

Incorporating Jesuit Values into a First Year Seminar on Markets and Morality

Rachael Behr LaRose, Ph.D.

Mentor: Marcie Lensges, Ph.D.

In the pursuit of Jesuit education that nurtures the mind, body, and spirit, my Ignatian Mentor Program project incorporated Jesuit educational values into a First Year Seminar I designed, titled “Markets and Morality”. This course set out to explore the ethical implications of capitalism, and it had three main units of study: the first explored markets as corruptive of our morals, reading from thinkers like Aristotle, Rousseau, and Marx. The second unit explored the idea that markets are merely tools, to be used by actors for good or ill, reading selections from scholars like Adam Smith and Bernard Mandeville. The final unit explored markets as morally enriching, and we read from scholars such as Montesquieu, Virgil Storr and Ginny Choi, and Deirdre McCloskey.

Central to my course design was the integration of Jesuit values, providing a framework for students to navigate the complexities of moral decision-making in a market-driven society. *Cura Personalis* guided our approach, emphasizing the importance of caring for the whole self and fostering a classroom environment where each student felt seen, heard, and valued. Through daily reflections, unit discussions, and research projects, students were encouraged to consider the diverse perspectives present in our readings and engage in dialogue that honored the inherent dignity of every individual. This also encouraged the Jesuit value of reflection, where students had multiple opportunities, both in writing and in discussion, to reflect on our studies and readings.

Cura Personalis extended beyond my students, however, as we explored ethical dilemmas such as people who buy and sell organs on the black market, people who provide surrogacy services, and people who are involved in sex markets. Students were encouraged to treat people in our case studies with respect and dignity while they attempted to grapple with potentially unethical market actions. While discussions often touched upon contentious and difficult topics, students approached each subject with maturity, in large part because we rooted our discussions in the inherent worth and dignity of all people.

Discernment played a pivotal role in guiding students through the ethical dilemmas posed by our study of markets and morality. By cultivating weekly practices of reflection and consultation with peers, students were challenged to discern the greater good and consider the consequences of market systems on both personal and societal levels. This process invited students to move beyond simplistic dichotomies of right and wrong, embracing the nuances of moral decision-making in market systems.

The concept of *Magis* served as a call to excellence, challenging students to exceed expectations in coursework and to engage in our discussions with empathy and accountability. Through rigorous academic inquiry, students were inspired to embody the Ignatian ideal of being men and

women for others, actively promoting solidarity and kinship, despite the fact they may have disagreed on certain subjects in discussion. Students learned together that through careful reflection, deliberation, and discussion, we can have stimulating conversation, even if there is disagreement.

In conclusion, my First Year Seminar on markets and morality provided students with a transformative educational experience that deepened their understanding of ethical decision-making in a complex world. Looking ahead, I am committed to refining the course structure and assignments to further enhance student engagement and facilitate deeper integration of Jesuit values into our exploration of markets and morality. In particular, I hope to provide more structured and guided reflection processes, through which students can improve their ability to reflect on course material in more meaningful ways. Moreover, I plan to introduce additional literature from Jesuit scholars. I included brief readings on Jesuits and usury, but this only scratches the surface of what Jesuits may think about markets and morality. I look forward to teaching this course in future semesters and embarking on this journey once again with a new set of students.