

Interdisciplinary Service-Learning Among Economics, Political Science, and Theology Courses: A Panel Presentation

by Jaime Acevedo, John Paul Bolano, Miguel Rivera, Rachel Sanchez, Joselito Sescon and Philip Tuano

1. Introduction

The Ateneo de Manila University is located in the Philippines, a country beset by many socio-economic challenges that negatively affect Filipinos belonging to vulnerable and underrepresented sectors. At the same time, the university's main thrust is to form “men and women for others.” Ateneo educators are therefore challenged to promote service and civic responsibility through their courses, especially through service-learning, which is understood as “a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified needs of a social development entity or cultural institution and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.” (Faculty Manual, 2013)

Theology 141 (Theology of a Catholic Social Vision), Political Science 100 (Politics and Governance), and Economics 177 (Theory and Practice of Social Development) are simultaneously offered in for senior Economics majors. Educators of these three courses have sought an interdisciplinary approach to service-learning to maximize students’ community output while also meeting their respective learning outcomes more meaningfully. This facilitated increased relevance of the courses, especially after students have realized their potential to help poorer Filipinos through academic work that provided service.

Service learning’, which allows students to interact with marginalized communities in order to enhance their learning experience, as a pedagogy of learning has been taking root in many tertiary education institutions in developed and developing countries. The proposed panel presentation reviews the experience of a multidisciplinary set of courses from the Economics, Political Science and Theology at the Ateneo de Manila University, a liberal arts college in Metro Manila, Philippines, in undertaking the methodology to assist marginalized groups. This has led to the increased relevance of the course, especially after students have realized their potential to help the welfare of poorer Filipinos, and satisfaction that the papers written for the subject had provided service to their communities. Some issues in implementing service learning, including coordination in course topics, the implementation of common assessment and testing tools, and strengthening opportunities for student reflection on their experiences, are also presented in this panel presentation.

2. Theoretical Framework

Service-learning entails students' engagement in community service and learning from this engagement, in a manner that benefits both the community and the student through learning outcomes that respond to real community needs to be facilitated by a process with three parts: classroom preparation, service activity, and structured reflection (K. McGoldrick, 1998; K. and A. Z. McGoldrick, 2002, 2008).

The courses designed by the teachers seek to ensure that academic credit is given for learning and application of learning without compromising rigor, that learning outcomes are clearly articulated, that partner communities are selected based on needs that match learning outcomes, that effective learning strategies are employed, that students learn from the community, that classroom learning and community learning are integrated, that teachers function as facilitators and guides in the process of learning, that there is flexibility to respond to variations, and values formation in civic responsibility is maximized (Updated from J. Howard, 1993.)

According to Falk, Durlington and Lankford, there is less literature focused on interdisciplinary collaboration in service-learning, and thus greater efforts should be undertaken in order to document and theorize such initiatives. According to the study, interdisciplinary service learning can be defined as, "two or more faculty representing two or more disciplines engaging in service-learning activities in the community with their students." The primary benefits of such collaboration, above and beyond the typical benefits of service-learning, are to more substantially approach the complexity of the real-world problems that service-learning aims to address and to model interdisciplinary collaboration for students. Such collaborative efforts may also lead to collaborative teaching and/or research that would ensure that the problems of partners communities are examined in a broader manner (Falk, Durlington, & Lankford, 2012, pp. 31–43).

The particular methodological framework used in the tie-up to integrated all the disciplines involved is the Pastoral Cycle which also ensures hermeneutical reciprocity between theory and praxis through the following phases: an experience of poverty, social analysis, theological reflection, and action (Tejido & Acevedo, 2007, pp. 86–90).

3. Methods/analysis

The collaboration among the three subjects developed over time through several iterations rather than as a result of a strategic long-term plan. At first, Theology 141 only sent students on immersion with a possibility of doing a project at the end of the courses according to the Pastoral Cycle, while Economics 177 sent the same batch of students on separate fieldwork. In the school year of 2001 to 2002, the two courses entered into a partnership wherein students' immersion areas became students' field work as well. Later on, more courses became involved in collaboration, such as Political Science.

Each course and its contribution to the integrated service-learning effort is to be described by a presenter coming from his or her respective discipline during the panel presentation. Theology 141 “is a systematic study of social commitment from a theological perspective. The course begins with an exposition of the Church as the Church of the poor and the pastoral cycle as a method of theologizing. It then focuses on a social and cultural analysis of the Philippine situation in the light of PCP II. The main content of the course is the theology of the Catholic social vision in its doctrinal basis, sacramental celebration, and biblical foundations declared in the papal social teachings and the pastoral letters of the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines (CBCP). In view of the various emphases in treating the Catholic social vision, responses to Philippine problems are related to business, science and technology, ecology and gender, politics and governance—in accordance with the students’ areas of concern and interest. The whole course is envisioned to deepen a “spirituality of social transformation” founded on a faith committed to social justice and liberation in the Philippines today.” (“Th 141,” n.d.)

Economics 177 “aims to acquaint senior year management economics students in the context of poverty and social development work in the Philippines. As the notion of development goes beyond economics, non-economic concepts and methodologies [are dealt with] in the course, although lectures and workshops will highlight the use of economic analysis and assessment. The course [is] oriented towards the application of the theories and tools learned in class through individual and group assignments and exercises; the highlight of the course [is] the writing of a group paper that aims to address specific community needs, such as the development of a socio-economic profile, feasibility design of a project, or the assessment of an existing project. (Economics 177 Course Description, Economics Department Course Syllabus)

Political Science 100 “introduces the persons, structures, and processes involved in the operation of the political system. Topics include basic political concepts, institutions of government, and the complex relationship between the citizenry and the state. Focus is on the Philippine context and contemporary issues.” (Loyola Schools Undergraduate Bulletin of Information, 2017, p. 436). The course begins by introducing the different notions of politics, power, and democratization to enable students to analyze the different institutional dynamics of partner communities. Particularly by analyzing the deliberative mechanisms and constitutions of these communities, the course aims to develop forms of action that integrate the expertise of students and the capacity of the communities to self-determination and political subjectivization.

The focal requirement of the different courses is the service learning project. In the project, students are required to undertake different types of activities that would benefit a partner community and, at the same time, practice the skills that were introduced to them during the lecture sessions. These projects may include developing a socio-economic profile of the community that could serve as the basis for future project interventions, a design of an anti-poverty project, an assessment of the impact of existing projects or of the effectiveness of existing organizations. The projects also provide the students the opportunity to reflect on the ethics of the immersion and exposure with poor communities and also in analyzing the political situation of the different partner communities.

The partner communities are chosen by the staff members of the Office for Social Concern and Involvement (OSCI), the university office in charge of college extension and service work. The OSCI investigates the suitability of the communities for project work and to ensure the safety and security of students during their stay. Since 2001, the communities have ranged from indigenous peoples communities in Tarlac and Mindoro provinces to fisherfolk areas in Bataan, Laguna and Batangas to farmers groups to urban poor groups in Metro Manila. These are also the same areas from the pool that OSCI provides to Theology faculty members for the immersion programs of their students. OSCI staff members assist students in making initial contact between the students and the communities and undertake sessions to clinic problems between students and partner communities.

In the second week of the course, students are asked to form groups of six to ten members for their service learning project. Before actually undertaking their project, groups are provided a short orientation by the OSCI, regarding the communities where they will undertake their service orientation. They also start discussing the types of service learning projects that would be undertaken in the community. One or two weeks after their immersion or initial contact with the communities, students meet with their Economics, Theology and Political Science faculty members and the OSCI staff in order to start drawing up plans for their service learning project.

The actual service learning project takes place in the middle of the semester when students undertake several trips to their partner community to implement their projects. Students undertake several methodologies in finalizing their project – including survey, focus group discussion and key informant interview techniques. Meetings with the leaders of the people's organization in the partner communities are also undertaken. Some groups also meet with the local government unit (LGU) and national government offices in order to better understand the context of development projects in the area. Students are required to submit to their teachers and the OSCI staff an accomplishment report of the activities undertaken in their areas.

The highlight of the service learning project is a presentation to the communities with regards to their findings. Students are asked to submit the initial results of their project a week before the presentation so that community representatives have time to review their paper. The student presentations may also be prepared in the vernacular (student groups are informed in advance, usually during their orientation, on the language to be used for both their written and oral presentations).

The presentations can be undertaken on the university campus or in the community itself. In the case of the former, a representative of the community is asked to be present; his or her costs are usually borne by the student group. If in the latter, students bear the transportation expenses going to the community. The faculty members and the OSCI staff are also present.

Community representatives and the OSCI staff are provided opportunities to ask questions regarding the paper; they are also requested to provide suggestions for the groups to improve their paper. At the end of the presentation, they are also requested to give marks to the student

groups, which is included in the final grade given to the students. Groups also submit a final draft of their service learning project. This is submitted during the final week of the academic term and should incorporate the suggestions made during the community presentation.

After the term, some student groups undertake follow-up activities on their service learning project. In a few cases, students undertake fundraising activities to support part of the activities that they have proposed to the communities, or if the implementation of proposed projects is started during the semester, monitoring of the project can be undertaken.

4. Exposition

Economics

The main objective of the course is to enhance students' knowledge in utilizing economics for the service of others through the application of tools of analysis in understanding poverty and marginalized communities including program and project designs, feasibility studies, community economic profiles, program/project evaluation assessments, and formulation of community social enterprises, among others.

The expected learning outcome is for Ateneo senior year management economic students would be able to analyze the social development issues and problems in the country through the lens of different approaches and methodologies in the assessment. They would also be able to use economic and social tools of analysis to effectively engage marginalized communities. The following are specific learning outcomes ideal by the end of the course, students would have had:

- Internalized and grasped the use of the sustainable livelihood approach (SLA) as a broad framework in the analysis and understanding of communities.
- Gained economic intuition in modeling behavioral analysis of economic incentives, interests, and strategies of community institutions, groups, households and individual members in relation to socio-economic welfare outcomes.
- Utilized tools for project development and assessment and apply these tools to assist in the socio-economic amelioration of specific communities.

The development of the Economics 177 can be rooted in the Filipinization movement of the Ateneo de Manila University in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This movement was named after the attempt by Filipino faculty and students to localize positions, then dominated by American Jesuits, in the university and to develop course content that better reflect Philippine society and respond to national problems during the socially turbulent decade. Changes in the curriculum were undertaken starting in the early to mid-1970s, including the creation of a Filipino Department in 1974 and the development of new courses such as Theology of Liberation. Extension offices were created to assist faculty and students in their involvement with poor communities and programs were created to link students in poor areas.

According to Evangelista (2006), Economics 177 was first taught in the 1975-76 school year as an attempt to provide academic credit to students who were undertaking immersion programs in marginalized communities in Metro Manila and Central Luzon. The course focused on deepening the social analysis skills of students as a foundation for a deeper understanding of the roots of the problems in their assigned communities. While a Jesuit priest who also was a professor of Economics, Fr. Noel Vasquez, initiated the development of the course, by the early 1980s, course tutors were recruited from the Center for Community Services, the university extension office set up to organize workers, farmers, and other poor communities during that period.

In the 1984- 1985 school year, upon the urging of several economic majors who reviewed the department subjects for their social relevance, the course was integrated into the curriculum as a required subject for students taking up A. B. Economics. The objective of the course was to provide economics students a course that would help them in gathering data for their senior year thesis.

The course throughout the 1980s not only focused on social analysis but also on the discussion on the specific situation of the socio-economic sectors and on how economic theory could be applicable in solving their problems. As most of the students did not undergo any exposure trip with the poor, sectoral leaders were invited to speak on their situation in class. By the 1990s, the course focused on familiarizing students with different types of social development projects and policies, and the techniques in developing, implementing and evaluating these. Around this time, an exposure requirement was integrated where students were required to undertake several trips to poor communities to assess the effectiveness of development interventions.

There have been several changes in the subject in the past twenty years. These include the following:

- In the 1999- 2000 school year, after a university-wide review, management (business) economics majors were also required to take the course; the objective of this action is to also strengthen the social awareness and involvement of students taking up the course.
- in the 2001- 2002 school year, the course was twinned with a required senior year theology course for economics and management economics majors; this meant that the exposure for both the theology and economics subjects were integrated, which paved the way for joint presentations in for the output in both classes; because of this, students were reported to have appreciated the fact that students had to undertake the same trips to fulfill the community requirements of both subjects;
- in the 2008- 2009 school year, after discussions with the School of Management, the community requirement for a business entrepreneurship class was also integrated; management economics majors then had an option to undertake their service work in three subjects (theology, economics, management) at the same time;
- In 2006, the course content was standardized following discussions by the members of the Economics Department, particularly its Undergraduate Committee; this was undertaken after several students have noted that some of the topics in the class overlapped with another course in development; a thorough revision was undertaken in order to highlight the applied nature of the course.

Currently, there are six modules that are covered in the course. **Table 1** below provides a brief overview of the different course topics taught in class, including the title of the module. Specific concepts are taught in each module and these are interspersed with skills that students can utilize in their service learning project.

Table 1. Course Modules and the Objectives, Knowledge, and Skills Taught In Each Module

<i>Module</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Knowledge (Concept)</i>	<i>Skill (Tool)</i>
Poverty Concepts	Introduce basic concepts of poverty to students	Different conceptual definitions of poverty	(Community integration tips)
Poverty Measurement	Provide an overview of different tools and methods to gather data on poverty	A framework to analyze community problems (Sustainable Livelihoods Framework)	Development and implementation of qualitative and quantitative data-gathering tools
Poverty Analysis (Causes and Effects)	Allow students to analyze the root causes of poverty in a community	Different macro, micro causes of poverty; pathways out of poverty; latest readings on Philippine poverty	Problem Tree Analysis; Objective Tree Analysis
Anti-Poverty Interventions	Review major public anti-poverty interventions	Overview of major anti-poverty interventions	Intervention selection criteria, Project log frame
Anti-Poverty Institutions	Assess the strengths and weaknesses of different institutions in anti-poverty	Overview of roles of different public and private institutions (national, local govt; NGO, Church)	Institutional analysis
Project Analysis and Assessment	Provide tools for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions		Cost-benefit/ cost-effectiveness analysis, Project M& E, Impact assessment (econometric analysis)

The first three modules introduce the problem of poverty and underdevelopment and deepen their understanding of how to measure and of what are the causes and effects of these problems. Students are taught to how to examine poverty in a multi-dimensional way, not relying on traditional quantitative definitions but also on qualitative descriptions which economists are not

that familiar with. The second module covers various data-gathering methods are also taught among students; these data-gathering methods are critical in their service learning project below as a starting point to gauge the initial situation in their partner communities. The third modules examine the distinguishing economic and social features of poverty in the Philippines and helps students to pinpoint the causes of social marginalization and economic marginalization in the country.

A feature of the course is the discussion of various tools applicable for community analysis, which is integrated with the lectures above. Students are asked to fill up worksheets on developing a framework for data-gathering in the community and computing for various quantitative indices of poverty. Students also undertake workshops that are designed to harness their skills in facilitating discussions to elicit the different dimensions of poverty in the community and to pinpoint the roots of community problems and possible solutions that can be undertaken to solve the community problem.

The last three modules of the course deepen students' knowledge of the different anti-poverty programs that could be undertaken to solve the poverty-related problems in the community. The features of different major anti-poverty programs are discussed, including those related to asset redistribution (including land and aquatic resources), social protection and microfinance and livelihood programs. A discussion of the institutions (national government, local government, non-government organization, people's organizations, cooperatives) is undertaken and the advantages and disadvantages of each organization as implementors of anti-poverty programs is reviewed. The last module covers the assessment of anti-poverty programs, including a study of cost-benefit assessment and impact assessment techniques.

As with the earlier modules, the last three are interspersed with exercises that help strengthen the students' ability to plan and evaluate anti-poverty programs. Worksheets are given to students to develop programs and projects using the logical framework method, and case studies are provided to assess the students' understanding on how to choose among different types of organizations to implement their suggested programs and plans. Students are also taught on how to plan and assess projects using the cost-benefit analysis method, and the simple methodologies for undertaking evaluation of the effectiveness of project impacts in the community.

Political Science

Political Science 100 or Politics and Governance is part of the Ateneo de Manila's core curriculum and is a required course for students at different year levels (depending on the degree program). The Knowledge and Skills component of the learning outcomes lead toward the specific emphasis on the creation of a concrete proposal for political intervention in the Attitude aspect, as presented below:

“Knowledge – Demonstrate verbally and in writing their understanding of key concepts in the study of politics. Students should also be able to generate a coherent, rigorous, and substantive analysis of contemporary political life.

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Skills – Construct their own political analysis organized under their own personal or societal contexts, specifically within their own academic disciplines/specialties. Subsequently, this requires that students recognize how the political operates in everyday life.

Attitude – Students are expected to exemplify and justify opinions and analysis formed of, and their involvement in communal and political life. *Therefore, they are required to integrate what they learned in the course with a concrete proposal for political intervention in specific communities and communal political life, in general.*” (Political Science 100 Syllabus, Department of Political Science)

This particular service learning program of Political Science 100 began in 2012. The design of the course was driven by four (4) factors: (1) the department had a desire to deepen the student’s appreciation of the theories to understand and solve real-world problems; (2) the Integration Ateneo Formation program called for a more integrative curricula by aligning the academic objectives and formation requirements of students; (3) the Loyola Schools’ invitation to implement a learning experience among its students; and (4) the university’s commitment to nation-building.

Currently, the course is divided into five main modules, namely: I. Politics, II. Power, III. Institutions and Development, IV. Philippine Democracy and Institutions, V. Deliberative Democracy.

The first two modules are designed to give students an introduction into the basic theoretical concepts that govern the study of politics in the discipline. The module on Politics, for example, focuses on conceptualizing Politics as being rooted primarily in human plurality (Arendt 2007). The readings for the first module emphasize this plurality by showing that difficulties of governance in the Philippines can be rooted in the “unjustified” processes of governance imposed by elite Philippine forces towards the polity (Rodriguez 2009) or the historical/cultural roots of disagreement and differentiation parallel to Philippine state-building from its colonial periods onwards (Zialcita 2011). Such a discussion necessitates that students are taught how to analyze how power works within societies. Particularly helpful in this endeavor is the concept of the “Four Faces of Power” (Digeser 1992). The four faces of power (namely coercion, agenda-setting, ideology, and biopower) enable students to identify particular power relations in differing areas and degrees of human interaction. At this point in the course, students should be able to identify the fundamental dynamics of power relations in their own immersion communities. Questions such as: Who has power? Who benefits and who doesn’t? What is the source of power? and How do people build, distribute, and maintain power?

The needs of the course, however, necessitates the grounding of these concepts within institutions within Philippine society. These modules are particularly reflexive, as it asks whether democratic progress and economic development are compatible (Leftwich 2005; 2011). This enables students to be critical of their own service learning endeavor and encourages them to come up with more democratic interventions in their own communal work. The module on Philippine institutions seeks to ground the course even further, explaining the dynamics of forces within Philippine society that either hinder or encourages democratization and development. The topics covered by this module largely depends on the needs of the class and as such may cover diverse institutions

and processes such as national government, local governance, urban governance, elites, elections, human rights, globalization, indigenous peoples, etc.

The newest addition to the way that the course is taught is in its Deliberative Democracy module. The addition of the Deliberative Democracy module to the course is a response to some experiences shared by students throughout their service learning immersion. Particularly, the problem of communal discord and disagreement is a challenge that students find difficult to confront or study. Students, for example, find it difficult to intervene or propose solutions for deep-seated problems in the interactions between leaders and community members in some areas. Another problem in some communities might be the mistrust of certain members or the marginalization of some members of the community for social or political reasons. As such, some students find it difficult to gauge the effectiveness or the prospect of implementing certain kinds of proposed interventions if they are not confident in the capacity of the community to act in concert towards a shared goal.

Hence, since 2018, the iterations of the course emphasizes that students must identify and analyze the power dynamics of each community in a deliberative sense. For example, they are asked to identify the substantive and procedural aspects of deliberation in the community, what values and principles govern the everyday political interactions of community members, and whether there exists a line of communication and consultation between community members and leaders.

The effects of the addition of the Deliberative Democracy module have been positive. The addition of the module introduced certain problems that would not have otherwise been studied by the students but are nonetheless important in the specific context of the community. For example, in some communities, problems of leadership succession, particularly with non-governmental organizations and people's organizations have been repeatedly emphasized by student findings.

Students also avoid the trap of merely imposing the forms of Western liberal democratic deliberation into their communities. They are asked, for example, to observe the deliberative dynamics of the communities as they are currently, and to identify how and why these forms of deliberation were created. It is emphasized that while the weaknesses found in the deliberative processes can be pointed out and interventions formulated, these solutions must adhere to values, principles, and norms already found in the community. For example, for groups immersing within indigenous communities, there has been an emphasis in comparing and nuancing the tribal political processes of these communities and reconciling these with liberal democratic processes of legislation and common life. Specifically, the chieftain system of certain indigenous tribes in the Philippines necessitates that the Chief is the sole decision-making body in a tribal polity. Such a concept runs contrary to mainstream interpretations of deliberative democratization. However, students are able to reconcile this with what they have learned in the class by strengthening the consultative bodies surrounding the Chief and reporting on how to handle disagreement and arguments so that these are fleshed out and articulated properly, instead of merely being silenced or seen as mere dissent.

While these problems and insights are possible even without the addition of the deliberation modules, students are given the linguistic and conceptual capacity to more confidently assert these problems than before. The students are made aware of the community's dynamics with regard to deliberation and decision-making, thus their proposed solutions are more in-line with the context of the community and are more likely to be implemented, egalitarian, and sustainable.

Theology

A Theology of a Catholic Social Vision is part of Ateneo de Manila's core curriculum and is required for seniors. It has the following learning outcomes:

1. summarize central social themes and interpret the social dimension of Christian faith sources;
2. explain integral evangelization, a "faith that does justice" and a "spirituality of social transformation";
3. appraise the contemporary Philippine social, economic, political, and cultural situation using the Christian faith as an analytical lens;
4. use the resources of the Christian faith in formulating a plan for their personal and professional social involvement that articulates their commitment to social transformation;
5. evaluate their own lifestyles and identify ways to live more in solidarity with the marginalized

The abovementioned outcomes express emphasis on facilitating among students an understanding and appreciation of the interconnection between faith and social engagement. Catholic Social Teachings (CST) and liberationist theologies serve as theological foundations for this course and its aims.

The Pastoral Constitution of the Church produced during the Second Vatican Council is a paradigmatic document because it expresses the Catholic Church's commitment to dialogue with the modern world and identify with the disadvantaged: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ." (Second Vatican Council, 1965, sec. 1) From this viewpoint, the Church's commitment towards justice and social transformation is seen as *constitutive*, and therefore indispensable to evangelization: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation." (Synod of Bishops, 1971, sec. 6) Thus, evangelization is no longer understood as merely preaching the good news in words. Rather, "For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new." (Paolo VI, 1975, sec. 18) Because of the different strata involved in the work of evangelization that entails transforming humanity, the mission of the Church, therefore, needs to be interdisciplinary in order to be effectively transformative.

A way by which theology participates in the transformative mission of the Church in the world is through liberationist theologies. The course is heavily influenced by liberation theology from Latin America which grew out of experiences of poverty, oppression, and social injustice, and the conviction that faith must have an impact on human life (Gutierrez, 1994, pp. 55–58). In the Philippines, the Theology of Struggle grew out of similar experiences of oppression and poverty, especially during the time of Marcos’ Martial Law, and Christian reflection in and from the struggle to bring about social justice and liberation (Amaladoss, 1997, pp. 17–21). The aim of both ways of theologizing is therefore transformative. Rather than adhere to a separatist worldview that seeks isolation from the world to attain holiness, or a reformist perspective that merely sees life and the necessity to do good as preparation for going to heaven in the afterlife, Christians who embrace a transformative view, consider themselves as called to participate in bringing about social change in the world so that the Lord’s prayer for “Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven” can be actualized and fulfilled in history (Balajadia, 1994, pp. 13–14). This perspective is consistent with the Church’s understanding of evangelization after the Second Vatican Council.

The method articulated in Church documents, therefore, recognize the importance of both social analysis and faith reflection, and their interface. For social interventions to be possible, *Gaudium et Spes* asserts that, “the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times” (social analysis) and “of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (faith reflection) (Second Vatican Council, 1965, sec. 4) Pope John XXIII prescribes a see-judge-act process in *Mater et Magistra*:

“There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgment on it in the light of these same principles; thirdly, one decides what in the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles. These are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: look, judge, act. It is important for our young people to grasp this method and to practice it. Knowledge acquired in this way does not remain merely abstract, but is seen as something that must be translated into action.” (John XXIII, 1961, secs. 236–237).

The interaction between theory and practice demands hermeneutic reciprocity wherein experiences and understanding of social realities, on the one hand, and the Good News expressed in Scripture and Church Teachings, on the other hand, mutually challenge and enrich one another (Tejido & Acevedo, 2007, pp. 88–89). This interaction is concretely facilitated in the Theology 141 course through the Pastoral Cycle. During its first phase, students go on immersion to stay for a few days with partner communities to personally encounter the poor and experience a glimpse of poverty. Then, students engage in social analysis to determine the interconnections and root causes behind the particular manifestations of poverty they have experienced and observed during their immersion. With the help of Economics and Political Science, students conduct fieldwork that entails activities like surveys, focused group discussions, and analyze

their data using social science frameworks. The emerging issues are then reflected on by the students from the perspective of a Christian faith before students create recommendations and personal initiatives for action (Tejido & Acevedo, 2007, pp. 85–90).

Student's theological reflection are carried out through the following process: First, they identify an ethical or theological question. An ethical question has to do with the rightness or the wrongness of a situation the students analyzed while a theological question concerns the relationship between Catholic beliefs and the context students sought to understand using economics and politics. Examples of ethical questions include whether the present trend of agricultural mechanization in the Philippines is just, whether constructing resorts in a specific island is in accordance with authentic development, whether the State should be concerned about the well-being of persons deprived of liberty. Examples of theological questions concern how hope can be understood in the context of prison inmates and their families, or how God can be found in experiences of suffering. Second, students research and reflect on scripture, church teachings, and human experience and the interrelationships among these in order to answer their own questions. Some of the resources that can be used from scripture in this part are the stories of creation and Exodus, the prophets, the life and ministry of Christ, and teachings from the early Church. From Church Teachings, Catholic Social Teachings are often emphasized. Some of the resources for these are papal encyclicals and the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines offers a list of principles of Catholic Social Teachings that students find useful in assessing the morality of the situation they are studying. These are *Integral Development - Human Dignity and Solidarity, Universal Purpose of Earthly Goods and Private Property, Social Justice and Love, Peace and Active Non-Violence, Love of Preference for the Poor, the Value of Human Work, Integrity of Creation, and People Empowerment* (Catholic Church, Plenary Council of the Philippines, & Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 2004, secs. 290–321). In relation to their analysis, the students realize that there are no easy answers. For instance, while farm mechanization enables work to be more efficient to human beings, particular persons who work for hire are the ones displaced from work while those who can afford to buy and rent out machines are the ones who end up earning even more. While creating resorts poses challenges to the environment and displaces locals, it nevertheless provides work opportunities for poor locals who appreciate the presence of such business ventures in their area. Students with community members begin to reflect on the relationship between the integrity of creation and human dignity, which the students are then challenged to articulate. By interfacing the Gospel with the stories and hopes of persons deprived of liberty and studying the Philippine justice system, and the economic constraints ordinary people face, students begin to understand the importance of restorative justice both as a principle and urgent need to practice. Third, based on their own research and reflections informed by community input, the group articulates a position or an answer to the question. The “technological development” of farm mechanization is understood to be unjust when merely implemented in a system that is already unjust. Rather than choose between a pro-resort or anti-resort stance, the students together with their partner community are challenged to find alternatives that enhance rather than destroy integral ecology. Students who reflect on hope amidst the concrete reality of persons deprived of liberty and their families are led to appreciate how hope can be found and fought for in the here and now. Fourth, students articulate moral imperatives for action that will serve as a guide for

their plans, projects, or concrete recommendations. Moral imperatives for action consist of guidelines and motivations such as prioritizing displaced persons, participating in efforts to change unjust systems, promoting rights, and strengthening solidarity and integral ecology, in particular situations.

5. Results and Discussion

The practices described above resulted into a model for doing interdisciplinary service-learning wherein students go through the process of experiencing poverty, social analysis, theological reflection, and reflected action, in collaboration with the OSCI, which partners with particular institutions, organizations, and communities. An illustration of how the three courses and the OSCI are linked is shown below in terms of ensuring a better understanding of the socio-economic context of partner communities is shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1. Illustration of roles of courses in experiencing poverty, analysis, and action.

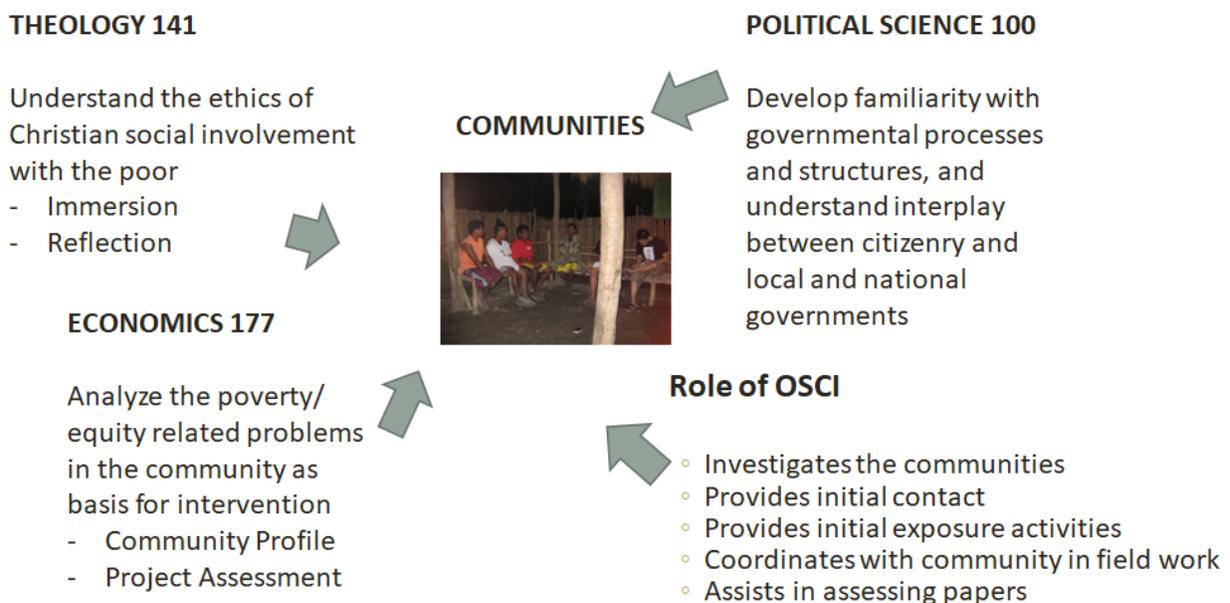


Figure 1 shows the different roles that the courses play in ensuring that students better understand and appreciate their community experiences. While the OSCI provides the initial contact and exposure with partner communities and coordinates with the community for continuous fieldwork, the Theology 141 course provides the foundation for understanding the basis of the Christian ethics for solidarity with the poor. On the other hand, the Political Science 100 course provides the skills to better understand the role of power in the community while the Economics 177 course provides the skills to gain information on the socio-economic status of the members of the community.

Student feedback made during the end of the course term showed that service learning has heightened classroom interest in the use of theories of concepts and tools among the different disciplines to assist marginalized groups, and enhanced student satisfaction with the course, as students felt that their outputs were put to good use. As senior year students comprise the audience of the course, this has also heightened their interest in employment opportunities that directly provide a service to the poorest income groups (i.e., government/ public service, non-government organizations or NGOs or cooperative work, microfinance, social entrepreneurship).

Engaging in interdisciplinary service-learning has provided several benefits.

First, it enables nuanced and multidimensional responses to complex social problems. For instance, poverty is not just an economic issue. It is also political and moral. The complexity of wicked social and ecological issues demands responses that can take various perspectives, information, and interrelationship into account. Students and teachers find interdisciplinary service-learning practically exercising solidarity for the common good. At the same time, students learn that the problems in the community can not only be solved in a “disciplinal” level rather that there is a better understanding that the issues of marginalized groups can be better addressed more holistically by applying several “disciplines” or fields of study in their response to community concerns.

Second, interdisciplinary service-learning is particularly beneficial to each of the particular disciplines as well. Regarding theology, for instance, liberation theologians insist that theology cannot just be "faith seeking understanding," but a "faith that does justice." The good news by its very nature needs to be proclaimed, and the Church has realized that this proclamation necessarily includes positively transforming the world through various means so that love, justice, and peace can be realized. When theology is done in dialogue with actual realities and various disciplines, the discipline itself also becomes more relevant and in line with the mission of the Church. On the other hand, while the economics course provides the basis for pinpointing the roots of the poverty and marginalization problems in the community, it is complemented by the Political Science course which can provide the skills to understand the political dynamics and the basis for power relationships in the community.

Third, an interdisciplinary model for service-learning allows more opportunities for relevant continuity for partner communities. The communities we serve have different needs, capacities, and goals. These communities also do not remain static; they grow, and so, the activities and projects that would correspond to their situation also vary and continue to change over time. For example, a community may come up with an initial idea for a business because of certain raw materials that are abundant in their place or specific skills that they have. Because of the interdisciplinary partnership, students are able to do a feasibility study of a business idea with the help of Economics majors in one academic term, and when this idea is found to be feasible, faculty members can plan and pilot social entrepreneurship initiatives with the help of Management Economics majors the following semester.

Fourth, interdisciplinary service-learning experiences can facilitate more profound understanding and appreciation among students of the learning outcomes of their courses. A revised Bloom's taxonomy considers two intersecting dimensions: First, the knowledge dimension which pertains to what students know and can be understood in terms of four levels: 1. factual (familiarity with basic elements of a discipline), 2. conceptual (knowledge of interrelationships among the basic elements and how these fit into a whole), 3. procedural (knowledge of methods and strategies), 4. metacognitive (self-awareness and recognition of one's own way of thinking). Second, the Cognitive Process dimension which is concerned with verbs students are able to enact or accomplish, consists of six levels: 1. remembering, 2. understanding, 3. applying, 4. analyzing, 5. evaluating, and 6. creating (Kratwohl, 2002, pp. 214-215).

The interdisciplinary service-learning with the students' integrated paper and community presentation, facilitates learning and reinforces class inputs regarding factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive knowledge. The pastoral cycle pushes students to exercise all the levels of learning mentioned in the revised Bloom's taxonomy, including the higher levels of learning. By encountering others and serving them, students witness theology at work and engage in the actual activity of theologizing rather than merely study this according to the works of other authors. They can see more connections and learn more nuances by doing theology in context, and reflect on their own assumptions, commitments, and lifestyles. Students also are able to learn from the communities who are experts in their lives and in how God also makes Godself known to them. Students generally engage in a project that has higher stakes beyond mere grades, which are immediately impressed upon them through actual community feedback.

In some cases, students are able to implement and develop the solutions that they are able to suggest and better understand which parts of their solutions work or not. They are able to utilize the different skills that they learned in their classes, for example, in order to ensure that a water supply system could be implemented in an urban poor community east of Metro Manila, or a livelihood program in indigenous peoples communities in the mountains north of the metropolis; these projects are usually undertaken after the end of the semester. So, the learning process of the students does not end in better understanding the plight of the marginalized groups, but also analyzing the causes of the problems in the community and also how to deal with these problems by proposing alternatives that can address the community issues.

Interdisciplinary service-learning; however, is not without its challenges. The short length of the semester is the biggest challenge given the necessity of undertaking the connections between the different courses; students and faculty members also have to coordinate in writing a paper which is a major requirement for the different courses and leveling off the framework and outcomes of this requirement is a challenge. Community needs have to be framed by the OSCI formator in consultation with partner institutions and communities beforehand. Weather constraints can even lessen the time for fieldwork. Also, because this activity is required, not all the students really become involved out of a sense of commitment, but this attitude can be cultivated from different starting points precisely through the process of interdisciplinary service-learning.

Creating a common framework that all disciplines will understand despite the different languages

involved is also a challenge. While the pastoral cycle has helped in unifying different aspects, understanding it and owning the specific version of the process described in this paper, was also an inductive undertaking. Educators also underwent “learning by doing.” The initial needs assessment of partner communities and ongoing feedback were also very valuable in refining the process and making the different efforts attuned with those of the partner communities.

Interdisciplinary service-learning also posed a steep learning curve for some faculty members, who tended to be trained in very specific disciplines or had very esoteric approaches to their expertise. This concern has been responded to by encouraging new faculty members to assist in the process or handle a few classes guided by others who have had more experiences. More formal training on how to coordinate with other faculty, departments, institutions, and communities can also be designed to respond to this limitation.

6. Conclusions and Contributions to Theory and Practice

This paper shows that interdisciplinary service learning leads to student and community outcomes that are different from service learning undertaken by a single discipline. Some of the key insights from this undertaking include the realization that the success of the tie-ups depended on matching community needs, educators’ disciplinary expertise, and student's learning outcomes, that the university community engagement office, Office of Social Concern and Involvement (OSCI) of the school plays a pivotal role in connecting and facilitating, and that the interdisciplinary character of the initiative is a direct response to the complexity of reality of the marginalized communities.

At the same time, there are challenges in implementing this type of community engagement methodology. The activities undertaken in this methodology are relatively demanding in terms of time, especially in developing a common framework and structure for the major requirements of the service-learning course. However, at the same time, this does not distract the fact that this type of service learning has also its unique rewards and thus has been adopted for quite a significant period at the Ateneo de Manila University. In fact, this methodology has been examined as an option in other service-learning courses in the institution.

Keywords: interdisciplinary, economics, political science, theology, pastoral cycle

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