

**Course Design to Connect Theory to Real-World Cases: Teaching Political Philosophy in Asia**

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*Abstract:* Students often have difficulty connecting theoretical and text-based scholarship to the real world. When teaching in Asia, this disconnection is exacerbated by the European/American focus of many canonical texts, whereas students' own experiences are primarily Asian. However, in my discipline of political philosophy, this problem receives little recognition nor is it comprehensively addressed. In this paper, I propose that the problem must be taken seriously, and I share my own experiences with a novel pedagogical strategy which might offer a possible path forward. Recent scholarship has championed an active learning approach, where students engage in their own research, and deliver outward-facing products that have a meaning and purpose beyond the confines of the student-professor relationship. In this spirit, I have put into practice a strategy of course design, where active learning is used to overcome students' disconnection with the course content. In particular, as a major component of course assessment, students are required to write an 'opinion piece', which is then showcased on a public website. The opinion piece must address a real-world issue which the student himself or herself selects and deems important; furthermore, it must build on the theoretical tools of the course and be written in a style which makes it accessible to a wider audience. I discuss the implementation of this strategy in two political philosophy courses, including strategies to avoid 'dumbing down' and 'diluting' the process of critical thinking. While no formal analysis of impact of the strategy on learning outcomes has been conducted, an anonymous pedagogical survey has yielded an overwhelmingly positive response for students' self-reported perceptions of the curricular innovations.

*Keywords:* Asian classroom; course design; practical application; online writing; student engagement; decolonising knowledge