CLAIMS:

1. A method for preparing methyl methacrylate from methacrolein and methanol; said method comprising contacting a mixture comprising methacrolein, methanol and oxygen with a heterogeneous catalyst comprising a support and a noble metal, wherein said support comprises silicon, and wherein said catalyst comprises from 0.1 to 40 mol% titanium and from 0.1 to 10 mol% of at least one noble metal selected from the group consisting of gold, platinum, iridium, osmium, silver, palladium, rhodium, and ruthenium, wherein mole percentages are based on total moles of silicon atoms and metal atoms, wherein at least 90 wt% of the noble metal is in the outer 60% of catalyst volume.

2. The method of claim 1 in which the noble metal is selected from the group consisting of gold, palladium and combinations thereof.

3. The method of claim 1 in which the catalyst has an average diameter from 60 microns to 10 mm.

4. The method of claim 1 in which the catalyst comprises 0.1 to 8 mol% of at least one noble metal, 60 to 95 mol% silicon, 0.1 to 20 mol% titanium and 0.1 to 20 mol% alkali metal or alkaline earth metal.

5. The method of claim 1 in which the support is silica.

6. The method of claim 1 in which the noble metal is gold.

7. The method of claim 1 in which the catalyst is contained in a catalyst bed.

8. The method of claim 7 in which methanol and methacrolein are fed to a reactor containing the catalyst bed in a molar ratio from 1:1 to 10:1, respectively.

9. The method of claim 8 in which the reactor is a tubular continuous reactor.