

# H-Diplo ROUNDTABLE XXI-39

*A Teaching Roundtable*

## Teaching Gender in IR

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Roundtable Editor: Diane Labrosse | Commissioning Editor: Andrew Szarejko | Production Editor: George Fujii

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INTRODUCTION BY LAURA SJOBERG, ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON AND  
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

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The first class I ever taught by myself was called Gender and Politics. Before ever entering the classroom, I spent countless hours producing a syllabus. As I worked on the structure of the class, I grappled with how to deal with questions of positionality, reflexivity, intersectionality, student interaction, policy and career relevance, optimism and pessimism, and a wide variety of other problems of academic commitment and pedagogical strategy. I came up with a syllabus which, on paper, I found both normatively satisfactory and pedagogically optimal. I walked into the first day of class very confidently, passed out the syllabus, and explained my commitments as a scholar and a teacher in a (heavily rehearsed) way that I was sure was accessible. I then opened the floor to questions from my students.

With this build-up, you can imagine the disastrous result which followed: I was irreparably stumped by the first question. I had prepared for questions about where I fell on a scale of liberal, radical, and/or post-structural feminisms, if I was concerned about my authority to talk about intersections of gender, race, and sexuality as a cis\* white woman, among others. The question that stumped me?

“What is gender?” At the time, I could propose answers to that question in 200 pages, using a wide variety of asterisks and question marks, caveats and detours. But a couple of sentences? To a student? Uh, no. That class spent most of the semester discussing that question, and why it is so difficult both to ask and to answer. Decades later, I feel *a little* less stuck, but still respectful of the difficulties of understanding gender, especially in classroom situations.

It is this set of problems that the essays in this roundtable address from a variety of different angles. The contributors ask what gender is, and what the best ways to engage IR students with issues of gender are. Jessica Auchter, in her contribution, sets the stage for the framing of these questions: how do you decide which readings are included and excluded when teaching gender in IR classrooms? How do you frame the teaching of gender?

The authors in this roundtable discussion bring to the conversation both different contexts and different concerns. The classes in which they teach gender vary significantly—some of our essayists teach traditional-aged undergraduates at a four-year residential institution, while another teaches post-graduate soldiers at a military institution, and others fall somewhere in the middle. The spectrum of authors here is in many ways representative of scholars looking to address teaching gender in IR—they are diverse, and have diverse concerns. That said, the scholars in this roundtable share something IR scholars more broadly do not—something important—that they are indeed interested not only in teaching gender, but in doing it well.

Before I move on, then, to contextualizing and engaging these pieces, I want to talk more about those teachers of international relations and international security who are not represented here—those who ignore, take causally, or even meet with hostility, the idea of teaching gender in IR classrooms. Many colleagues omit explicit mentions of gender in their politics and IR syllabi, either because they truly believe gender is irrelevant to their substantive interests or because they have difficulty sorting through the relevant work to select the most appropriate readings for their syllabi. Even syllabi which do address gender often treat the subject quite marginally. One recurring theme is relegating work on gender to one class period or one week, and then scheduling that week as the one when a professor intends to be otherwise cancel class, telling students either to read on their own that week or that the readings are not that important and/or will not be examined. Another pattern is scholars who assign only gender-essentialist work on gender, characterizing women as necessarily peaceful or as limited to being victims rather than agents. Another theme is framing gender as something women have (not men), and therefore limiting gender readings to those about the status of women. Still others treat gender readings on their syllabi as a foil, a joke, or a one-off. By their discussion in class, teachers will signal to students that work on gender is to be taken as different, less rigorous, or less topical than ‘proper’ IR work. All of these situations communicate either an explicit or implicit message to students that the professor takes gender work less seriously than the other readings which are assigned, and the student may/should view it similarly.

The authors in this roundtable look to discourage these trends, and argue that it is important both to signal the (increasing) relevance of gender work and to put significant thought into when and how gender is presented in IR classes, and with what readings. Ozum Yesiltas is interested in mainstreaming gender in IR courses which do not primarily address gender—how do you teach gender *in IR classes*? Particularly, Yesiltas sees work based on gender as playing a key role in decentering the sticky state-centrism of mainstream IR scholarship. To Yesiltas, gender work not only contributes insights about how gender operates substantively in global politics but also insights about *where* global politics takes place and how perspectives matter in settling the substantive dimensions of the field. Yesiltas explains the ways that deploying particular readings about gender in IR classes can serve to critique the state-centrism of ‘traditional’ IR work and open up other areas of study across the global political arena.

Kathryn Fisher looks practically at the benefits and challenges of teaching gender in IR in both traditional undergraduate classrooms and in the graduate classrooms of National Defense University where she is employed. Fisher explores these challenges in three areas: conceptual/theoretical (what is gender and what do you teach it as?), illustrative/empirical (how can examples be used to provide learners with concrete understandings of gender?), and situational/self-reflective (how can an instructor get learners to reflect about gender, both in global politics and in their lives?). Across these areas, Fisher identifies many commonalities across classroom types both about successful strategies for teaching gender and about continuing challenges.

One of the continuing challenges that Fisher identifies is teaching gender without essentialism. This is also a central concern of Auchter’s. Essentialism is a word I used above without explaining; like gender, it is a complex concept. A quick way to think about essentialism is that it is a word for the unjustified assumption that people of a certain sex (or in some other category) *necessarily* have particular traits in common. Examples of common essentialisms around gender and IR and international security include the assumptions that women are non-violent themselves and/or invested in peace, that women have less fiscal agency and more fiscal responsibility than men do, and that women are always and necessarily interested in (biological and social) reproduction. Auchter discusses particular tactics to teach students what essentialism is and how to root it out of [gender-based teaching in] IR. Auchter shares experiences with centering gender discussions in classes around masculinities and femininities in global politics, rather than around women as a subject of gender. Auchter also discusses the importance of including work on gender and IR that runs counter to gender-essentialist assumptions, including research on politically violent women and victimized men. Within these contexts, Auchter discusses the importance of assigning essentialist work (which she calls ‘bad feminist’ work) to show students its analytic and political limitations. In my view, each of these is a key steps.

Another key step in my view is one taken by Susanne Zwingel and Markus Thiel in this roundtable—one of dealing with issues about teaching gender side-by-side with issues about teaching sexuality. Using a conversation-based format, Zwingel and Thiel link their personal(s) to their political(s) and pedagog(y/ies), demonstrating that gender and sexuality can decenter not only canonical literature in IR but also the stability of the subjects in/of global politics. They engage the complex relationships between teaching gender and sexuality, conundrums about presentation, and visibility around gender and sexuality.

Across these engagements, the roundtable participants provide both important theorizations and key examples about how to teach gender in IR and security classrooms. They provide reading suggestions, tips for teaching techniques, and ideas about how to deal with the everyday challenges of teaching gender and IR. The roundtable is great along all of these axes, and I find it incredibly useful.

Looking forward, it would be wonderful to be able to increase the number of voices participating in this conversation, and the diversity of representation of those voices along a number of dimensions. (How) are questions of teaching gender in IR different in different places in the world? (How) do the appropriate readings, techniques, and conversations differ by type of institution or type of course? (How) do issues of teaching gender overlap with or engage with not only questions of teaching sexuality, but also with questions of teaching race, religion, nationalism, etc.? (How) do questions of gender, sexuality, and other positionalities within classrooms affect the ways that gender can (or should) be taught? (Where) in the substance of IR

generally or international security specifically is it useful to think about masculinities, femininities, and sexualities? These are questions that I hope that readers will carry not only through reading the pieces in this roundtable, but as they construct and teach their courses.

**Participants:**

**Laura Sjoberg** is British Academy Global Professor of Politics and International Relations at Royal Holloway University of London, and Professor of Political Science at the University of Florida. Her research interests include feminist security theorizing, representations of women's political violence, and political methodology. Her work has been published in more than four dozen journals of politics, international relations, gender studies, geography, and law. She is author or editor of fifteen books, including, most recently, with Jessica Peet, *Gender and Civilian Victimization* (Routledge, 2019) and with J. Samuel Barkin, *International Relations' Last Synthesis* (Oxford, 2019).

**Jessica Auchter** is Guerry Professor and Associate Professor of Political Science at The University of Tennessee Chattanooga. Her research focuses on visual politics and culture. Her book, *The Politics of Haunting and Memory in International Relations* (Routledge, 2014), examines memorialization and the politics and ethics of being haunted by the dead. Her work appears in *Critical Studies on Security*, *Journal of Global Security Studies*, *International Affairs*, *Millennium*, *Journal for Cultural Research*, *Global Discourse*, *Human Remains and Violence*, *Review of International Studies*, and *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, among others, and in several edited volumes. She is currently working on a book manuscript on the global politics of dead bodies.

**Kathryn M. Fisher** is an Associate Professor of International Security Studies with National Defense University, working with their Joint Special Operations Master of Arts program based at Ft. Bragg. In addition to her book *Security, Identity, and British Counterterrorism Policy* (Palgrave, 2015), she has published in areas such as critical terrorism studies and temporality and International Relations (IR). She received her PhD in IR from the London School of Economics and Political Science, MA in International Affairs from American University, and BA in Geography and French from the University of Colorado.

**Markus Thiel** is associate professor in the Department of Politics and International Relations at Florida International University, Miami, and director of FIU's EU-Jean Monnet Center of Excellence. His research focuses on European political sociology and LGBTIQ Politics, with several books and articles published in these areas, including *Sexualities in World Politics: How LGBTIQ Claims Shape International Relations*' (edited with Manuela Picq, Routledge, 2015) and *European Civil Society & Human Rights Advocacy* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017). He currently works on a monograph that critically examines the EU's international LGBTI rights promotion policies (Routledge, forthcoming 2021).

**Ozum Yesiltas** is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Texas A&M University-Commerce. She earned her BA in Sociology and MA in International Relations from the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey, and received her Ph.D. in International Relations from Florida International University in 2014. Her teaching and research interests include human rights, nationalism and ethnic conflict, conflict resolution and gender and identity politics with a focus on the Middle East and the Kurdish question. She did extensive field research in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey and published on the issues of ethnic movements, conflict and democratization in the Middle East.

**Susanne Zwingel** is Associate Professor in the Department of Politics and International Relations at Florida International University. Her research interests are women's human rights and their translation, women's movements and public gender policies around the world, global governance and gender, and feminist and post-colonial IR theories. She is author of *Translating International Women's Rights: The CEDAW Convention in Context* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) and co-editor with Elisabeth Prügl and Gülay Çağlar of *Feminist Strategies in International Governance* (Routledge, 2013). She currently works on transnational gender norm translations in South Florida and the Caribbean.

ESSAY BY JESSICA AUCHTER, UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE CHATTANOOGA

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Teaching Gender and IR is a challenge because in many cases the faculty member has had to justify the need for such a course in the first place. Such justification is often couched in the context of what gender can bring to already established or existing theoretical frameworks, approaches, or concepts, such as political economy, security, terrorism, or IR theory. This allows the faculty member to justify the applicability of gender to concepts already being taught in the curriculum, but also generates the temptation to cram as much as possible into the course. Suffused in a graduate program that allowed a substantive focus on Gender and IR, my first undergraduate class offering was a syllabus full of theoretical debates between postmodernist feminist and feminist standpoint approaches to IR, and focusing on debates such as gender-as-variable. I quickly realized that students did not approach gender from an IR theory perspective when they entered the classroom, and were less interested in the internal debates of IR theory that I had used to justify the existence and need for the class in the first place.

I began to shift my perspective a bit, and ask about aspects of global politics that we could focus on in which adopting a feminist perspective would allow students to see the issue differently. Yet I quickly realized that those same intra-theoretical debates in IR theory were posing difficult questions for syllabus design, particularly the selection of reading assignments. This contribution seeks to examine the question of whose voices to include on the Gender and IR syllabus. It thus begins with the nuances of course design and the dilemmas a faculty member encounters in this regard. I examine the debate within the literature to consider what it means to teach about women's lives in global politics versus what it means to teach about gender in global politics. I consider the different ways in which to focus on problems of masculinity and femininity, and what choices faculty members can make for including particular canonical readings that may reify essentialist understandings of gender. I then advocate centralizing the question of power relations and the way gender essentialisms reinforce particular sets of power relations as a means to balance potentially competing aims.

This contribution explores the questions associated with syllabus design for teaching Gender and International Relations, two main questions in particular: 1. What is the basis for including and excluding particular reading assignments and to what extent is ideological syllabus diversity desirable for a Gender and IR class?, and 2. what are some ways in which syllabi can be framed, particularly in the women/ "women" question of a focus on women's lives versus a focus on gender?

Feminists have long focused on the importance of bringing women's voices to the table, and the way in which their stories matter for IR. Cynthia Enloe's relevant work is exemplary.<sup>1</sup> Yet there remains a debate in the field over whether we should be framing our scholarship in terms of women or in terms of gender. At my regional state university, half of the students taking my course are Women, Gender, and Sexuality studies (WGS) majors and minors, and the other half are political science majors. The WGS program recently changed its name from Women's Studies to Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, acknowledging the disciplinary shifts in language and focus. I frame this debate in two ways in my Gender and IR class.

First, I center the class on the problem of masculinity/femininity. This allows us to discuss how women's lives have been decentered from traditional approaches to global politics, while also emphasizing the ways in which gendered understandings impact both women and men. Early on in the semester I put the terms femininity and masculinity up on the board and ask students to name attributes that are typically associated with each. The binaries that emerge (rational/emotional, strong/weak, independence/relationality, violence/peace, invulnerable/vulnerable, public/private) allow us to examine how particular values generate hierarchies, and to discuss how masculine characteristics are also those that tend to be valued in the political sphere. This sets the scene for further discussions about the impact of these stereotypical characteristics. At this point in the class I usually show some images that equate nationhood with femininity, such as Lady Liberty or the French figure of Marianne. This allows students to see firsthand the ways in which states draw

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014).

on these characteristics to conduct statecraft, including waging war to defend the home front, which they can now envision as a highly gendered notion. I also show some example from popular culture, including the ad campaign by Tide detergent called DadMom,<sup>2</sup> which depicts a man using his “brute strength” to do laundry, a responsibility typically associated with mothering, and a baby carrier for sale targeted at men that looks like a bulletproof vest.<sup>3</sup> These examples help students to see how particular characteristics are gendered, and this moves them beyond assumptions about biological sex.

In order to do that, however, the students need to see examples of scholars talking about gender who reduce the issue to one of biological sex. They need to see ‘bad feminist’ work. This type of work is not the work that leaves out gender, as that is covered in every other IR class they will take. Rather, it is work written by supposed allies that offers a problematic perspective on these topics. For example, I assign Francis Fukuyama’s *Women and the Evolution of World Politics*.<sup>4</sup> This piece offers a great example of “bad feminism” because Fukuyama equates women to peace and uses this to justify the advantages and disadvantages of female leadership. For the following class I assign some responses to Fukuyama from J. Ann Tickner, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Katha Pollitt<sup>5</sup> since I have found that assigning the responses alongside the piece in the same class makes the students almost defensive of Fukuyama’s work and his ‘good intentions.’ Discussing the piece in its own right first allows for a fuller exploration of how assumptions about gender can color our perceptions of how the world works. This also helps drive home the point that individuals or institutions formally committed to gender equality may still be operating by the limiting assumption that women are emotional and peaceful, while men are rational and prone to violence.

I also assign some pieces written by women that examine the debate about women in combat and the connections between women and peace.<sup>6</sup> To contribute to the discussion, one of my students offered his experience in the military during the discussion about women in combat units, and suggested that one argument he had heard was that if women were in combat, male soldiers would take unnecessary risks to save them, thus impacting military effectiveness. This provided a great example of how assumptions about masculinity translate into policy and have real-world consequences. Examples such as this are effective precisely because theoretical debates about masculinity and femininity are often seen as armchair politics that has no bearing on the real world. So, it is important to connect these characteristics to examples associated with actual policy.

Second, I focus on how gender essentialisms impact our perception of women and men in global politics. I centralize this through two main empirical contexts: first, female perpetrators of violence, and second, male victims of violence. These two cases allow us to discuss the construction of vulnerability in global politics and also how individuals who disrupt these categories are depicted. For the former, I primarily assign Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry’s *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women’s Violence in Global Politics*.<sup>7</sup> This allows the class to begin thinking about particular framings of violent women, to

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<sup>2</sup> Tide, “DadMom,” YouTube Video, 0:52, posted 21 January 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDZ0SdlKXPXU>.

<sup>3</sup> “Tactical Baby Gear,” USA Patriot Tactical, <https://uspatriottactical.com/tactical-baby-gear-tactical-baby-carrier>.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “Women and the Evolution of World Politics,” *Foreign Affairs* 77:5 (September/October 1998): 24-40.

<sup>5</sup> J. Ann Tickner, “Why Women Can’t Run the World: International Politics According to Francis Fukuyama,” *International Studies Review* 1:3 (Fall 1999): 3-11, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1521-9488.00162>; Barbara Ehrenreich and Katha Pollitt, “Fukuyama’s Follies: So What if Women Ruled the World?” *Foreign Affairs* 78:1 (January/February 1999): 118-125.

<sup>6</sup> Sara Ruddick, “Pacifying the Forces: Drafting Women in the Interests of Peace,” *Signs* 8:3 (Spring 1983): 471-489; Anna Simons, “Women in Combat Units: It’s Still a Bad Idea,” *Parameters* 31:2 (Summer 2001): 89-100; Megan McKenzie, “Let Women Fight,” *Foreign Affairs* 91:6 (November/December 2012): 32-42.

<sup>7</sup> Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry, *Mothers Monsters, Whores: Women’s Violence in Global Politics* (London: Zed, 2007).

see how such violence is narrativized and justified. For the latter, I assign Charli Carpenter's work on Bosnia<sup>8</sup> in order to examine how the civilian protection norm is gendered and the ways in which this renders male civilians vulnerable and unprotected by the very international frameworks which are designed to protect civilians. Through these two cases, we dissect the stereotypes of vulnerable persons in global politics, and explore the very real impact these have on men and women. We connect this back to the stereotypical features of masculinity and femininity and I frame the discussion using questions like: If men are naturalized to behave violently, why do we see such high rates of Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among male soldiers?

This also connects back to the reasons why I assign the work of 'bad feminists' such as Fukuyama. Fukuyama suggests that to be a female leader, you have to be tough-minded like former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher or former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. In discussing the topic of socialized traits, students are able to excavate the assumption made by most IR scholars that politics requires tough-mindedness in the first place, and inquire what it might mean to think of IR not as the realm of hard politics? Whose lives and whose voices would come to the fore in this regard? We then return to work like that of Cynthia Enloe on women's lives<sup>9</sup> to consider how, even work which purportedly focuses solely on women from a liberal feminist approach, can broaden our understanding of what qualifies as legitimate subject material for IR. Here I suggest that faculty members centralize the question of power relations and the way gender essentialisms reinforce particular sets of power relations as a means to balance potentially competing aims in the focus on women versus gender. I pose the question to students: What does it say about our idea of International Politics if the sources and 'scholars' on the subject, use language that promotes a hierarchy where the white masculinized west is on the top? What might it mean to consider a feminist foreign policy, for example?

In other words, when we are selecting readings for a Gender and IR course, I suggest attending to which voices students hear and how authoritatively we allow them to speak. Drawing attention to the functioning of power relations in world politics is a first step, but we should also expose students to the power relations at play in which scholars have been authorized to speak as purported experts on feminist IR or on women's lives, and the different ways in which they speak.

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<sup>8</sup> Charli Carpenter, "Women, Children and Other Vulnerable Groups: Gender, Strategic Frames and the Protection of Civilians as a Transnational Issue," *International Studies Quarterly* 49:2 (June 2005): 295-334; Carpenter, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence Against Civilian Men and Boys in Conflict Situations," *Security Dialogue* 37:1 (March 2006): 83-108, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010606064139>.

<sup>9</sup> Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, Bases*.

Discussing “Teaching Gender in IR” is a simultaneously energizing and slightly daunting endeavor given the challenge and opportunity of identifying how best to engage and communicate this topic. We see an increasing attentiveness to all things gender in IR across and through a range of spaces: Pedagogy/andragogy, syllabi and representation, theoretical debates building in existing research in feminist and gender studies, and specific issue areas such as “Women, Peace, and Security,” gender and domestic labor, and women and transgender service members in military combat roles. For this essay I have chosen to engage in a relational discussion across two different educational audiences, and three different educational areas of focus. The audiences are undergraduate/non-military and graduate/military, and the areas of focus are conceptual/theoretical, illustrative/empirical, and situational/self-reflective. More specifically, I endeavor to identify teaching efforts, challenges, and lessons learned for each audience corresponding to all three areas of focus as they relate to teaching gender in IR, highlighting similarities and differences across each audience, with a concluding prioritization of resonance, relevance, and agency in the classroom and through assignments.

### Undergraduate/Non-military Courses<sup>2</sup>

As background context, my undergraduate teaching experience includes being a graduate teaching assistant in the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) IR department, a teacher for the school-wide course LSE 100, and a Visiting Assistant Professor at Ohio University in the political science department. These were all varied student bodies, classroom formats (from seminars to lectures of 100 or more students), and degree programs.

#### *Teaching efforts*

Teaching responsibilities include everything from deciding course content and required readings to classroom time management balancing ‘lectures’ with ‘student-driven engagement.’ For *conceptual/theoretical* areas of focus, the overarching goal for undergraduate/non-military audiences was to introduce theories in feminist and gender approaches to social science more broadly, and IR more specifically. This included core concepts and definitions (feminism, gender, sex, social construction) with reference to some key authors, for example J. Ann Tickner, Laura Sjoberg, Cynthia Enloe, and Lene Hansen.<sup>3</sup> In *illustrative/empirical* terms, moving from the conceptual/theoretical necessitated what I would consider empirical snapshots into gender and IR, which I situated largely in terms of security/insecurity. Such examples include differential wages across gender, race, and ethnicity, statistics on domestic violence, and performativity based on everyday constructions of masculinities and femininities. These snapshots, it was hoped, would foster a connection of theoretical principles (i.e. social construction) with real-world examples that resonated with students given their experiences in life, maybe asking OU students about how gendered dynamics relate to a story in their local paper *The Post*,<sup>4</sup> or asking students at the LSE about the gendered and racialized dynamics of international sport given the London Olympics. A goal here was

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<sup>1</sup> The analyses and conclusions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of National Defense University, the U.S. Department of Defense, or any other U.S. governmental entity.

<sup>2</sup> “Non-military” does not imply no students had prior military experience or were currently in ROTC, rather that the institutions were not military.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Caron E. Gentry, Laura J. Shepherd, and Laura Sjoberg, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Security*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> An interesting recent article highlighting the end of welding classes for women is Lily Roby, “Womens’ welding classes leaves lasting impact on Athens,” 24 February 2020, <https://www.thepostathens.com/article/2020/02/athens-makerspace-closure-womens-welding-impact>, accessed 7 March 2020.



to support *situational/self-reflective* learning to facilitate student engagement, voice, and discussion, prioritizing both student agency and a certain type of responsibility linked to gender and IR.

### *Challenges*

An overarching *conceptual/theoretical* challenge (albeit not exclusive to teaching gender and IR) was how to make complex and often abstract theoretical concepts resonate more directly with the students. Thinking about and teaching gender in IR is, I would argue, not about memorizing definitions, rather, it is about better ‘seeing’ the way in which gender is an unavoidable aspect of how we think and experience international politics, security, and identity. Acknowledging this explicitly can then help students (and faculty) better understand the ways in which politics unfold in particular ways, in particular spaces. In addition to the challenge of connecting theory with student resonance, a key challenge was the limited time in which to do so. For an introductory undergraduate course on IR, having one day dedicated to ‘gender and IR’ is limiting.

A key challenge in terms of *Illustrative/empirical* material related to teaching gender and IR again relates to student resonance. While there are a multitude of historical and contemporary examples of how gender plays a role in power dynamics and associated ideational and material effects, prioritizing which ones to highlight in teaching, whether in informal classroom discussions, planned lecture/seminar material, or formal assignments, is not clear cut. Key questions include how to ascertain what matters to the relative student body and individual students at hand, how to ‘know’ this, and then how to incorporate it into class in a way that challenges all of us while opening space for critical thinking and self-exploration rather than a detached ‘information transfer’.

Linked to the above are challenges related to *situational/self-reflective* aspects of teaching and learning. One area I would highlight is how to encourage students (and faculty) to share their own points of situatedness and self-reflection without the burden of requiring them to do so. There are clear ethical aspects of this challenge, for example the responsibility to acknowledge our own positionalities without pushing any sharing of this beyond respective comfort zones. Alongside such a broader ethical piece are the logistical difficulties of many undergraduate courses that in my experience were 100 or more students without seminar breakouts.

### *Lessons learned*

For *conceptual/theoretical* lessons learned, in many ways, less is more. A consistent reference to existing literature, research, and IR-specific terminology matters, but only to an extent. I suggest that a consideration of student resonance may matter more, and this applies to *illustrative/empirical* challenges and questions as well. How can we best stay tuned into IR research while listening to students? What aspects of gender and IR are filtering through one’s respective university campus? Current events? Popular culture?

As a *situational/self-reflective* lesson, my recommendation is to introduce this from the beginning and reference situatedness throughout each lesson, whether gender related or not, then have an assignment (blog entry, short answer, etc.) that enables but does not require self-reflective engagement. In this way, it could be a kind of protected space through which students can engage the topic how they see fit and still meet course objectives in terms of literature engagement, conceptual coherence, and issue area examples. I also think, to the extent that professors are comfortable with doing so, sharing our own experiences if even as informal asides or anecdotes, can be useful vehicles through which to ground gender and IR connecting literature with individual human experience. This does not have to be presented in a way that connotes arrogant navel-gazing, rather, it can be an expression of trust and humility with students while still asserting one’s role as a teacher.

### **Graduate/Military Courses**

This discussion on graduate teaching is focused on professional military education (PME). In this context my experience has been teaching mid-late career students who are on average over 90% male and United States (US) Special Operations Forces, with approximately ten percent of the class being international partners and in the US Department of State. Classes included a graduate course on international security studies (ISS) and an elective on critical security studies, terrorism, and counterterrorism, with both endeavoring to bring in gender and IR.

### *Teaching efforts*

For the *conceptual/theoretical* side of ISS, required readings focused on social theories, including social constructivism, post(de)-colonialism, and feminist/gender approaches.<sup>5</sup> In this vein students were introduced to the fundamentals of ‘non-traditional’ IR lenses as a vehicle through which to bring gendered approaches, rather than ‘gender’ as a stand-alone category, into view. For the elective, the focus was on gendered approaches specifically linked to ‘critical security studies’ approaches, anchored largely in “Feminist and Gender approaches to Security” from Vaughn Williams and Peoples’s text *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*.<sup>6</sup>

Given that these students are state security practitioners, there is a wealth of potential material through which to tease out direct *illustrative/empirical* examples. In past classes this has included reference to women in combat roles (such as women qualifying for the US Army’s 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment<sup>7</sup> or completing the Special Forces Qualifications Course (becoming a ‘Green Beret’)<sup>8</sup>), transgender service in the U.S. military, sexual assault and harassment in the U.S. military, and broader discussions on everyday relations of patriarchal systems and gendered inequality (for example the economics of military bases, domestic labor, and salary). Reference to ‘gender’ as a category in security practices (such as women in peacekeeping and the United Nations) also came into discussion.

In an effort to bridge the *conceptual/theoretical* and *illustrative/empirical* areas of focus, a key goal of graduate teaching was to attend to *situational/self-reflective* areas of engagement in more depth. This occurred largely, though not exclusively, in two areas: Class discussion (including the experiences of students and myself as faculty) and formal assessments/assignments. An example of the latter included a narrative self-reflection (with the full disclaimer that students were not required to write about their own experience) focused on intersections of identity, security, and insecurity linked to readings in critical security studies. While gender as a focus was not a topic that was forced onto students, I have found that many decide on their own to bring in gendered dynamics when they write on identity and (in)security.

### *Challenges*

The *conceptual/theoretical* challenges of gender in IR for graduate PME relate largely to the overall challenge of linking theory to practice, especially given that the student body consists of advanced military/security practitioners. As much as there was an overall openness to critical approaches, to include a gendered lens, the impact of engaging theory largely relied

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<sup>5</sup> Helen Kinsella, “Feminism,” in John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 189-203.

<sup>6</sup> Nick Vaughn Williams and Columba Peoples. *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, “No Turning Back? First Woman Makes Army’s Elite 75th Ranger Regiment, Big Step For Women in Combat,” *Defense One*, 19 January 2017, <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2017/01/no-turning-back-first-woman-makes-armys-elite-75th-ranger-regiment-big-step-women-combat/134691/>, accessed 6 March 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Gibbons-Neff, “First Woman Set to Pass Special Forces Training and Join Green Berets,” *New York Times*, 26 February 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/25/us/politics/first-women-special-forces-green-berets.html>, accessed 6 March 2020.

on whether such readings and discussions could connect to problem solving in the security realm. This was and is a welcomed challenge: It pushed me to challenge my own starting assumptions of critical approaches as essential to epistemological and ontological engagements in IR regardless of applied outcome; it encouraged a consistent “Why/how does theory ‘matter’ in mitigating everyday insecurity?”. As with undergraduate teaching, a component of such theory-practice bridging is to ensure that relatively jargon-heavy literature and abstract concepts can resonate with students in a way that is supported but not predetermined by the instructor.

This challenge of resonance was also present for *illustrative/empirical* areas of focus. It was and is essential to connect what matters to students with theoretical engagements around ‘gender’ as a ‘gendered *lens*’ rather than gender as a strict ‘category’. As such, while a multitude of topics could be incorporated as examples to show gendered dynamics, the ones chosen for PME spoke largely although not exclusively to military contexts. I do not think this was by default a limitation, but it is a serious ethical and epistemological challenge in that it paradoxically meant reinforcing a U.S. state centric lens and traditional security studies in the process of trying to think critically about gender.

For *situational/self-reflective* teaching goals there was a need to ensure the agency of students while also bringing in my own situatedness if/as appropriate. This can help to establish a level of trust and openness in the classroom alongside a pluralism that encourages full participation of every individual. This is a challenge in that while acknowledging positionalities is essential to illustrating the way in which gender has everyday implications for (in)security, it can also lead to a misinterpretation of ‘supporting self-reflection means legitimizing bias.’ Such topics are often personal, and while I would argue that it is necessary to confront and support and encourage students, it should not be forced upon students.

### *Lessons learned*

In the context of teaching gender and IR to graduate PME, a lesson for *conceptual/theoretical* areas is to ensure consistent and explicit attention to theory meeting practice. While I continue to try and learn, based upon experience so far the best way is to provide clear and tangible examples. One way to do so is through independent and small group work. In discussing the way gender entails social construction along expectations of gender roles and different expressions and embodiments of masculinities and femininities, one classroom task was to write out what characteristics construct students’ individual identities, then sharing these in larger discussion. A smaller seminar facilitated this, and enabled students to take ownership and agency of their engagement with the reading.

This connects with a lesson learned in *illustrative/empirical* areas as it provided a way to show how critical gendered approaches *do* in fact engage ‘empirics,’ not just through statistics or case studies, but in this case, by showing lived experiences of gender drawing on key theoretical concepts; the students’ experiences were the empirics they were exploring. Another lesson I am still working on is how to discuss gender critically without (however unintentionally) essentializing gender as a timeless category, whether in analytical, discursive, or ontological terms. The perhaps biggest lesson was the use of a specific assignment as a way to encourage and support *situational/self-reflective* learning. While not everyone engaged with a gendered topic, having an assessed task that was very much student driven enabled those inclined to push their thinking about gender and IR in a personalized way that still linked to ‘security.’ I have also learned that a full aversion to not being self-reflective as a professor to mitigate perceptions of ‘bias’ is not particularly helpful. Instead, an honest sharing of my own experiences of gendered dynamics (for example, a male conference panel chair stating “well, I guess we have that gender problem solved” because all panelists were women), done with humility and care to avoid excessive self-reference, may provide an opening for others to do the same.

### *Conclusion*

Through this essay I have tried to identify examples and challenges of teaching gender and IR across two student audiences and three areas of focus: undergraduate/civilian and graduate/military, and conceptual/theoretical, illustrative/empirical,

and situational/self-reflective. While I could offer only a brief snapshot, one that unavoidably reflects selection bias, and with much work to do so as to improve my teaching, there are some useful conclusions to draw.

One is that there are in many ways more similarities than differences connecting undergraduate/civilian and graduate/military audiences. While each audience (and the participants within each audience), represent a diversity of thought, particular backgrounds, and unique motivations, an overarching teaching goal is to connect theory with practice, and simplify theoretical concepts to bring out resonance and relevance. Whether through listening to students and what issues matter to them as part of how course decisions are made, a conscious support of individual agency in assignment instructions, or sharing our experiences that speak to power relations and (in)securities, ensuring student-centered/driven teaching is essential. As teachers we have a responsibility to balance instruction and speaking with being attentive to student concerns and interests. A question for each class is how best to understand and support resonance along/through/with gender and IR for different audiences. This does not mean taking out critical theory or abstract concepts. Rather, it is to think about how we can best engage such concepts to connect literature with what students care about.

A second conclusion, and ongoing challenge, is how to engage 'gender' without essentializing gender in a way that actually obstructs rather than enables critical thinking. This is particularly difficult in areas of IR that position gender as a 'thing' that obscures thinking in terms of a gendered lens, to include power hierarchies and exploitations *within* gender(s), for example incorporating the role of racialized and ethnic boundary dynamics. Alongside this is the need to ensure a consistent attentiveness to masculinities and men. This is not a novel claim, and excellent work already engages this issue.<sup>9</sup> But it remains all too often the case that reference to 'gender' is interpreted as a type of singular, liberal feminism, exclusively about (white) women, that misses much of the excellent critical work challenging such singularity.

There is much more to be learned in how we teach gender and IR, in no small part requiring a critical self-reflective attentiveness on our own assumptions about the world as teachers. In thinking of the above, an overarching take-away that I humbly suggest we consider in our teaching, cross-cutting conceptual/theoretical, illustrative/empirical, and situational/self-reflective areas of focus and student audiences, is how to best support resonance, relevance, and agency, both through formal assignments and informal classroom discussion.

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<sup>9</sup> For example: Paul Kirby and Shepherd, Laura J, "The futures Past of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda," *International Affairs* 92: 2 (2016): 373-392; Kirby, Paul, "Refusing to Be a Man?: Men's Responsibility for War Rape and the Problem of Social Structures in Feminist and Gender Theory," *Men and Masculinities* 16:1 (2013): 93-114.

*Gender Mainstreaming in Teaching International Relations*

While gender studies and feminist theories had long been accommodated within other branches of the social sciences, engagement with gender within the discipline of International Relations has remained notably scarce. The publication of Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* broke new ground in 1990 by bringing a new approach to the study of some of the core concepts of International Relations (IR) such as war, conflict and political economy.<sup>1</sup> Her approach, which Enloe identifies as informed by a "feminist curiosity," made a strong case for the relevance of ordinary lives of women, who sew blue jeans, pick bananas or work as domestic servants, to the study of international politics.<sup>2</sup> Alongside the growing feminist interest in contributing to substantive debates within IR theory, the 1990s also witnessed increasing efforts to mainstream gender within the practice of international politics. Gender mainstreaming was endorsed as a critical and strategic approach for achieving gender equality commitments at the 1995 Fourth United Nations (UN) Conference on Women in Beijing. This was followed by a variety of UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions to support efforts to mainstream gender into all substantive areas of international policy as well as the UN Millennium Declaration of 2000 which specified gender equality as a long-term development goal. Incorporating these developments is imperative to any effort to bring gender into the teaching of IR. Nonetheless, given the scarcity of women's voices and experiences in political science textbooks, a major impediment to mainstream gender in IR classes is the high reliance on textbooks in undergraduate teaching.

The state and inter-state relations have long been embraced as the very core of IR as a discipline. Mainstream theories of IR take the state as a given and do not much question how and why the world is constituted as a system of states.<sup>3</sup> Rather, they focus on the consequences of this, the problems that arise, and how those problems can be addressed within the existing international architecture. As Enloe emphasizes, however, a gender-curious analysis teaches one to ask whether anything that passes for natural, given, inevitable, or inherent has been "made."<sup>4</sup> Asking how something has been made invites not only an investigation of those who hold the power of 'making,' but also exploring possibilities for change and transformation. As the workings of myriad forms of power become a subject of investigation, many more topics become visible and enter the agenda of IR. In order to mainstream gender in IR classes, therefore, the primary task is to open space for discussing international politics from the vantage point of people rather than an a priori focus on state behavior which often dominates political science textbooks. Such a starting point allows for the recognition of gender as relevant not only to specific problems in IR, such as war, conflict, and militarization, but also to various forms of activism that challenge the ways in which the existing state system is made and reproduced.

The method I employ for addressing the problems associated with state-centric teaching of IR is based on a hands-on approach which combines a mix of theoretical and empirical reading material with experiential learning techniques. This perspective suggests an epistemological engagement with IR theories which encourages students to explore different questions each paradigm asks to produce knowledge about the world and to explain how international relations work. For this exercise, I assign published work on realism and liberalism, such as excerpts from Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of*

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<sup>1</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Enloe, *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, 12.

*International Politics* (1979), John Mearsheimer's *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001) and Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's *Power and Interdependence* (1977), as well as critical theory, including various strands of Marxist, feminist and postcolonial thought.<sup>5</sup> In class, I ask students to analyze each theory in terms of the questions they ask to understand the world and figure out which questions they think matter for them the most. The exercise allows students to place themselves in relation to the theories and reflect critically on diverse ways of knowing, including those in which elements such as class, gender, race and ethnicity are at the center of the analysis. I supplement these readings with case studies on events and issues in IR, ranging from the war on terrorism and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars to peacekeeping operations and international political economy, and ask students to highlight the different ways in which mainstream and critical theories of International Relations approach global problems and how each approach informs different solutions.

As students are exposed to this epistemological exercise, significant room opens up for analysis of IR from the vantage point of people rather than an exclusive focus on state behavior, allowing for a recognition of how the questions prioritized by mainstream approaches push the study of certain topics and actors to the margins of the discipline. Once we establish in class the understanding that people both shape and are shaped by what happens in the international arena, I direct students towards theme-based readings centered specifically on gender, primarily from feminist scholars such as J. Ann Tickner, Enloe and Chandra Mohanty.<sup>6</sup> We then analyze the material through experiential learning techniques including simulations, in-class debates and small group activities.

One of the experiential learning exercises I use in class includes a small group media analyses activity on the perceptions of Kurdish women fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the U.S. and British media. As part of their preparation for this activity, students read the introduction of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Mohanty's seminal work "Under Western Eyes" (1984) and excerpts from Tickner's *A Feminist Voyage through International Relations* (2014).<sup>7</sup> I supplemented these readings with articles from Kurdish Studies scholars in order to provide students with insight regarding the history of the Kurdish struggle in the Middle East and the evolution of Kurdish women's activism within the movement.<sup>8</sup> Afterward, students were divided into groups and assigned to conduct searches on Kurdish female fighters in the U.S. and British media from January 2014 to December 2018 to capture peak times in news coverage of Kurdish women

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<sup>5</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001); Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977); Andrew Linklater, *Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1990); Stephen Gill (ed.), *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); J. Ann Tickner, *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Tickner, "Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation," *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 17:3 (1988): 429-440; Tickner, "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements Between Feminists and IR Theorists," *International Studies Quarterly* 41 (1997): 611-632; Chandra T. Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres, eds., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*; Enloe, *The Curious Feminist*

<sup>7</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Boundary 2* 12:3 (1984): 333-358; Tickner, *A Feminist Voyage through International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

<sup>8</sup> Ofra Bengio, "Game Changers: Kurdish Women in Peace and War," *The Middle East Journal* 70:1 (2016): 30-46. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mej.2016.0009>; Martin van Bruinessen, "Matriarchy in Kurdistan? Women rulers in Kurdish history," *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 6:1-2 (1993): 25-39; Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden, "Understanding Today's Kurdish Movement: Leftist Heritage, Martyrdom, Democracy and Gender," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 14 (2012): 2-10.

from the siege of Kobane in late 2014 to the battle for the city of Afrin in Syria in early 2018. Each group focused on a particular news outlet and made a list of the ways in which Kurdish women were invoked and linguistically generated in news pieces, op-eds and commentaries within the specified time frame. They then analyzed their respective samples through the lenses of post-colonial feminism and orientalism.

In the end of the exercise, we found that during the time frame we explored, there was widespread media coverage of Kurdish female fighters in the context of the fight against ISIS which provided the Kurdish cause with an unprecedented degree of international recognition and visibility. This recognition, however, was divorced from the authentic ideology and the feminist approach embraced by the agents of the struggle and presented instead within the confines of a Western liberal framework.

One of the major representations that students identified was the portrayal of Kurdish women as heroes and champions of women's rights in the Middle East which was articulated through the presentation of Kurdish female fighters as 'badass' soldiers fighting against radical Islamists in the region. Students indicated in their analysis how this popular representation framed Kurdish women in ways that fit neatly into the liberal women's rights discourse while the specific sociohistorical background and the political language of the Kurdish struggle was ignored. As we referred back to our readings on post-colonial feminism, we discussed how these Western narratives feed into the Orientalist dichotomy between the civilized Occident and the barbaric Orient articulated through the juxtaposition of Kurdish female fighters as 'liberated' and 'secular' women fighting for Western liberal ideals, with ISIS, the radical Islamist enemy of the West.

Besides the heroic representations, students also pointed at the numerous media references to Kurdish women's 'victimized' past in a conservative society where they found emancipation in the Kurdish movement's secular vision. We evaluated these references in relation to gendered orientalism and discussed the ways in which Kurdish women were posited as the new democratic proxies of the West in the Middle East and how their struggle was appropriated to reproduce the hegemonic, Western-centric category of the 'Muslim woman,' a victim in need of secular values for her emancipation. Students identified that in these readings, the female fighters' political agency is centered on either resistance against the patriarchal structures of their own society or against the gender-based violence committed by ISIS, thus marginalizing the space for Kurdish women's engagement beyond the resistance/victimhood narrative.

Further underpinning the resistance/victimhood narrative, students highlighted the assertions in Western media that represent Kurdish women's political agency as a by-product of the movement's male leadership. In explaining the rationale for not taking seriously women's insights and impacts, Enloe emphasizes the tendency to view any advancements that women have gained not as a result women's political theorizing and organizing but because women have been given these advancements by enlightened men in power.<sup>9</sup> In a similar vein, we found that a common theme shared by Western publications is the view that Kurdish women's participation in the armed struggle is encouraged and facilitated by Kurdish leaders (read: male) as a tactic to gain Western sympathies for the nationalist project. We underlined that this kind of portrayal was instrumental to portray Kurdish women as victims who fight not by choice but at the behest of the movement, or the male leadership without sufficient engagement with why Kurdish women choose to participate in political violence and how they approach armed struggle on their own terms.

On the problem of how women are usually portrayed as the objects or victims of the international political system, Enloe states the following:

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<sup>9</sup> Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, 17.

In this worldview, women are forever being acted upon. They are victims of garment factory disasters; they are the targets of sexual assault in wartime; they are the trafficked, the low paid; the objectified. Rarely are women seen as the explainers or the reshapers of the world. Rarely are they made visible as thinkers or actors.<sup>10</sup>

Further elaborating on the problem in colonial and post-colonial contexts, Mohanty points to the Western representations of women in third world countries who have “needs” and “problems,” but few if any have “choices” or the freedom to act.<sup>11</sup> The task of mainstreaming gender in IR classes requires highlighting these problems which can best be achieved through establishing an understanding that International Relations is not only what states practice, but also the experiences of men and women in relation to core subject matters of IR such as war, peace, and security. Such an understanding allows for a greater inclusion of alternate ways of knowing the world that may not be available in traditional political science textbooks.

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<sup>10</sup> Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, 34.

<sup>11</sup> Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes,” 344.



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 ESSAY BY SUSANNE ZWINGEL AND MARKUS THIEL, FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
 

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Gender and LGBT+ issues in international relations have received increased attention in past years. They are, however, still considered marginal in the teaching of IR theory or specific subjects within the field. In our estimation, they are neither simply ‘topics’ to be treated (akin to war and peace, environment etc.), nor do they constitute yet another school of theory. Rather, similar to constructivism, we perceive the project of gendering and queering IR as an ontological and epistemological project that impacts how conventional IR is enacted and perceived. In this essay, we aim to compare and contrast how gender and LGBT+ can be taught to increase students’ awareness of the different viewpoints they provide. While we both teach classes that focus on these issues, we also aim to include them in our standard teaching repertoire, for example, in IR theories or Introduction to IR, with our respective expertise. The teaching of these subjects should not be classified as ‘special interests,’ but as important correctives to the standard gender-blind curriculum. It applies to a large segment of our student population -in fact, to *all* of our students, as the teaching of gender includes *all* genders. We structured our contribution by formulating and individually addressing essential questions about our respective experiences:

*How has your ‘personal’ influenced your ‘gender-political’?*

**Zwengel:** I am a white, heterosexual cis woman who considers herself an academic feminist. I have a family, which comes with reproductive labor next to my paid work (I am doing laundry while writing this). This ‘double shift’ influences what and how I teach in at least two ways: the importance of reproductive labor in women’s lives, the societal undervaluation, and the personal exhaustion is something that I teach *and* live. Further, I do a lot of unrecognized-work-that-is-good-for-others in my professional life, which includes thinking a lot about teaching rather than focusing on the ‘big picture’ (getting grants and doing prestigious things). Writing a blog about teaching also falls into the category of under-recognized service work. I have worked on feminist issues for almost three decades and have never been affiliated with institutions where gender sensitivity is part of mainstream considerations.

Currently, I teach in a Politics and International Relations department with over 30 faculty members. Within the IR program, I am the person hired specifically for teaching feminist and gender issues (some of my colleagues integrate feminist material in their classes, but among other things). When I ask undergraduate students if they have heard about gender in International Relations in other classes, they typically say no. Last year, I was invited to discuss feminist epistemology in the Graduate methods class and asked if and how students have gotten in touch with feminist literature. To my surprise (and both pride and disappointment), many said through my teaching. It is fair to say, then, that gender is not a core concern in my department’s teaching, but it is still considered worth hiring one person to teach it. Several of my colleagues see this as a division of labor: “You do gender. I do Latin America” (this a verbatim quote, except for the world region).

The wider institutional context mirrors the department – there is no open hostility toward gender studies, because Florida International University, where I am employed, is open to diversity. Nonetheless, institutional exclusions based on gender are obvious to those who pay attention but are not recognized by the overwhelmingly white male leadership (in South Florida, ‘white’ often includes ‘Hispanic white’). This ignorance became particularly clear when FIU’s leadership saw no problem with hosting a Miss Universe Beauty Pageant on the university’s premises and was caught by surprise when faculty members protested<sup>1</sup>. I am going into detail about the wider institutional context because it makes a difference if you consider your teaching at the core of your discipline/ institution; or if you feel you have to sneak in your material or do extra work to make it digestible for students (why SHOULD this be important to them if they have never heard about it in any of their other classes?).

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Vasquez, “FIU’s bet on Miss Universe comes with a price,” *Miami Herald*, 15 January 2015, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/education/article7243046.html>

**Thiel:** As a white, cisgender out gay male who holds a tenured position in a global North-based research university, I am conscious of the double-edged position I inhabit. On the one hand, I have to be careful about how my engagement with LGBT+ issues is perceived among colleagues, students, and in my discipline more generally. It may be seen as a peripheral research interest, not worthy of attention, publication or promotion, or it may be regarded as a subject too personal and thus one that is lacking supposed standards of ‘objectivity’ that are still the norm in IR. Which is why, for instance, I developed my substantial research focus on LGBT+ politics only once tenure was secured.

On the other hand, I am also aware of my privileges as someone in a position of relative power to effect change, and as a white, gay, upper middle-class male I figure on top of the hierarchy among gender and LGBT+ minorities. Therefore, I am with one foot a minority-representative that is often called upon to provide input from ‘your perspective,’ but can also use my being representative of the dominant race, class and gender in academia – and the fact that I can conceal my gay-ness if need be—to advance my intellectual agenda, or my career. With this comes a responsibility to not only make students more aware of the complexity of lived LGBT+ experiences, but also to gradually change our discipline from within to make it more inclusive by walking the academic tightrope between conformity to disciplinary standards and policies, and critical transformation of them.<sup>2</sup>

*Teaching Gender in a Large Urban Public Research University such as Florida International University*

**Zwinglel:** I find myself in two settings when teaching gender: a class with a general theme in which gender is one perspective (e.g. IR Theories) or a course entirely dedicated to gender (e.g. Women and Men in International Relations). In the first case, I divide the class in two parts: cannon and de-centering theories. After the traditional Realism etc. in the first part, we discuss Feminism and many other ‘non-traditional’ lenses such as Queer Theory, Postcolonialism, Indigenous Perspectives, and Green Theory in the second<sup>3</sup>. At the end of the course, students have learned that one can think from many different angles. They have to identify which theories were most convincing for them and why. The least popular is always Liberalism – perhaps it is too bland?—and a good number of students favor Feminism and/ or Queer Theory. In sum, the strategy for this course is to widen the scope of what belongs to IR theory and include gender and other excluded perspectives.

Many of my colleagues teach the course differently and some have publicly questioned the assumption that Feminism belongs to IR. But undergraduate students, who are ‘untainted’ by disciplinary conventions, have no difficulty to realize the importance of a feminist or queer perspective in IR. It makes sense to them.

When it comes to courses with a focus on gender relations or feminist thinking, I highlight two components: the students’ own gendered existence and how it relates to larger societal structures, which implies that gender is a social category and a relation of power<sup>4</sup>; and the connection between activism and knowledge creation. For example, when we talk about the global political economy and how it is gendered, students think about their employment experiences (a male Victoria’s Secret sales person; a female secretary in a law firm with only male lawyers, etc.) and consumption patterns (why do shavers for women look different from those for men and why are they more expensive?) and how these fit into or deviate from the larger gendered structure (gender-segregated labor markets; male needs framed as basic, female ones as luxurious). The activism-theory nexus is crucial in order to question the idea of objective knowledge; without feminist and other social movements, certain ideas would never have reached problem status, for example, violence against women as a global

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<sup>2</sup> David Paternotte, “Coming out of the Political Science Closet: The Study of LGBT Politics in Europe,” *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 1:2 (2018): 55–74.

<sup>3</sup> *International Relations Theory*, edited by Stephen McGlinchey, Rosie Walters and Christian Scheinpflug, available at <https://www.e-ir.info/publication/international-relations-theory/> is a wonderful basis for this approach.

<sup>4</sup> Raewyn Connell and Rebecca Pearse, *Gender: In World Perspective*, third edition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

patriarchal pattern, or achieved legitimacy as a scholarly perspective, in the form of analysis and critique of patriarchy and heteronormativity in combination with other global hierarchies.<sup>5</sup>

The students I work with represent many dimensions of diversity – most of them are working class, Latinx, immigrants, of color, and/or the first in their families to go to college. They make me feel the privileges in my life, for example that I grew up in a country where higher education is free. Unlike them, I was unburdened by backbreaking workhours while at college and accumulated debt afterward. I did not have to live the anxiety that my students' economic present and future must cause them. One response to these pressures is to not assign textbooks and rather to post readings online at no cost to the students. What I find harder to deal with is the fact that many students, due to their precarious economic situations, cannot devote the time to learning that the 'ideal student' of my imagination would.

**Thiel:** My teaching of international LGBT+ Politics (& Advocacy) is not limited to LGBT+ studies dealing with questions of recognition, activism or inclusion, but it also includes a critical discussion of the debates surrounding those topics, as well as an introduction into Queer Theory. The latter provides a counterweight to the liberal-democratic, normative approaches that are more visible in actually occurring international LGBT+ politics. In the beginning, I provide an overview of global developments, aiming to highlight the fact that despite a globalizing discourse surrounding 'LGBT+' equality, there still exists significant variation across the globe in terms of how LGBT+ rights manifest, and are promoted and/or manipulated by various governments or non-state actors. This global review is necessary as U.S. students, even in a diverse setting such as Miami, often have limited firsthand experiences outside their country and tend to live in a millennial-urban, identity-affirming bubble of sorts. More importantly, I establish early on the distinction between gender identity and expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation in order to highlight differences and overlaps between those, as students easily conflate those terms.

Here, the foundational knowledge established in feminist theory<sup>6</sup> provides a solid basis for differentiating between these concepts and recognizing the socially constructed nature of so-called 'SOGIE' (sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) issues. Another important segment focuses on the question of rights universalism versus cultural relativism, reflecting the way in which assumed 'universal' conceptions of the human rights of LGBT+ people end up becoming polarized as special, Western LGBT+ rights.<sup>7</sup> Both 'gender and LGBT+ ideology' have more recently become a pretext for dispute by conservative and androcentric forces, and students generally relate well to instances of chauvinism or homophobia based on their own SOGIE positionality. More broadly, I aim to include queer literature<sup>8</sup> that is critical of the mainstream liberal internationalist model, and also global South scholars in order to de-center the parochial Northern literature that is dominant in this newer field of research (again, being aware of my own ambivalent position within this context).

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<sup>5</sup> Laura J. Shepherd, ed., *Gender Matters in Global Politics. A Feminist Introduction to International Relations*, 2nd edition (London, New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> J. Ann Tickner, "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements Between Feminists and IR Theorists," *International Studies Quarterly* 41:4 (2013): 611-632; Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in Martha Fineman and Rixanne Mykitiuk (eds), *The Public Nature of Private Violence* (New York: Routledge, 1994): 93-121.

<sup>7</sup> Altman, Dennis, and Symons, *Queer Wars* (London: Polity Press, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Cynthia Weber. *Queer International Relations*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Nikita Dhawan, Antke Engel, and Maria do Mar Castro Varela, eds., *Hegemony und Heteronormativity: Rethinking "the Political" in Queer Politics*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2011).

*The Challenges of Teaching Gender*

**Zwingle:** While many students benefit from and appreciate my teaching, some do not. Sometimes, this comes across in outright sexist statements and a dismissive attitude that devalues course content as ‘opinionated’ or ‘biased’ (for example the assertion that there is a gender pay gap). Sexist assumptions ooze into the classroom—and how could they not? Many students in Miami are exposed to rather openly patriarchal and heteronormative family structures. Some yearn to find other types of valid norms—college can be liberating for them. Others seek to reinforce conservative gender norms; they feel defensive in college, which is supposedly a liberal space. Often, such situations can be dealt with constructively, for example by opening up the debate for all students. However, female teachers deal with sexism in the classroom regularly and I have not seen my institution recognize the work that it takes to approach such situations pedagogically.

Experiencing *only* sexism, and not homophobia, racism, or transphobia in the classroom means that I am privileged. I work to recognize situations where my privilege (whiteness, cisness etc.) and the expectations that come with it may be alienating to students. I am at the beginning of this endeavor, but I feel that feminist reflexivity is useful on the way.

*The Differences between Teaching LGBT+ Issues and Gender Ones*

**Thiel:** Although the fields of international law and global governance are increasingly responding to the claims of both gender and LGBT+ advocates, the latter have fewer and less robust legal international provisions, and those tend to also be more contested than gender equality ones. Another comparison focuses less on (inter)governmental responsibilities and actions, but on non-state actors that influence the domestic implementation of human rights for LGBT+ individuals, such as civil society groups, religious associations, or corporations. Again, a parallel to the first wave of feminist activism, with its focus on representation and inclusion, is easily understandable for students. However, this liberal-democratic strategy is then contrasted with queer theoretical tenets that highlight transgressive and non-normative aspects that are often downplayed, since policy-makers need to have a relatively fixed and generally supportive, heteronormative population to work for/with. Having students debate these contrasting approaches is one of the most rewarding experiences, as is seeing how they aim to link these apparently irreconcilable positions together.

Focusing on the international, students learn not only about the mechanics of transnational LGBT+ advocacy, but also about deeper conceptual issues related to it, such as unifying nationalist tendencies assembled in the term homonationalism<sup>9</sup> (which appears to have prepared the way for the more recent notion of ‘femonationalism’ advanced by far-right female politicians) or the neoliberal, depoliticized inclusion strategies prevalent in the notions of homonormativity<sup>10</sup> or homocapitalism.<sup>11</sup> Even though these concepts can be difficult to parse out for undergraduates, I aim to relate them to students’ experiences based on their own stances regarding nationalism, societal equality, and capitalism, and ask them to critically reflect on the way in which these ideas have done more damage than provided benefits to the LGBT+ community worldwide. Finally, I invite glocal activists and scholars to offer presentations in class, and also ask students to go into the field, for instance by attending a LGBT+ focused museum exhibition or event in order to connect theoretical knowledge to local actions. This scholar-activist linkage is essential in a field like this, and provides students the opportunity to apply what they’ve learned to what they will hopefully be doing in the future.

*Concluding Thoughts*

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<sup>9</sup> Jaspir Puar. *Terrorist Assemblages* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Lisa Duggan. *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (New York: Beacon, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Rahul Rao. “Global Homocapitalism,” *Radical Philosophy*, 194 (November/December 2015): 38-49.

The teaching of both, Gender and LGBT+ issues in IR, while having common theoretical and epistemological roots, comes with idiosyncratic opportunities as well as challenges. Yet both should be more prominently featured in IR department curricula as they have become more policy-relevant and important correctives to the scholarly canon