

New Book – Signature Pedagogies in International Relations

Written by Jan Lüdert

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<https://www.e-ir.info/2021/04/28/new-book-signature-pedagogies-in-international-relations/>

JAN LÜDERT, APR 28 2021

This is an excerpt from *Signature Pedagogies in International Relations*. Get your free download of the book from E-International Relations.

This edited volume builds on recent Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) research to showcase a range of teaching and learning approaches in International Relations (IR). A critical contribution arising from SoTL has been that effective IR teaching varies across academic disciplines and departments (Haynie, Chick, and Gurung 2009; Haynie, Chick, and Gurung 2012). Of course, teaching strategies travel across higher education institutions and are shared throughout the academy; as all educators need to lesson-plan, present relevant content in a structured and engaging manner, while actively including students in the learning process (Frueh et al. 2020; Vlcek and Bower 2020). Apart from the confluence of relevant disciplinary content, the pedagogical approach and instructional repertoire, as well as the program objectives in which a course is couched; an effective instructor will draw on common teaching strategies shared across the discipline while bringing a unique style of instruction to the discipline.

This chapter introduces the reader to the signature pedagogy framework and its relevance to teaching and learning International Relations. It establishes that IR as a discipline, although carrying the semblance of a singular pedagogy like other social sciences, is more usefully understood as a place of plurality; hence the volume's title: 'Signature Pedagogies in International Relations.' Second, it details how pedagogical practices and their underlying assumptions influence how we teach and impart knowledge, and offers a synthesis on the diverse contributions of the volume. This collection of signature pedagogies, more broadly, intends to present a wide range of active learning strategies and offer critical reflections on IR teaching as a moral and ethical endeavor through which students come to appreciate eclectic theorizing, encounter global affairs via layering central concepts, and gain transferable skills for a wide range of possible careers. By sharing techniques and reflections, authors in this book provide pedagogical insights for IR educators, students, and practitioners, as well as practical ways for developing their own approaches to learning about the world of politics. As such, this volume offers a unique collection bringing together IR educators from across the world and various university settings.

Contributors take as their starting point that IR is a practical form of education. At the most basic level, and irrespective of theoretical persuasion, IR is animated by the question of 'how we should act' (Reus-Smit and Snidal 2008, 7). Yet an IR education is, strictly speaking, neither professional nor vocational in orientation, but introduces students to different theoretical and methodological perspectives with the intent of illuminating global issues that demand action (e.g., promoting peaceful coexistence between nations or addressing transboundary challenges, such as climate change). By discussing aspects of their own IR signature pedagogies and detailing specific teaching models, the authors in this volume explore the following questions:

1. What concrete and practical acts of teaching and learning IR do we employ?
2. What implicit and explicit assumptions do we impart to students about the world of politics?
3. What values and beliefs about professional attitudes and dispositions do we foster in preparing students for a wide range of possible careers?

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Leading on from this, we encourage others in the field to consider how their own teaching, and especially its underlying assumptions, influence how we impart knowledge to the next cadre of IR graduates.

Mapping Shulman's Signature Pedagogy Framework onto International Relations

Lee S. Shulman, emeritus professor at the Stanford Graduate School of Education, first proposed the conceptual framework for developing signature pedagogies in 2005.[1] Shulman advanced that education, irrespective of discipline, constitutes professional preparation and that conceptualizing signature pedagogies (SPs) helps reveal the methods of instruction common in an academic discipline. SPs, as such, are pervasive and cut across individual courses and institutions. An SP's central function is to build *habits of mind* in students, which lead them to act and think like experts and professionals. SPs, in other words, socialize students into academic disciplines and act as steppingstones for their careers. Signature pedagogies matter precisely because they

implicitly define what counts as knowledge in a field and how things become known. They define how knowledge is analyzed, criticized, accepted or discarded. They define the functions of expertise in a field, the locus of authority, and the privileges of rank and standing (Shulman 2005b, 54).

In other words, SPs are less concerned with what content we teach, focusing instead on how we teach and impart knowledge. SPs, in essence, are types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways of preparing future practitioners and are used by educators to transfer skills of how *to think, perform, and act*. Moreover, signature pedagogies are integral to an instructor's pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman 1986). Such focus clarifies the intersection between educators' subject matter expertise (or disciplinary content knowledge) and their pedagogical knowledge (the instructional strategies used to impart content knowledge). Although SPs, as the foundation of pedagogical content knowledge, remain discipline-specific, they, as Shulman (2005a) noted, share three common dimensions.

First, they have a *surface structure*, which includes the concrete acts of teaching and learning. Surface structure involves the practical and operational parts of teaching: how lessons are planned and organized, and how teaching and learning praxis are enacted within a particular discipline (e.g., lectures, seminars, flipped classrooms, case studies, simulations). Indeed, Daniel Clausen in Chapter 3 challenges us to consider ways to decrease our reliance on lecturing, and instead establish the IR classroom as a place where students speak more and the IR teacher speaks less. A call most, if not all, authors, in this collection share. Archie W. Simpson, in Chapter 10, for example, pays heed to the overlooked aspect of supervising undergraduate dissertations (or honors theses), which prepare students to become research-active, engage them in analytical and critical thinking, and encourage originality as future IR scholars or practitioners. Xiaoye She, in Chapter 12, provides the reader with an overview on the use of simulations as an integral part of IR signature pedagogies. She employs a series of small, in-class simulation in combinations with games, case studies, and discussion groups to create recursive and active learning sequences.

Second, SPs are based on a *deep structure* of assumptions about how best to impart a certain canon of knowledge (e.g., Socratic method, applied and participatory learning, problem-based learning, service learning, negotiated curricula). Shane Joshua Barter, in Chapter 6, here analyzes 'Learning Cluster' courses that take students abroad (e.g., Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore) to encounter international studies as a form of experiential education. His unique teaching, in fact, disrupts more common IR surface and deep structures away from the comforts and confines of the classroom to the complexities of international studies on the ground. In Chapter 8, authors William J. Shelling and Jenny H. Peterson share insights on experiential learning in a human rights course in partnership with the Scholars at Risk Network, which aims to free wrongfully imprisoned scholars around the world. In their case, students apply human rights advocacy strategies while being sensitized to the central function of academic freedom. In Chapter 13, Ismail Eerkam Sula presents three active learning techniques as part of his SP; namely, strategy games, crisis simulations, and the use of storification. With the latter being particularly innovative, employing a tale of two villages: 'Rationalia' and 'Reflectia' to engage students in theoretical debates on rationalist and interpretivist IR methodologies. In Chapter 14, by Xira Ruiz Campillo, Katty Cacante Hernández, and Antonio Moreno Cantano, the authors underscore that fostering students' creativity and innovation is essential for IR graduates to meet twenty-first century challenges arising from technological advances, social change, and global transformations. They offer

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readers an explication of the pedagogical use of policy memos, graphic novels, and virtual posters.

Third, SPs have an *implicit structure*, which is related to the moral values and beliefs about professional attitudes, conduct, and disposition. Implicit structures include the normative and moral aspects of teaching and learning in a specific discipline, including ontological beliefs, ethical values, and methodological and pragmatic attitudes (e.g., speaking truth to power, reporting facts, parsimonious theorizing, the nature of objectivity, which actors count, the connection between the 'is' and 'ought' in IR). As Lisa MacLeod underscores in Chapter 2, an IR education seeks to help students gain liberal arts skills that apply beyond academia. In the end, a degree in IR equips students with transferable skills and, most importantly, an analytical, critical, and enquiring mind. Mathew Davies establishes in Chapter 3 how an IR degree promotes global citizenship skills, which his teaching approach revolves around fostering students' thoughtfulness as understood by Hannah Arendt. Erzsébet Strausz, in Chapter 6, shares a method of students not simply reading IR scholars but engaging instead in 'letter-writing' to them. With this effort, Strausz intends to transform students' experiences of disconnection into dialogue. By writing to IR authors (real and imagined), student-teacher relationships are transfigured, novice-expert positions open up, enabling learners to realize their agency as part of the discipline. In Chapter 9, David Andersen-Rodgers, challenges readers to consider the ethics of teaching the use of violence in in-class simulations and especially with respect to effects on students engaging in questions of life and death not merely from a strategic but, as he emphasizes, a moral position. Patricia Capelini Borelli, Patrícia Nogueira Rinaldi, Roberta Silva Machado, and Talita de Mello Pinotti, in Chapter 11, illustrate the deep integration of a Model United Nations simulation project as practice for students' professional formation. Through these simulations, students learn to negotiate, find consensus, and persuade in real-world multilateral and multi-stakeholder scenarios.

With this synthesis in mind, it is important to note that signature pedagogies also share a set of common temporal features. First, they embody and demarcate teaching frameworks that are *pervasive* and *routinized*. They, fully or in part, carry over generations of educators. A memorable example in my own socialization is when a leading constructivist professor asked us during the very first graduate seminar what our orientation on human nature was: Do we think individuals are inherently 'good' (the liberal view), 'bad' (the realist view), or that good and bad are 'socially constructed' (constructivist view). This simple technique left an indelible mark on me. I have since used it as a point of departure for introducing students to IR theories and to encourage valuing theoretical plurality. Pervasive practices and routines, of course, are not without problems when stagnant and lacking innovation; yet remain useful because they enable a focus on complex subject matters, which, in turn, develop *habits of mind* around various affective, cognitive, and psychomotor learning (Lüdert and Stewart 2017). Indeed, as the authors make clear, institutions of higher learning continue employing classic forms of lecturing while increasingly incorporating new technologies (e.g., learning management systems, graphic novels, virtual posters, use of clickers) and active learning strategies (e.g., experiential learning, travel clusters, problem-based learning, team projects, and simulations). Second, SPs involve capturing and measuring student performance; while emphasizing their role as visible, active, and accountable learners. SPs are, in the end, pedagogies of uncertainty; rendering the classroom a space that may be unpredictable and surprising. This latter aspect, as the authors of this volume illustrate, entails that IR subject matters involve learning to navigate complexities that defy simple solutions as well as ethical dilemmas, including the realities of violence and the persistence of global inequalities. This type of learning content that is so central to IR undoubtedly raises the emotional stakes for both the instructor and learner, leading to the need for teachers to foster curiosity while decreasing anxiety and with the goal of enhancing students' learning outcomes. A focus Tamara A. Trowsell takes up in her chapter, which encourages us to prepare students to be both ontologically resilient and versatile.

To take stock, SPs hold value across higher education institutions and departments. When consciously formulated and employed they, as this volume advances, promise to help IR educators tailor active, collaborative, and transformative learning strategies. As a result of examining and formulating our teaching, we improve the means by which student learning takes place. By gaining insights into how our teaching methods are couched in our disciplines, we can devise learning activities and outcomes that are a) suitable to our field and assessment strategies and b) prepare students for their varied future career paths inside and outside the ivory tower. Of course, as noted by Murphy and Reidy (2006), there is a distinction to be made between professions and academic disciplines. International Relations degrees neither prescribe a single career path nor intend to train students for a specific

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profession. By exploring IR signature pedagogies, we aim to offer a guide to students interested in taking ownership over their studies while preparing novice students to emerge as the next generations of experts (whether as future scholars, policymakers, or other practitioners in diverse sectors).[2]

Valuing Innovation and Plurality in IR Teaching

As scholars with busy research agendas and full teaching loads, we tend to overlook that IR is a practical form of education. At the most basic level and irrespective of theoretical persuasion, IR is, as mentioned, a practical discourse animated by understanding global political phenomena. Because an IR degree prepares students for a range of possible careers, we purposefully focus our instruction on IR's key concept, theories, methods, and perspectives with the goal of helping students competently analyze global issues.[3] By beginning to formulate their own IR signature pedagogies, the authors in this volume take stock of how teaching IR is neither monolithic nor stagnant, but a space of innovation and plurality (Hagmann and Biersteker, 2014).

While IR educators employ different strategies, it seems manifest, nonetheless, that we typically model our teaching on the concrete act of organizing syllabi and lectures around canonical texts. Indeed, is there an introductory class to IR that does not talk about Waltz and anarchy, about E.H Carr and the twenty-year crisis, about Kant and the democratic peace? The answer is likely no and introductory textbooks, although increasingly paying attention to diverse theories, typically follow a framework that sequences IR theories temporally from realism, to liberalism, and then to critical approaches. Implicit in these ways of teaching is that we foster a set of assumptions that relate to the praxis of what happens in the world of politics and how we make sense of that world through theoretical approaches, their ontological presuppositions, and methods for discovery or confirmation. These assumptions include, among other things, that there are certain actors in International Relations, which we treat as central: states. We assume that these states behave in a certain way and foster a certain type of relation with each other and vis-à-vis other actors. In fact, we frequently center classroom debates by mapping theoretical assumptions onto particular cases studies concerned with the relevance of states: the Concert of Europe, the Cold War, Globalization, and Decolonization to name a few.

Yet again such habits of teaching IR are in flux as most authors in the volume attest. This is most evident as we introduce students to other types of actors that are both interesting and important. It is here, with subsequent chapters detailing, that much is happening in our discipline that requires us to evaluate and reflect on the beliefs we have about International Relations as a practical discourse and field of inquiry. This is why there is broad consensus amongst the contributors to incorporate not only discussions of states, but broaden students' view in light of other interesting actors in the realm of world politics: non-state actors, International Organizations, epistemic communities, citizen and interest groups, corporate as well as criminal, and others. In this way, students are equipped to engage with the material not only in light of empirical realities, but to reflect on the 'state' of our theories and their utility through, for example, simulations and mock negotiations. Widening perspectives on IR actors changes the classroom climate away from passive regurgitation of state-centrism toward providing students with a view that not all important actors are states, and instead signals that purposeful agency is situated within other actors, including individuals like themselves.

By broadening IR signature pedagogies along these lines of inquiry, our students begin to engage with the implicit structure of learning about global affairs. It is here that the authors have taken cues from students who keep pushing us to review our teaching as an iterative process of continuous improvement (and which inevitably involves a level of risk taking). For instance, IR's reliance on the traditional lecture format, seminars, and tutorials appear outdated, especially in the face of technological innovations. In fact, we all notice a shift in the ways students use technology in the classroom. With that realization, we can all agree how we, as instructors, ought to pay attention to changing processes of learning.[4] Especially since Covid-19 and the requirement to teach online, we are likely to further integrate flipped classroom modalities, varied technologies, and media into our courses (Goldgeier and Mezzera 2020). In fact, these kinds of changes to the surface structure of our instruction should be embraced as they afford students the ability to take greater ownership over their research projects and the production of online as well as graphic and video artifacts. This correspondingly has the budding benefit of developing student information literacy by providing opportunities to implement communication, technical, and research skills (Lüdert 2017).

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Aside from deepening cognitive learning, authors in subsequent chapters underscore the importance of perspective-taking techniques to develop students' affective empathy. Here, contributors discuss ways of how our instruction goes beyond preparing students to be proficient in consuming news about World Politics but are enabled to present and write about politics and policies as informed, thoughtful global citizens. In this sense, contributors discuss how specific teaching approaches are intended to prepare students for actual work in International Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, government agencies, and other careers. Indeed, several authors design their courses to achieve larger learning goals surrounding transferable skills, aptitudes and dispositions relevant for IR careers and beyond.

On the flip side, authors question the reliance on lecturing students and detail how they create space for peer engagement and participatory learning instead. As the chapters on simulations highlight, for instance, students work on applied, emblematic, and illustrative case studies in Intergovernmental Organizations (IGO) simulations or mock climate change conferences. These types of experiential and active learning approaches shift our roles away from all-knowing lecturers to facilitators of learning. The benefits of this shift in our role are wide-ranging. They provide space to walk around the class, answer individual questions, listen carefully to group discussions, and gain an overall better understanding of students' comprehension and comfort with the material. In fact, these types of direct conversations with students deepen our engagement, as opposed to answering only a few questions in a large lecture setting.

Teaching IR as a Practical Discourse and Field of Inquiry

The study of IR is a practical discourse and field of inquiry that centers on conceptions of the 'is' and the 'ought.' Students of IR have always been animated to investigate the global politics empirically, while concurrently being asked to consider the normative dimensions undergirding phenomena of international significance or finding possible solutions to them. As E.H Carr put forth in the *Twenty Years' Crisis*. 'Utopia and reality are [...] the two facets of political science. Sound political thought and sound political life will be found only where both have their place' (Carr 1946, 10).

As IR educators, we ask our students to grapple with contending ideas and competing theories or; to put it differently: we require students to assess the relative merits of IR 'isms.' The cacophony of theories—from realism, liberalism, constructivism to critical theory and post-modernism—are reflective of IR's breadth and theoretical diversity. Irrespective of our own theoretical persuasions, we do intend to pass on to students the ability to draw competently on these 'isms.' Building students skills on identifying the use of IR 'isms' (by politicians, in the news, or scholarship) or drawing on them in their own research is key to drive students' understanding of IR as a practical discourse and field of inquiry. Through teaching IR 'isms,' we essentially help students realize how theory-building takes place in relation to both empirical and normative questions about the international landscape. We clarify for students that IR theorizing rests on assumptions about what matters empirically as well as normatively (e.g., states are central actors, agents are rational utility maximizers, norms constitute interests and identities, human rights are universal) and help them to differentiate how IR theories are informed by specific and/or overlapping ontological and epistemological assumptions. As the authors make clear, we all seek to foster in students a stance of eclectic theorizing. We underscore that IR 'isms' answer some big and important questions, and that no single approach that answers all questions exists. With such an understanding, we expand students' insights and IR knowledge base. Indeed, through plurality, we accommodate adherence to diverse research traditions and by facilitating fruitful conversations across and outside the boundaries of the academe (Sil and Katzenstein 2010).

We achieve this by enabling students to think critically and logically about central IR concepts, knowledge practices and dispositions. One useful tool I like to put forward is to explore and layer IR's threshold concepts through the two faces of empirical and normative IR theorizing. Threshold concepts (TCs) are foundational or core concepts, which once grasped by students, transform their perception of a subject matter, discipline, or field of study. Meyer and Land (2003) first popularized threshold concepts in relation to troublesome knowledge, or those ideas, concepts, theories, mechanisms, that at first appear difficult to grasp, strange, or counterintuitive.[5] They conceptualize threshold concepts as,

akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a

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transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view. This transformation may be sudden, or it may be protracted over a considerable period of time, with the transition to understanding proving troublesome (Meyer and Land 2003b, 1).

Threshold concepts have four common characteristics. First, they are irreversible, as perspective change and transformation resulting from the acquisition of a TC are often accompanied by an *aha* moment: a breakthrough that is not forgotten or can be unlearned only through considerable effort. This can be observed, for instance, when students contend with the historically contingent and socially constructed nature of the assumption of sovereign states. Second, TCs are integrative, by clarifying and exposing to students previously obscure and hidden connections within a discipline or subject matter. An illustrative example here would be the transition students undergo when grasping theoretical assumptions underlying foundational concepts with wider everyday meaning, such as anarchy, order, and hierarchy. Third, TCs are bounded insofar as any conceptual space carries borders, which demarcate new conceptual areas of comprehension. Finally, and as mentioned, they are troublesome, because students move 'from a common sense understanding to an understanding which may conflict with perceptions that have previously seemed self-evidently true' (Davies and Brant 2006, 114).

The claim here is that there is a discernable connection between TCs and SPs. Threshold concepts are specific to disciplinary teaching contexts insofar as they transform how students think in a particular discipline, and how they perceive, apprehend, or experience particular phenomena within that discipline. TCs are deeply embedded in SPs because as conceptual gateways a given threshold concept is

ritualized, inert, conceptually difficult, alien or tacit, because it requires adopting an unfamiliar discourse, or perhaps because the learner remains 'defended' and does not wish to change or let go of their customary way of seeing things (Meyer, Land & Baillie, 2010, ix).

By making IR's foundational concepts tangible for students through exploring substantive problems, key issues and exemplary case studies in original, creative ways, drawing on various theoretical traditions and eclectic scholarship (e.g., war and peace, cooperation and governance, justice and (in)equality) we ultimately help students to emerge as critical thinkers, future practitioners, or scholars. This is different from structuring IR courses as a set of competing and segmented theories—a classical pedagogic approach risking excessive compartmentalization with students—instead of building their knowledge base. Instead of teaching via compartmentalizing IR theories, I contend that it is more productive to help students illuminate connections, similarities, and differences between IR theories and research traditions, their assumptions, and explanatory reach. Appreciating IR through an eclectic set of theories or as a *toolbox* or as *lenses*, as subsequent chapters underscore, supports students in illuminating complex interactions among processes and mechanisms that bear on a given problem, helps them recognize related aspects in a similar issue area, and ultimately moves students toward richer explanations and interpretations of global issues. Helping students recognize the dynamics and complexities of real-world problems and the practical effects for solving these through the eclectic lens of various IR theories, in turn, assists them in appreciating the importance of empirical and normative dimensions inherent in the study of IR on their own terms.

While there are a wide variety of big and important IR concepts to comprehend, those listed below seem central in supporting students' transformation and progression from novice to expert.[6] With that caveat in mind, it is helpful to introduce threshold concepts in clusters or groups of questions so students can delve deeper into (inter)relationships of 'isms' and perspectives on the 'is' and 'ought' of IR. In fact, threshold concepts are vehicles for structuring IR curricula away from sequencing them along with standalone 'isms.' They, as outlined below, help students emerge with richer and deeper affective and cognitive connections about IR as a practical discourse and field of inquiry:

- Units and levels of analysis; or who matters and has effects in IR? (e.g., exploring state centrism, states as unitary actors, individuals as utility maximizers, domestic/international politics, non-state actors, IGOs, epistemic communities, etc.)
- System, Structure, Society; or how should we comprehend the nature of IR? (e.g., from the study of 'International Relations' or toward the study of 'global society,' perspective taking 'view from below and

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from above')

- Hierarchy, Order, Anarchy, Hegemony, Governance; or how we narrate the story of IR?
- Agency and Structure; or what determines individual behavior: social structures or human agency?
- Ideational and material dimensions; or what are (social) facts and which of them count as evidence?
- Authority, Power and Legitimacy; or how is influence yielded and projected? (e.g., compulsory, structural, institutional, productive)
- Value and ethical commitment; or what matters (most) and to whom? (e.g., national interest, individual freedom, international cooperation, responsibility towards others, inclusivity/self-reflexivity)
- Change and Continuity; or what is our orientation towards stasis or evolution? (e.g., agnostic, skeptical, optimistic, past awareness, present focus, future orientation, etc.)

In essence, IR signature pedagogies include a focus on both traditional lectures and active learning techniques, including, but not limited to, seminars, discussions, simulations, and case studies, and can be advanced by layering threshold concepts relevant to studying international, regional, and local phenomena.

Conclusion

This volume's introductory chapter examined how SoTL research related to Shulman's signature pedagogy framework improves teaching and learning IR. Understanding the 'how' we are teaching International Relations—as the authors in this volume demonstrate in subsequent chapters—enables us to teach beyond content, formulate learning outcomes and assessment strategies suitable to our field, and articulate to our students how learning IR maps onto their career aspirations. The central takeaway here is that, by formulating our SPs, we can better assess whether and how well we are preparing students to be the next generation of scholars, experts, policymakers, or practitioners. Examining IR signature pedagogies primarily offers a framework to focus our individual teaching strategies and, in extension, advances our collective understanding of effective pathways for learning in our discipline. As subsequent chapters make clear, we must continuously adjust and refine our teaching practice to be more effective by seeking students' feedback and reflecting on our teaching praxis. By deploying IR signature pedagogies, we support individual learners' growth and motivate them to be prepared for their careers as well as to emerge as informed global citizens and changemakers. By drawing on a variety of learning techniques, we help students connect, center, collaborate, and reflect on their learning, and by bringing a practical and ethical focus to IR teaching, we contribute to student development beyond the university setting—as practitioners in their chosen field. A charge, I trust, we can all embrace.

**I would like to thank Lisa MacLeod, Jenny H. Peterson and Tamara A Townsell for their comments.*

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[1] Shulman (2005a, 2005b), in his seminal work, did not focus on the social sciences. He developed the signature

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pedagogies framework for professions such as law, medicine, nursing, and engineering. This volume picks up on the work by Gurung, Chick, & Haynie (2009) who adapted Shulman's framework for other disciplines and by taking the assumption that IR educators prepare students for various roles in the larger field of International Relations.

[2] Even though an IR education, like other social sciences, does not train students for specific careers, it remains important to prepare students at all levels for multiple career pathways, in and outside of academy.

[3] As Garrett points out the social sciences are seen as academic rather than vocational or professional (1999:312).

[4] My personal teaching style is based on backward design principles that first identify desired learning results, from which appropriate forms of measuring students' performance are developed via sequenced learning activities (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). In terms of individual lesson planning, I embrace a structured teaching model – known as the BOPPPS model – which breaks lesson plans into six distinct components. Structuring classes around lesson planning models allows for greater consistency while fostering accountability for instructors and students. See for an overview: https://wiki.ubc.ca/Documentation:Mini-Lessons_Basics_BOPPPS_Model_for_Planning_Lessons.

[5] Examples include threshold concepts such as 'Personhood' in Philosophy; 'Gravity' in Physics; 'Depreciation' in Accounting; 'Legal Narrative' in Law; 'Limit' in Mathematics or 'Power' in Political Science. See Meyer, Land & Baillie, 2010, p. ix

[6] To be clear this is my own approach/focus and various authors in this volume advance signature pedagogies that challenge the explication here. I welcome their perspectives as it pushes me (and I hope others) to reflect on improving teaching and learning IR.

About the author:

Dr. Jan Lüdert is the Head of Programs at the DWIH – German Centre for Research and Innovation New York City. He previously served as Associate Professor at City University of Seattle where he was the inaugural Director of Curriculum and Instruction. He has held positions as Visiting Research Scholar at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies at City University of New York's Graduate Center as well as Research Associate with the DFG 'Dynamics of Security' project at Philipps Marburg University. He is an alumnus of Seattle's World Affairs Council Fellows and UBC Liu Institute for Global Issues Scholar programs. He is the author of *Non-State Actors at the United Nations* (Routledge); co-author of *The United Nations Trusteeship System* (Routledge); and editor of *Signature Pedagogies in International Relations* (E-International Relations).