

DECOLONIZING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: AN INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL THEORY (IPT)

THE CHALLENGE: DECOLONIZING THE CURRICULUM

- TRIP faculty study (2014)

80% share the view that that ‘the discipline of IR is a Western dominated discipline’

75% consider it ‘important to counter Western dominance in the discipline of IR’

- Student voices at LSE (LSESU, 2015)

- ‘The Western perspective... isn’t shown as just one perspective, it is shown as what is the truth’
- ‘The LSE boasts itself of having 150 different nationalities represented in student body, but . . . this multicultural pluralism isn’t present in the readings or knowledges taught.’



WHAT’S AT STAKE

- Decolonizing = ‘expos[ing] the role colonialism had in [the] construction [of the discipline], and through that awareness, enhance its future development in ways that are non-colonized (Krishna, 2012)
- Not only adding voices (of female & BAME authors); decolonizing requires an underlying and deep transformation from a culture of denial & erasure, to one which recognizes & values different knowledge traditions
Excluding non-Western histories, perspectives & narratives, is to exclude the students themselves.
Confronting a multiplicity of experiences & voices fosters identity construction and complex & critical modes of thinking

THE COURSE (IR 200)

- Objectives of the course
 - Exploring how international thought sits within global intellectual history, responding to world events, frequently shaped by patterns of imperialism, violence, and resistance.
 - Examining the connections between key texts in IPT and the prevailing IR ‘canon’ (realism, liberalism, constructivism & critical theory)
- Learning outcomes:
 - Describe and compare some of the existing texts in IPT & discuss themes, concepts, and ideas contained within them.
 - Learn methods of interpretation & critique.
 - Use IPT to analyse & interpret historical and contemporary issues in world politics



An inclusive classroom

WHAT? A politics of recognition (Lavia, 2007) which values difference: acknowledging that students engage & learn in multiple ways

HOW? - Diversity of learning material (interviews, podcasts, short videos)

- Diversify class activities & discussion formats (small groups vs plenary, debates, contributing to a collective online word cloud)



‘Turn[ing] it inside out’ (O’ Leary, 2002)

WHAT? Shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning
Give students ownership of their learning

HOW? - Clarify expectations => learning agreement

- Make it manageable => assign 1 text as priority OR ask students to choose 1 text & share key points with the rest of the class
 - Additional resources on slides to go further (incl. LSE events)



Teaching through questions (Duron et al, 2006)

WHAT? Foster critical thinking & academic engagement
Encourage self-reflexion & dissent

HOW? – ‘How to read a text?’ sheet with critical prompts to consider when reading a text

Ask questions to help students build on each other’s contributions / go further / problematize & criticize



THE PEDAGOGY

Building skills

- Critical thinking, teamwork, cooperation, listening, debating & oral communication
 - Detailed feedback for formative essays with both strengths & areas of improvement
 - Essay-writing & ‘questioning the question’
 - (LT): tips for exam preparation



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