



POLITICAL PEDAGOGIES

Teaching International Relations in a Time of Disruption

Edited by
Heather A. Smith · David J. Hornsby

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Political Pedagogies

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The purpose of the series is to create a new space for conversations between scholars of political pedagogy, and between such scholars and those looking for guidance on their teaching, and become the main recognizable authority/series/conversational space in this field. The proliferation of journals, conferences, and workshops devoted to teaching attest to the accelerating interest in the pedagogy of Political Science and International Relations over the past two decades. While research scholarship remains the dominant criterion for hiring and promotion at top tier institutions, almost all academics in these disciplines spend most of their energy teaching, and more than two-thirds do so at institutions where effective teaching is the primary factor in career success (Ishiyama et al 2010). Even those at research-intensive positions benefit from more effective classroom environments, and institutions across the world are building centers devoted to improving teaching and learning. The challenges of teaching span sub-disciplines and connect disparate scholars in a common conversation. Indeed, teaching may be the only focus that academics in these disciplines truly share. Currently, most writing about teaching politics is published in journals, and is therefore dispersed and restricted in length. This series will provide a much needed platform for longer, more engaged contributions on Political Pedagogies, as well as serve to bring teaching and research in conversation with each other.

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*To our family, friends and colleagues who prevailed in spite of often very
difficult personal and professional circumstances arising out of the
COVID-19 pandemic.*

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—Heather A. Smith

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—David J. Hornsby

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ACRONYMS

EBL	Enquiry-Based Learning
E-IR	E-International Relations
EU	European Union
IDS	International Development Studies
IFS	International Futures Simulations
IR	International Relations
IRD	Institut de Recherche pour le Developpement
IS	International Studies
ISSOTL	International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
LSE	London School of Economics
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NBC	National Broadcasting Company
OER	Open Educational Resources
PBL	Problem-Based Learning
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SAP	Students As Partners
SOTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNBC	University of Northern British Columbia
US	United States
WUSC	World University Service Canada



Introduction: Teaching International Relations in a Time of Disruption and Pandemic

Heather A. Smith and David J. Hornsby

INTRODUCTION

When we started this project, the idea that our lives would be turned upside down by a pandemic, was furthest from our mind. Now the pandemic envelopes our lives as different places and spaces adapt, address, and consider remedies for this serious matter. In higher education, the project of teaching and learning has been flipped on its head with the pivot to online learning or emergency remote teaching. Indeed, as we craft this introduction, we are still in the midst of determining just

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when we might be able to return to our traditional face-to-face learning environments.

Originally this book was conceptualized with the idea that the type of disruption facing international relations referred to such things as mass shootings, the climate crisis, a changing world order, technology and its influence on political perceptions (e.g. fake news), Brexit, Trump, rigged elections and white supremacy. These are the topics that were, and continue to greet us on a daily basis as we assess and teach the state of international affairs. Today, things are entirely different. And yet, these sites and sources of disruption haven't gone away as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for reflection on disruption remains. The intersection of politics, power and pedagogy remain pertinent and necessary to reflect upon, and the insights of the chapters continue to be relevant, even if the majority were crafted before our respective lockdowns. The central question in this volume persists: "how do we, as International Relations scholars support our students, and indeed each other, to create classroom spaces that foster the critical curiosity and engagement required to understand and live in a world that feels dangerously disrupted?" If anything, pandemic pedagogy, as we discuss in the concluding chapter, only gives further urgency to this question and the need to reflect on our teaching practices.

bell hooks famously postulated that "the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy" (hooks, 1994, p. 12). This volume takes this position seriously and advances the premise that the position and construction of learning environments in International Relations (IR) requires a fundamental re-think. Traditional IR programs tend to emphasize and focus on the delivery of discipline-relevant content. This is important but often comes at the expense of thinking through how the needs and expectations of our students and societies have changed. We are in an era of globalization, disruption, and a pandemic, and IR educators need to reflect deeply upon what attributes and proficiencies students require in order to keep abreast of the ever-changing content of the discipline. We need to think through how teaching helps constitute the discipline and the position of our students in the advancement of IR as a discipline (see Hornsby and Grant in this volume). In such a context, the volume considers innovative approaches to teaching and learning that move IR beyond the traditional orthodoxy. The intent here is to ensure that IR keeps up with the contemporary needs of students, continues to be relevant in efforts to enhance student learning, and takes advantage of

the opportunity to advance as a discipline now and in the future. And as we muddle through ‘pivots’ online and ‘transitions’ to remote learning in the midst of a pandemic, the need for attention to student learning in IR is only made more prescient and urgent.

When we approached our authors to contribute to the volume our request was simple: could you write about teaching and learning IR in an age of disruption? We didn’t give them a template or model of what constitutes disruption. Rather sought to solicit contributions from their own perspectives, enabling a diverse set of interpretations of ‘disruption’. Their contributions remind us that the idea of disruption is complex, nuanced and often, situational. From here we have noticed a number of common themes emerging.

TEACHING AS DISRUPTION

A central theme that resonates throughout the volume is teaching as an act of disruption. Throughout the volume, authors adopt or reflect the principles of critical pedagogy epistemology which acknowledges that students are central to the advancement of our discipline and to foster their success requires us to consider how the different ways we teach matter. Such a viewpoint is underpinned by the work of Paulo Friere (1970) which focuses directly on the question of pedagogy and empowerment. By recognising that students come to the classroom with their own experiences and understandings of the world, Friere (1970) argues that the power of pedagogy to draw out new possibilities for thinking and theorizing within a discipline becomes evident. Nicole Wegner, for example, highlights “disruption of status quo power relations in the academy” and Kristi Kenyon shows us how human rights teaching is an act of transformative disruption. David J. Hornsby and J. Andrew Grant directly challenge assumptions of the ongoing value of the sage-on-the-stage model and argue now is the time to “rethink of the role of the professor in the journey of learning”.

Teaching as an act of disruption is premised on an assumption, shared among contributors, that teaching is an act of politics. Our classrooms are sites of everyday practice. They are sites of the personal and the international. In the era of Trump and Brexit, having students analyze data and come to conclusions using analytical frames, as Mark Boyer argues, is a political act. Asking students to interrogate normative assumptions about social innovations as universally good (Tiessen this volume) and/or

challenging the margins and silences in the discipline through our course design and curriculum (Andrews and Odoom this volume) are political acts. Critically interrogating the stories of our field as Marshall Beier advocates, is an act of politics which challenges assumptions of expertise and knowing. Teaching is not neutral. It is not value free. We create and recreate the discipline through our teaching. Thus, for us, our acts of disruption are intentional and purposeful. For many of us, our starting point is disruption of the discipline.

DISRUPTING THE DISCIPLINE THROUGH TEACHING

Disruption of the discipline of IR arises throughout the volume in a variety of permutations. Heather Smith and Yahlnaaw, Marshall Beier, Justin de Leon, and Nathan Andrews and Isaac Odoom embrace the idea of disruption as a means by which to upset the embedded assumptions of the white settler, Eurocentric and colonial assumptions of both International Relations as a discipline and teaching as a practice. Andrews and Odoom remind us that IR remains in significant need of ‘disruption’ as they highlight the colonial and eurocentric project that underpins IR as we know it and which translates into misrepresentations of the world.

Several of the chapters are informed by both teaching and learning literature and IR literature thus sharing with the audience examples of scholarly teaching and modelling the means by which we integrate the scholarship of teaching and learning with our IR teaching (See Hornsby and Grant and Tiessen) and thus disrupting the traditional disciplinary boundaries of IR. This emphasis on scholarly teaching, that is teaching that is informed by teaching and learning literature, also disrupts arbitrary divisions between teaching and research.

Not only do the chapters in this volume model the scholarship of teaching and learning, the collection models interdisciplinary, thus again, disrupting the arbitrary boundaries that are designed to regulate the discipline of International Relations. While all of the contributions are relevant to an IR classroom, chapters by Black, Tiessen and Keynon, challenge us to think in interdisciplinary ways. David Black, for example, emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinarity to creating vibrant and challenging learning spaces and encourages us to engage in a ‘process of creative disruption’. Rebecca Tiessen encourages a focus on social innovation and