

REFLECTIONS: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

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The core course I will be teaching is *Civic Engagement in International Marketing*, with the theme Communities and Environments. Specifically, it examines the issues of global prosperity and justice, ecological and economic sustainability and balanced growth, ethical dimensions of business, international trade and marketing, and norms and values that dictate our lives (both personally and professionally) on local and global scales. All of these issues are important dimensions of the Communities and Environments theme. It is truly an interdisciplinary course that integrates concepts from the fields of business in general, marketing, international trade, sustainability, economics, sociology, political economy, law, ethics and technology, among others. Additionally, the opportunity to be in Italy during the course and the first-hand experience to observe the applications of the theories discussed in class (via field trips) will make it very unique, exciting and challenging.

With increasing globalization and increasing consumer awareness around the world, there has been a growing groundswell of social movements aimed at marketing as a discipline. These movements share the key ethos of civic responsibility and community involvement in generating changes in public values. They also have their mantra of responsibility and social justice tailored towards interactive dimensions with the business community. The purpose is to engender collaborative, productive, innovative modes of an eco-effective sustainable development. These include constructing green buildings and parks, using toxicity-free safe products, reducing wasteful consumption of non biodegradable petro-products, etc.

This course on civic responsibility in marketing will take a close look at corporate responsibility and community involvement and will incorporate these ideas to understand the current consumer and business attitude

toward marketing. Students will examine how businesses, communities, NGO's, and governments work together to create and consume products and services, with an ultimate goal of sustainable growth and prosperity for all. The opportunity to be in Italy (under the DU-Bologna Study Abroad Program) and visit its local/ national companies, non-profit organizations and civil administration will provide us the extra dimension of being "international." We will learn about the cultural, social, political, legal, and economic differences between Italy and the United States and how the marketing strategies in each country need to be adjusted because of these differences.

In terms of the current massive economic crises, civic morale about business integrity is very low. This makes it a timely course for students interested in learning about the perils that economic progress represent in the absence of adequately negotiated social governance. Civic engagement by multiple actors with stakes in the economic arena represents an interactive context of extant information dissemination, germination of new ideas, distribution of responsibility based on a negotiated understanding of what is the best path forward in terms of material and moral progress. Such modes of deeper alignment of social goals of various social actors is likely to represent better modes of problem solving, innovation and preservation of critical aspects of life that are highly valued by society, such as the environment.

A significant stakeholder in all of these issues is the young minds that we are providing foundational support to, so that they can go on to become leaders with strong initiative to shape a better world. However, the flowering of such a possibility requires that the youth of today learn to explore their potential and enhance their understanding

through self-generated synthesis of situations that they purview around themselves. Hence, this class has three critical components – active field-work, formulating the resources of that field-work by reading the latest works on the subject matter, and writing about not just what has been learnt but also about what is potentially possible from their viewpoint.

The process of writing is intended to help the students formulate their ‘active learning’ into coherent thought patterns that lend a deeper insight into not just what they have seen and analyzed, but also how those tie up into their own self-conceptions and their visions of the world. The attempt is to get the students beyond the stupor rendered by any dominant discourse and set them free to search alternate paths of visualizing existence through active involvement rather than mere arm-chair theorizing.

Writing is a journey into self-discovery, a way to let loose the passions of ideas and concretize convictions about goals. It clears all confusions and ignorance by forcing one to ‘spit out’ what one is trying to grapple with. This is done by not merely stating ideas but stating them with some semblance of clarity - in short, grappling with the meanings and consequences of one’s ideas and actions. I want to deliver this path of awareness to my students by getting them to tentatively explore their ideas in various mini-projects before finally rendering them into a systematic, synchronized, well-defined, final paper with something insightful to offer beyond the obvious. It is expected that at the completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- 1) Identify the economic, political, legal, social and cultural differences among nations as they influence marketing (knowledge acquisition and application)
- 2) Reflect on current consumer and business attitudes (in Italy and the USA) towards sustainable growth and prosperity for all (enhancement of higher order thinking and skills)
- 3) Demonstrate an understanding of civic responsibility as a citizen, and the roles of businesses, communities, NGO’s

and governments (development of psychomotor skills)

- 4) Advocate a position one wants to take in this controversy of ‘sustainable development’ and suggest a solution (changes in attitudes or values)

As a ‘writing intensive’ core course, there is a great emphasis on writing deliverables in this course. The following four papers are the major deliverables:

1. Five-page paper on identifying the economic, political, legal, social and cultural differences among nations as they influence marketing, due in week three; revised version (based on instructor’s feedback) due in week four.
2. Five-page paper on reflecting on current consumer and business attitudes (in Italy and the USA) towards sustainable growth and prosperity for all, due in week five; revised version (based on instructor’s feedback) due in week six.
3. Five-page paper on demonstrating an understanding of civic responsibility as a citizen, and the roles of businesses, communities, NGO’s and governments, due in week seven; revised version (based on instructor’s feedback) due in week eight.
4. Five-page paper on advocating a position one wants to take in this controversy of ‘sustainable development’ and suggest a solution, due in week nine; revised version (based on instructor’s feedback) due in week ten.

Besides these deliverables, there will be a few writing assignments that I developed as a direct outcome of attending the Writing Intensive Core Workshop.

1. Exploratory Writing Assignment examples

- (a) The purpose of this assignment is to get you going on developing a ‘portfolio’ of exploratory writing on concepts central to the course. The

expectation is that your exploratory work based on your understanding of the concept, aided over time with research done on the subject matter, will help you to ground yourself in some of the basics that are required for you to turn in your course deliverables. The length of these exploratory writings should not exceed a page.

The idea is for you to take a first cut into delving into the concept and understanding its complexities. The focus of these writings is not so much structure as a stream of thought process that helps you to lay out visually what your mind has configured through absorption of various readings, actions of individuals and institutions that you have seen throughout your life and during your current travels abroad.

For further enrichment of your ideas, you can engage in an interactive dialogue with your peers over the DU BlackBoard site. You can post your writings, get feedbacks from others, as well as constructively critique their writings in return. With this in mind, explore the concept of civic responsibility in general. Your next assignment should focus on the difference in cultural understanding of this concept in Italy and the US.

- (b) Read about the current consumer and business attitudes (in Italy and the USA) towards the marketing of sustainable growth. You can use the internet, newspapers, journals, and any other resources you see fit. Based on your conceptual understanding of these issues from your textbook, can you apply these concepts to the current affairs? Keep a journal where you pick a news event each day and think about its relevancy vis-à-vis your knowledge of the course material.

2. Formal Writing Assignment examples

- (a) A formal writing assignment is designed for you to do several things. First, you should construct a thesis that should be stated succinctly in the form of a question or statement that poses a problem.

Second, you should provide extant arguments of the subject matters that roughly encompass that thesis or do what is termed a 'literature review.'

Finally, you should provide evidentiary proof to back up your thesis. You are free to take up any position you want on the subject matter. However, please ensure that you provide a balanced judgment as to why the reader should be persuaded by your argument. This involves you stating several counter positions and why you are not convinced by them. The paper should have a clear outline with definite headings. Each section of the paper should begin with an introduction and conclude by reiterating the main purpose of the section. With this in mind, write a paper on sustainable development.

- (b) Write brief letters to the Editor of *Roman Times* representing (i) a Roman citizen, (ii) a typical Roman business, (iii) a typical Roman community, (iv) a typical Roman NGO, and (v) a Roman government official. You need to argue either in **favor** or **against** urban development and growth in Rome in each letter and provide a solution of your own.

I also learned a lot about grading rubric from this workshop. Below are a couple of examples that I may use:

1. Read about the current consumer and business attitudes (in Italy and the USA) towards the marketing of sustainable growth. You can use the internet, newspapers, journals, and any other resources you see fit.

Based on your conceptual understanding of these issues from your textbook, can you apply these concepts to the current affairs? Keep a journal where you pick a news event each day and think about its relevancy vis-à-vis your knowledge of the course material.

Grading rubric:

- (i) Support of Theses
 - A. Statement of theses 10 points
 - B. Clarity of support 10 points
 - C. Logic of the arguments 10 points
 - D. Quality of source support 10 points
 - E. Quantity of source support 10 points
- (ii) Specific Features
 - A. Grammatical errors 10 points
 - B. Organization 10 points
 - C. Accuracy 10 points
 - D. Adherence to a style manual 10 points
 - E. Logical conclusion 10 points

2. Write brief letters to the Editor of *Roman Times* representing (i) a Roman citizen, (ii) a typical Roman business, (iii) a typical Roman community, (iv) a typical Roman NGO, and (v) a Roman government official. You need to argue either in **favor** or **against** urban development and growth in Rome in each letter and provide a solution of your own.

Grading rubric:

- A. Quality of ideas 25 points
- B. Organization /development 25 points
- C. Clarity and style 25 points
- D. Sentences & mechanics 25 points

My fervent ‘hope’ is that students will be able to use these writing assignments as a tool for their self-discovery. For my specific course, I hope that students will exhibit traces of moral sensibility critical for progress that is sustainable, rather than short-term rendering of a glitzy world whose glitter palls in the blink of an eye. However, I do not try to define or impose what that moral sensibility is going to be. I try to avoid being a Leviathan that renders a moral certitude that reeks of intolerance and bigotry, and instead try and create a democratic atmosphere of dialogue. My hope again is that this will prod people to strive for a moral purpose that gives life dignity by doing the right things or ‘what ought to be’ despite the costs. The

development of a love for virtues and ideals that may not necessarily be required is a step forward in this direction. Oftentimes, self-expression through writing is a tentative first step into this love affair that is ridden with multiple pitfalls.

To achieve this journey, students will be required to share their writing samples with their classmates. This will hopefully help ensure that there is no eristic rhetoric that degenerates into unproductive ‘personal’ strife about whose ideal is better. Instead of creating a politicized environment of partisan spins, there will hopefully be a productive collaboration on exchange of ideas. A fair constructive critique of these ideas will lead the path forward to learning what true collaboration really entails – tolerance and a fair hearing of the ideas on board. This tends to generate dialectics of good conversation that seeks to jointly explore a path of common humanity instead of trying to win or lose by turning the exercise into a ‘game’ of ideas that has to end with the emergence of one truth.

Mere subversion of the extant modes of actions and ideas in order to be gloriously labeled as a ‘non-conformist individualist’ who is not part of the ‘herd’ is not helpful. Simultaneous fruitful engagement with the possible is a pre-requisite to generation of creative writing. Avoiding sophistry and digging deep into the real world of pathos and hope will hopefully create a generation of thinkers and doers who are consciously aware of the political implications of the world that they are creating.

This, I firmly believe, is the path to generating students’ critical analytical power. Wisdom of effective and substantively valuable choice should hopefully emerge in this conscious process of self-immersion into the gritty world of real engagement outside and inside the academia. This will provide students with the confidence to create a public persona that will enable them to be better business leaders in the emergent world of post-crises. An articulate illustration of their ideas, both vocal and in writing is indeed a prerequisite.