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Report:
**Teaching at the College of Political Science and Law of Shandong Normal
University (SNU) in Jinan**
(December 20, 2004 – January 10, 2005)

Introduction

Sponsored by the Overseas Young Chinese Forum (OYCF), I taught a short-term intensive course on “international relations theory” at the College of Political Science and Law of Shandong Normal University (SNU) during December 2004-January 2005. I arrived in Jinan on December 20, 2004 and started lecturing the second day on December 21, 2004. I taught a joint class of 40 graduate students who major in international politics (class of 2006 and class of 2007). Some faculty of international politics in the college also attended my class. I taught four periods (8:00AM to 12:00 noon) on Tuesdays and Thursdays and a total of 24 hours during the three weeks.

The Course

This course was designed to be both an overview of the field of international relations and an in-depth analysis of international relations theory. I used two types of textbooks: Edited books on international relations theory and the original works of international relations theorists. The graduate students at SNU had been exposed sporadically to international relations theory before my arrival but they had not been systematically taught international relations theory. Few students had read original texts in English. I systematically introduced international relations theory, exposed students to the study of international relations and different perspectives on international relations, and provided updated information to the students and faculty at SNU.

I started this short course by identifying four central issues in international relations today: Security, International Political Economy, Environment, and Human Rights. As each of these issues could be a one-semester course, I chose to focus on the definitions and distinctive characteristics of these issues. I then shifted the focus to international relations theory and the study of international relations.

First of all, I discussed with students the method for studying international relations by concentrating on the issue of “level of analysis.” Kenneth Waltz’s *Man, the State, and War* was used to illustrate the issue.

Secondly, I introduced the basic assumptions of realism and discussed classical realism and neo-realism. As realism as a political tradition dominated international relations for years, I elaborated on the logic and rationale of its dominance.

Thirdly, I introduced the liberal tradition in international relations and liberalism's recipe for peace. We discussed Kant, Wilson, Locke, free trade and interdependence, international regimes and the role of international institutions, and democracy and individual liberty.

Fourthly, I introduced the basic assumptions of constructivism and addressed the key questions raised by social constructivism. In relation to constructivism, we also briefly discussed the feminist tradition in international relations.

Fifthly, I introduced decision-making process theory by focusing on Graham T. Allison's *Essence of Decision* and Richard C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin's *Foreign Decision Making*.

Sixthly, I introduced political culture theory and discussed the provocative writings of Francis Fukuyama and Samuel P. Huntington.

Seventhly, I addressed the issue of "elusive quest" for grand theory of international relations.

Finally, I concluded this short course by putting the central issues in international relations today in perspective and highlighting the challenges that China faces and the opportunities China has in the 21st century.

Teaching Methods

My teaching method is a combination of lecture and discussion. I lectured most of the time when I was introducing the basic concepts and assumptions and the major theories of international relations. I engaged students in class discussions and conversation when I was evaluating theories and addressing contemporary issues.

Feedback from Faculty and Students

My teaching at SNU is a success. My lectures and talk were very well received by both faculty and students there. This course is essential to the students there as they are pursuing a Master Degree in International Politics, and nobody is offering an international relations theory course. Many students told me that they got ideas from my lectures about their Master thesis and my lectures were stimulating. It was an eye-opening experience for many students as this was the first time that they were exposed to both new perspectives and new approaches. They highly appreciated and valued this opportunity. The Dean of the College invited me to teach there again next year. It was a rewarding experience for me.

Other Activities

I also gave a 2-hour public talk on “2004 American Election and Sino-American Relations” to the whole College of Political Science and Law of Shandong Normal University at 7:00 PM on January 5, 2005. Before the talk, the Dean of the College held a short ceremony to present me with a certificate as a Guest Professor of SNU. In the talk, I analyzed Bush’s election victory, addressed the issue of division in American politics today, and discussed the policy orientation of Bush’s second term and its implications for Sino-American relations.

During my stay there, I also had opportunities to meet and exchange ideas with their school leaders about exchanges between our two schools. As an immediate result, SNU invited our school to visit their school and our school will send a delegation to SNU in May 2005 to explore opportunities for exchanges and establishing partnership between our two schools.

Summary

In the process of globalization, the line between international and domestic politics is rather blurred and national borders in many cases are irrelevant. It is becoming increasingly important for China to produce its own experts and professionals on international issues. But many provinces and cities other than the municipalities are surprisingly poorly prepared and equipped. For scholars like myself, it was really a rewarding experience to make my contributions in a small way. I really appreciate OYCF for facilitating bridge-building between China and the West. I am personally thankful for this opportunity of teaching at SNU, and I am sure that students and faculty of the College of Political Science and Law at SNU are thankful for this opportunity too.