

## *Session Summary*

### **Team Teaching a Class on *Integration of Faith and Business*: Observations and Lessons Learned from the Experience**

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In the spring semester of 2003, five faculty members from Gardner-Webb University (GWU) offered a new elective undergraduate business course titled “Integration of Faith and Business.” The course was not only a new topic for each of the professors, but for most it was also a new experience in team teaching. This paper describes the rationale for the structure and content of the course. The paper also shares highlights from the experience: lessons learned, student responses, and strategies for further development.

The purpose of the paper is to encourage readers to consider creating their own course work for teaching integration of faith and business. Though not perfect by any means, we believe the course effectively achieved its goals. We learned many things in the process, and we would like to help others learn from our mistakes and successes. For those interested in developing such a course, this paper would keep them from having to reinvent the wheel. For others seeking ideas on faith integration in particular subjects, the paper may provide insights to consider.

*“I think every student should take this class. It was a wonderful time for discipleship ... very thought provoking.”*

--- from a student’s course evaluation

2003 CBFA Conference

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Observations and Lessons Learned from the Experience**

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# **Team Teaching a Class on *Integration of Faith and Business*: Observations and Lessons Learned from the Experience**

## **1. Introduction**

In the spring semester of 2002/2003, five faculty members from Gardner-Webb University (GWU) offered a new elective undergraduate business course titled “Integration of Faith and Business.” The course was not only a new topic for each of the professors, but for most it was also a new experience in team teaching. This paper describes the rationale for the structure and content of the course. The paper also shares highlights from the experience: lessons learned, student responses, and strategies for further development.

The purpose of the paper is to encourage readers to consider creating their own course work for teaching integration of faith and business. Though not perfect by any means, we believe the course effectively achieved its goals. We learned many things in the process, and we would like to help others learn from our mistakes and successes. For those interested in developing such a course, this paper would keep them from having to reinvent the wheel. For others seeking ideas on faith integration in particular subjects, the paper may provide insights to consider.

## **2. Course structure and content**

### **2.1 Team approach**

The rationale for team teaching a faith and business integration class came from several factors. In a formal sense we wanted to teach from our strengths, particularly as we moved from the theoretical dimensions to the practical applications of faith integration. We desired to share with students from a personal history of experience, exploration, and deep reflection of the pertinent issues. (For example, a Finance professor could dialogue in an intelligent manner about the mechanics of the capital markets and may even be able to unpack any relevant faith issues; that same Finance professor probably lacks a deep understanding of the nuances of Marketing, much less ways to integrate faith into that discipline.) We felt that *both* business discipline expertise and a significant faith journey [1] are critical prerequisites for teaching an *integration* course with excellence. So in that sense, a team approach became desirable, if not critical, for meeting these pedagogical goals. In an informal sense we also employed a team approach because this level of faith integration was new territory for all of us, and five heads are better than one in figuring out how to pursue the objective.

### **2.2 Materials**

Many types of resources have been considered for use in the class. No materials we found exactly correspond to the format and content we desired to teach [2] -- a blend of theory and practice that is business discipline specific. Therefore we took a “buffet” approach. Two of the texts, *Perspectives in Business Ethics* (Hartman) and *On Moral Business* (Stachkouse, et. al.), are more theoretical in nature; the other two texts, *God is My CEO* (Julian) and *Behind the*

*Bottom Line* (Addington and Graves), are more practical in nature. In addition to these primary texts, we pulled from countless other resources as various times in the course:

- interviews of local Christian business executives,
- cases from Hartwick Humanities in Management Institute,
- web sites such as [www.Leadershiplifestyle.com](http://www.Leadershiplifestyle.com), and [www.ethix.org](http://www.ethix.org),
- videos such as the *60 Minutes* interviews with Malden Mills CEO Aaron Feuerstien,
- book excerpts from Hill's *Just Business*, Stapleford's *Bulls, Bears, and Golden Calves*, Rae and Wong's *Beyond Integrity*, Nash's *Believers in Business*, etc.,
- the movie *Wall Street*, starring Michael Douglas (shown at a professor's home, which the students really enjoyed),
- articles such as *Business Week's* "The Good CEO" (September 22, 2002), and various issues of *Life@Work* magazine, and
- audio tapes on discipleship from the Navigators.

One of the advantages of team teaching this course was that each professor brought a unique collection of materials to the classroom that the others did know about. This created unplanned synergies throughout the semester.

### 2.3 Format and topics

The course was divided into three segments. The first segment we called *Frames of Reference*. We felt that it was important for students to have a solid conceptual framework on which to build the practical applications of faith integration later in the course. This framework encompassed various ethical and moral frameworks that students would encounter in the corporate environment and society at large. A brief overview was also given of some of the best historical writings and thinking on morality, ethics, and faith. The purpose of this was to give students a philosophical framework and historical perspective to broaden their awareness and challenge their own assumptions. We also briefly looked at how other major world religions deal with business issues. And finally, we broadly examined the relevance of the Bible to everyday work issues [3].

The second segment, *Applications in Business Disciplines*, was the main content component of the course. Here we spent 3-4 class sessions exploring faith integration at a deeper level within each of the major business disciplines: Leadership, Management, Strategy, Marketing, Human Resources, Accounting, Finance, and Economics.

The third segment, *Personal Integration Issues*, dealt most directly with the individual student. Here students were personally challenged to embrace faith integration for themselves. We also explored a lot of the common areas where faith integration is most difficult in the workplace: ambition, expectations, balance, accountability, vocational calling, etc.

### 2.4 Assignments

We used a variety of evaluation measures to determine how well students were interacting with the material. Course assignments included the following:

- A mid-term take home exam covering the key topics of the first segment of the course, *Frames of Reference*,
- A final take home exam covering the key topics of the third segment of the course, *Personal Integration Issues*

- Five topic-related papers or projects relating to five of the business discipline areas of the middle segment *Applications in Business Disciplines* (Leadership, Strategy, HR/OB, Marketing, and Accounting/Finance/Economics),
- Extensive readings from the four primary course texts plus other handouts, and
- A paper and oral presentation of each student's interview with a Christian business person who is actively attempting to integrate faith in the workplace.

## 2.5 Guest speakers

We brought in three guest speakers during the course of the semester: the manager of a mutual fund, a human resources manager, and a small business owner. This was one of the highlights of the semester, helping students become aware of the dynamics of faith integration.

## 2.6 Prerequisites

We felt that students need a certain amount of business knowledge and experience before this course can have significant relevance. Students first need to be aware of the issues of the workplace so that they can have context for integrating their faith. Given this, we required that students be business majors or minors and have at least two years of business coursework or experience. We allowed students not meeting these requirements to audit the course, several of whom did.

## 3. Lessons learned

Team teaching was wonderful but tough. We naively assumed "You teach that, I'll teach this, and it will all work out." Our various topics in the course did not always flow together as neatly as we would like. That was due in part to differences in emphasis and teaching style. Some synergies did occur, but more was possible. However, we are convinced, in this course, that team teaching is the way to go, both for the sake of the students and the faculty involved.

It is difficult to move beyond business ethics to true integration of faith and business. Many of the resources we used for the course do not make that distinction, and it was a difficult distinction to drive home. Faith integration is much more than doing the right thing or being a good witness at work. It took much of the semester for that concept to really strike home. As the semester advanced it seemed as though we progressed from business ethics to vocational discipleship, which was an important, wonderful transition.

Faith and business integration is still in its early stages theologically and functionally. Consequently there are various, often incongruent, voices out in the public arena espousing what integration looks like. We had to wade through a lot of trivial, irrelevant, cheesy material in deciding what to present to our students.

Having students interview Christian business people was a great idea and generally had excellent outcomes. But it was more complicated than we thought. We obtained our list of volunteer interviewees through a local affiliate of Fellowship of Companies for Christ International (FCCI). Several students did not have phone calls and e-mails returned when they tried contacting the business person for an interview. We now know to have about 30% more interviewees than students in order to ensure that all students are able to interview a business

person. Also the interview process needs to take place early in the semester to provide sufficient time to complete the process, particularly when busy executives are involved.

## 4. Student responses

### 4.1 Quantitative measures

Near the end of the semester we passed out an extensive evaluation form to the students of the class. The evaluation asked the students to both rate the quality of different aspects of the course on a five-point scale and write a qualitative evaluation of what they liked, did not like, and what they would change to improve the course.

The quantitative measures of the students revealed that they were pleased with the course. On a five-point Likert scale, the students addressed the different sections of the course dedicated to the different business disciplines, the guest speakers, and the texts. The mean score of the five sections dedicated to a business discipline was 4.50 out of 5.00. The highest rating was for the section on Strategy that focused on the Mauldin Mills case (4.88). This was followed by the sections on Finance and Human Resources (4.57 each).

The students rated the three speakers as effective as well. The mean score for the guests were 4.16. The high was 4.6 – given to a Human Resource manager who came and spoke very frankly with the class about a variety of sensitive topics. The low score was a 3.60 – still positive on the Likert scale. The students’ views of the texts were split. The two theoretical texts (Hartman and Stachkouse, et. al.) scored the lowest (2.93); the two applied texts scored much higher (4.38).

Two other quantitative measures were taken. The students rated both the team teaching approach to the course and their likelihood to recommend the course to their colleagues. Both were very positive – scoring 4.29.

### 2.2 Qualitative Measures

Some of the pertinent comments are listed below. On the Strategy sessions, students wrote:

- *“It was neat se see real life people and their reactions to trying times during their business careers. Do good CEO’s always finish last?”*
- *“(The topic was) excellent, made me really think.”*

On the Leadership sessions the written comments pointed out that students found great value in the segment. Comments included:

- *“I have never thought of creating my own personal code of ethics and really enjoyed doing the assignment. Very beneficial, should continue to assign this in classes to come.”*
- *“This assignment really made me think about my life and the way I live. The assignment pertained to what was taught in class and was more of personal evaluation than an assignment.”*
- *“Learning about how to make a code of personal ethics was very helpful.”*

In the section on the Biblical Basis of Work (part of the Human Resources section) students responded as follows:

- “I think this had great tie-ins to what we’ve been learning and I found it helpful to my everyday life.”
- “When we were given this assignment, I was just going to hurry through it as I have so many papers and projects due this time of year. But as I started I realized how much I was enjoying listening and learning what these great men had to say. Never before have I sat down and really listened to and wrote down what I was learning, but I have come away from this assignment not only learning so much great insight, but I feel I have grown closer to the Lord...Thanks for a challenging assignment and a great opportunity.”
- “I had no clue that this assignment would turn out to be such a huge production, but obviously God had a lot to teach me...I hope you can appreciate all that God has taught me.”

In addition to the positive comments above, there were critiques that will be helpful as the course is repeated. First, the students found the amount of reading to be excessive. This particularly centered on the four texts – especially in light of each instructor adding readings pertinent to their discipline. Likewise, several of the assignments appeared to be more extensive than what the students experienced in other classes. This was attributed by some as a by-product of the tag-team approach – with the instructors not coordinating assignments between them.

There was also some critique of assignment relevancy to the topics at hand – even when the students enjoyed the assignment. For instance, during the section on Human Resources, the instructor chose to focus on the Biblical Basis of Work as part of the content. While the comments about that topic were favorable and the assignment appeared to be effective in making the students think, the students noted that this focus limited discussion of Human Resources topics they expected in the section.

Our favorite two quotes from students during the semester included: “It’s like drinking from a fire hydrant” and “My head hurts”. We think they got their money’s worth.

## 5. Strategies for further development

- We want to more strategically integrate the flow between the different professors and their respective topics. “*E pluribus unum*” is our goal. This means better communication and planning on our parts as professors. We also need to carefully coordinate the timing of assignments so that due dates do not converge.
- We think we can do a better job at focusing more on faith integration and less on business ethics. Business ethics takes care of itself when faith is truly integrated.
- We will further research what other universities may be doing along these lines and incorporate some of their ideas.
- Reassess the quantity of assigned readings. Keep searching for the best course materials, including primary texts, to use in the class. We were generally pleased with what we used but constantly want to improve where possible.
- We want to better articulate the need for *Frames of Reference*. Students do not know what they do not know.
- Given the right constituency, this course could work very well at the graduate level. We are mulling over that option.

## Endnotes

1. It should be noted that the five professors have very different faith journeys and theological views. However, we all feel there is enough common ground (what C.S. Lewis called “mere Christianity”) to provide a consistent yet diverse framework for the task at hand.
2. This lack of suitable material indicates a great need for further research and writing in the whole area of faith and business integration.
3. This section encouraged students to avoid some of the common errors associated with applying the Biblical text to business life. We personally feel that errors occur when people (i) see the Bible as either an explicit business manual, which it is not, or (ii) see the Bible as great for one’s private spiritual life but generally not relevant for business spheres of life. Either extreme can be dangerous to business and a poor use of Scriptures. We also discussed the distinction between applying general biblical principles and applying specific biblical principles to business.

## Appendix A

BADM 340

### ***Integration of Faith and Business***

Spring 2003

#### **COURSE INFORMATION**

Credit Hours: 3

Prerequisites: Junior or senior majoring/minoring in business

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This elective course will explore the interplay between faith and business. Various models of integration at the personal and corporate will be explored. You will be challenged to develop your own philosophy of how faith makes a difference in your approach to business. In addition to traditional business ethics topics, this course will explore personal morality, the unique implications of the Christian faith to various business disciplines, and business as service and vocation.

#### **INSTRUCTORS**

Drs. Swicegood (*anchor*), Perry, Honts, Mellbye, Keyts

Office: 313 Hamrick

Phone: 406-4389 (W) anytime; 434-4887 (H) before 10:00 p.m.

Office hours: MWF 10:00 – 11:00 a.m., noon – 1:00 p.m., W 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

I try to maintain an open-door policy. You are encouraged to stop by at other times or make an appointment.

E-mail: pswicegood@gardner-webb.edu

#### **MATERIALS**

- *Perspectives in Business Ethics* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), by Hartman, ISBN # 0-07-231405-2
- *On Moral Business*, by Stackhouse, McCann, Roels, and Williams, ISBN # 0-8028-0626-0
- *God is my CEO*, by Julian, ISBN # 1-58062-746-1
- *Behind the Bottom Line: Powering Business Life with Spiritual Wisdom*, by Graves and Addington, ISBN # 0-7879-6467-0

#### **EVALUATION**

The evaluation of performance in the course is based upon the following scheme:

- 35%: 5 topic-related papers or projects (Leadership, Strategic Management, HR/OB, Marketing, Fin/Acct/Econ)
- 10%: Integration profile paper and presentation
- 20%: Mid-term exam (covering *Section I: Frames of Reference*)
- 20%: Final exam (covering *Section III: Personal Integration Issues*)
- 15%: Readings

Grades are assigned on the following basis:

100.0-90.0	=	A
89.9 -80.0	=	B
79.9 -70.0	=	C
69.9 -60.0	=	D
59.9 -00.0	=	F

Topic-related papers or projects will be assigned by each professor when that topic is being covered (Leadership, Strategic Management, HR/OB, Marketing, Fin/Acct/Econ). Due dates and requirements will be announced at the appropriate times by each professor.

After spring break, a selected student will begin each class with a 5-minute presentation profiling a business person who is successfully learning to integrate faith in his/her market place setting. A 3-5 page paper should accompany the oral presentation. Presentation dates and contacting suitable profiles will be discussed later in the semester.

Exams will be take-home. Most questions will be short-answer or essay in nature, related to the key topics in each section. Assignment of exams and due dates will be announced as appropriate.

Assigned readings are given in the Course Schedule below. Supplemental readings will be given periodically throughout the semester. These are assigned for your benefit to allow you to engage with the best thinkers and practitioners in these topic areas. Consequently it is a critical requirement of the course that you engage in the reading assignments in a *thorough* and *timely* manner. Some reading assignments are substantial, so please pace yourself and consult the syllabus for due dates. On the final exam you will be asked to state what percentage of all assigned and supplemental readings you actually read in a comprehending way (skimming doesn't count). This portion will be graded on an honor basis.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

- This course assumes a high level of participation from you the student. Your interaction is expected. What you get out of this course will directly depend on what you put in it.
- Please leave your ego and close-mindedness at the door. This will allow all of us to engage in serious but fun discussions and debates.
- It will be expected of you to read the assignments before coming to class.
- The Academic Honor Code will be enforced. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Dishonest work through cheating or plagiarism may result in failure of the exam, project, or class.
- As professionals, punctual and consistent attendance is expected of you. Per university policy, students must attend at least 75% of classes to pass the course.
- A disabled student is responsible for arranging with the professor any accommodations necessary for the student's participation in class. I will be glad to work with disabled students, but require advanced notification from the NOEL House within the first 2 weeks of the semester.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Instructor	Assignment
	<b><i>Section I: Frames of Reference</i></b>		
1/9/03	Course overview: Law, Ethics, Morality, and Faith in the business context	Swicegood	Purchase supplemental texts
1/14/03	Broad ethical and moral frameworks: Democracy, Utilitarianism, Power, Natural law, Relativism, Religion	Swicegood	Ch. 1 (Hartman)
1/16/03	Specific ethical and moral frameworks: Social contract theory, Stakeholder theory, Maximizing shareholder wealth	Swicegood	Ch. 2 (Hartman)
1/21/03	Traditional wisdom: Kant, Locke, A. Smith, Aristotle, Marx, Rawls, Friedman	Swicegood	Ch. 3, 6 (SMRW)
1/23/03	Part 1: Business through the eyes of other faiths (Muslim, Hinduism, and Buddhism) Part 2: The relevance of the Bible: myth and reality	Bottoms Swicegood	Ch. 1, 2, 9 (SMRW)
	<b><i>Section II: Applications in the Business Disciplines</i></b>		
1/28/03	Management/Leadership	Mellbye	Ch. 7 (Hartman)
1/30/03	Management/Leadership	Mellbye	
2/4/03	Strategic Management	Perry	Ch. 6 (Hartman)
2/6/03	Strategic Management	Perry	
2/11/03	Strategic Management	Perry	
2/13/03	Marketing	Keyt	Ch. 9 (Hartman)
2/18/03	Marketing	Keyt	
2/20/03	Marketing	Keyt	Ch. 12-1 (SMRW)
2/25/03	Marketing	Keyt	
2/27/03	Guest Speaker	TBA	
3/4/03	<i>Spring Break</i>	-----	
3/6/03	<i>Spring Break</i>	-----	
3/11/03	HR/OB	Honts	Ch. 8 (Hartman)
3/13/03	HR/OB	Honts	Ch 12-4 (SMRW)
3/18/03	HR/OB	Honts	
3/20/03	HR/OB	Honts	
3/25/03	Management/Leadership	Mellbye	Julian
3/27/03	Management/Leadership	Mellbye	
4/1/03	Finance/Accounting/Econ	Swicegood	Ch. 10 (Hartman)
4/3/03	Finance/Accounting/Econ	Swicegood	Ch. 12-2,12-3 (SMRW)
4/8/03	Finance/Accounting/Econ	Swicegood	
	<b><i>Section III: Personal Integration Issues</i></b>		
4/10/03	Leadership, Followership, Control, Relationships	Swicegood	Graves, Addington
4/15/03	Goals, Ambition, Balance, Patience	Swicegood	Ch. 3 (Hartman)
4/17/03	Integrity, Character, Choices,	Swicegood	Ch. 13 (SMRW)
4/22/03	Mentors, Accountability, Finishing well, Vocation	Swicegood	
4/24/03	Guest Speaker	TBA	
4/29/03	TBA	TBA	
	<b><i>Final Exam</i></b>		

**Note:** This is a tentative schedule. All dates are subject to change, particularly in relation to guest speakers.