivan, the preeminent historian of Catherine McAuley, "The challenge these words [regarding the instructor as exemplar] present to Mercy educators may not have fully dawned upon us. We are to *be* and *do* what we *teach*. If we wish to teach mercifulness, we must speak and act mercifully towards others" (2006, 23). The Mission, Vision, and Values statements of 12 of the 17 Mercy universities express a goal of students transforming society in ways that effect the common good.

Catherine McAuley exemplified the option for the poor before this theme was articulated as a major tenet of Catholic social thought. Her main concern was the education of those who were materially poor, particularly women and girls who suffered greatly during her lifetime in Ireland. As we have seen above, this value can be applied to the way faculty structure classroom dialogue and to their choice of resources. In her discussion paper on characteristics of universities sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, Maryanne Stevens, R.S.M., refers to this value in the following way: "through action and education, promotion of compassion and

justice towards those with less, especially women and children” (2004, 4). In the Mission, Vision, and Values statements of Mercy universities, the option for the poor refers mainly to the work of graduates who engage in service and effect social justice (14 universities) rather than to the students the university recruits for admission (1 university). Though we know that many Mercy universities focus on attracting first-generation and other students who would be considered to be marginalized, this is only articulated in 1 mission statement. However, 6 universities refer to “hospitality” as a primary value, and link it with diversity and inclusion of those groups to whom universities have not traditionally been hospitable.

The Catholic social tradition and the Ignatian and Mercy charisms provide a rich trove of resources to apply to classroom teaching in our challenging time. These resources provide a strong foundation for our work of protecting students’ dignity and freedom in the classroom by offering language, imaginative vision, and appreciation of our longstanding commitments to particular values. In tandem with strong liberal arts curriculum and pedagogy, mining these resources for crafting classroom norms and choice of assigned resources can contribute to educating students for inclusive freedom and full participation in diverse democracy.

Bibliography

- Ben-Porath, Sigal R. 2017. *Free Speech on Campus*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Berhent, Michael. C. 2019. “A Tale of Two Arguments About Free Speech on Campus.” *Academe* (Winter). <https://www.aaup.org/article/tale-two-arguments-about-free-speech-campus#.Xr75XW5Fw2x>.
- Brackley, Dean. 2004. *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola*. New York: Crossroad.
- Brigham, Erin M. 2013. *See, Judge, Act: Catholic Social Teaching and Service Learning*. Winona: Anselm Academic.
- Buckley, Michael. 1999. *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom*. Georgetown: Georgetown University Press.
- Chemersinsky, Erwin and Howard Gillman. 2017. *Free Speech on Campus*. New Haven, Yale University Press.
- Cortina, Jon, S.J. No date. “Video, “El Salvador: Healing the Wounds of War.” Magis Productions. <http://www.magisproductions.org/video-1>.
- Curran, Thomas. 2017. “Difficult Conversations . . . One Bite at a Time,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 51: 8–9.
- Eifler, Karen E., and Thomas M. Landy, eds. 2014. *Becoming Beholders: Cultivating Sacramental Imagination And Actions In College Classrooms*. Collegeville: Liturgical.
- Farley, Margaret. 2006. “Wisdom, Dignity and Justice: Higher Education as a Work of Mercy.” Conference for Mery Higher Education, Gwynedd-Mercy College, June 15. https://dpk.3b7.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/wdj_farley.pdf.

- Garibay, Juan C. 2014. "Diversity in the Classroom." UCLA Diversity and Faculty Development. <https://equity.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/DiversityintheClassroom2014Web.pdf>.
- Greenberg, David. 2016. "An Intellectual History of Trumpism." *Politico* (December 11). <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/12/trumpism-intellectual-history-populism-paleoconservatives-214518>.
- Hudson, Tara, Heather Mack, Jennifer Reed-Bouley, and Margarita Rose. 2018. "Assessing Student Learning about the Catholic Social Tradition: A Validated Rubric." *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* 37, 1: 127–50.
- Hussar, William J., and Tabitha M. Bailey. 2019. *Projections of Education Statistics to 2027 (NCES 2019-001)*. U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC, National Center for Education Statistics.
- Jesuit Student Government Alliance. 2019. "Statement Regarding Hate Crimes and Bias-Related Incidents," (March 14). <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55d1dd88e4b0dee65a6594f0/t/5c8bde5c8165f5e77c26706b/1552670300336/3.14+FINAL+Official+Statement+percent281+percent29.pdf>.
- Kammer, Fred. 2004. *Doing Faithjustice: An Introduction to Catholic Social Thought*. New York:Paulist.
- Kolvenbach, Peter-Hans. 2000. "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education." *Santa Clara Lectures* 7/1 (October 6).
- Krier Mich, Marvin L. 2008. *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements*. Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications.
- Lawrence, Fredrick. 2017. "The Contours of Free Expression on Campus: Free Speech, Academic Freedom and Civility." *Liberal Education* 103, 1: 14–21. <https://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/2017/spring/lawrence>.
- Lieberman, Robert, Suzanne Mettler, Thomas B. Pepinsky, Kenneth M. Roberts, and Richard Valelly. 2017. "Trumpism and American Democracy: History, Comparison, and the Predicament of Liberal Democracy in the United States," (August 29). <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3028990>.
- Mattson, Kristin, and Jennifer Reed-Bouley. 2017. "Religion and Politics: Educating for Engagement." *Religion and Politics*, edited by Ronald A. Simkins and Zachary Smith, 181–99. *Journal of Religion & Society Supplement* 14. <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/toc/SS14.html>.
- McQuillan, Patrick, Michael J. James, and Timothy P. Muldoon. 2018. "A Vision for Catholic Higher Education in the 21st Century: Reflecting on the Boston College Roundtable." *Journal of Catholic Education* 21, 2: 107–32.
- Montas, Roosevelt. 2017. "Democracy's Disappearance: Our students don't understand what it is, so how will they defend it?" *Chronicle of Higher Education*. 64, 6. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Democracy-s-Disappearance/241303>.

- Montenero, Dominico. 2016. "How the Browning of America is Upending Both Political Parties." *National Public Radio* (October 12). <https://www.npr.org/2016/10/12/497529936/how-the-browning-of-america-is-upending-both-political-parties>.
- Muldoon, Timothy. 2014. "The Theology of the Mercy University," (October 1). <https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.138/dpk.3b7.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Theology-of-the-Mercy-University-Tim-Muldoon.pdf>.
- Murphy Michael P. 2017. "A Spirituality of Citizenship: Cultivating the Ignatian Charism of Dialogue." *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 51: 2–7.
- National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. 2012. "A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future." Association of American Colleges and Universities. <https://www.aacu.org/crucible>.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. 2010. *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs The Humanities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Paul VI, Pope. 1965. *Gaudium et Spes*. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.
- PEN America. 2019. "Chasm in the Classroom: Campus Free Speech in a Divided America." <https://pen.org/chasm-in-the-classroom-campus-free-speech-in-a-divided-america>.
- Prusak, Bernard. 2018. "Catholic Higher Education as Transformation: With What Warrant? Toward What Ends? By What Means?" *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* 37, 2: 175–93.
- Sanders, Susan M. 2010. "Charisms, Congregational Sponsors, and Catholic Higher Education." *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* 29, 1: 3–18.
- Schwartz, Lara, and Daniel Ritter. 2019. "Civil Discourse in the Classroom: Simple Approaches to Tough Conversations." *Academe*. (Winter). https://www.aaup.org/article/civil-discourse-classroom#.X_eCHi1h00p.
- Schifino, Linda. 2011. "For a Just and Merciful World: Bringing Mercy to Light in the Teaching of Social Movements." *Carlow Proceedings*, 31–37.
- Stevens, Maryanne. 2004. "Mercy Higher Education: Culture and Characteristics." Discussion Paper for Conference for Mercy Higher Education, December 2004.
- Strauss, Valerie. 2019. "Colleges and universities can do more to protect students and faculty against hate crimes. Here are some ideas." *Washington Post* (April 16). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/08/16/colleges-universities-can-do-more-protect-students-faculty-against-hate-crimes-here-are-some-ideas>.
- Strossen, Nadine. 2018. *Hate: Why We Should Resist it with Free Speech, Not Censorship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Strunk, Kamden. 2018. "Free Speech for Some, Civility for Others." *Inside Higher Ed* (September 21). <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2018/09/21/colleges-and-politicians-promote-free-speech-some-insist-civility-others-opinion>.

- Sullivan, Mary. 1995. *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- . 2006. “Catherine McAuley and the Characteristics of Mercy Higher Education.” *MAST Journal* 16, 2: 18–26.
- Sullivan, Susan Crawford, and Ron Pagnucco, eds. 2014. *A Vision of Justice: Engaging Catholic Social Teaching on the College Campus*. Collegeville: Liturgical.
- Tabachnick, David Edward. 2016. “The Four Characteristics of Trumpism.” *The Hill* (January 5). <https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/presidential-campaign/264746-the-four-characteristics-of-trumpism>.
- Tsai, Robert L., and Calvin Turbeek. 2018. “Trumpism Before Trump.” *Boston Review* (June 11). <http://bostonreview.net/politics/robert-tsai-calvin-terbeek-trumpism-trump>.
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). No date. “Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching.” <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching>.
- . 1986. *Economic Justice for All*. https://www.usccb.org/upload/economic_justice_for_all.pdf.
- Viteritti, Joseph P. 2019. “How Trump Changed the Way I Teach.” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (September 22). <https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-trump-changed-the-way-i-teach>.