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**Citation:** Odermatt, J. (2025). Reimagining International Law Teaching. *European Journal of International Law*, 36(1), pp. 165-184. doi: 10.1093/ejil/chaf021

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**Link to published version:** <https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/chaf021>

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# Reimagining International Law Teaching

Jed Odermatt\*

Folúké I. Adébísi, Suhraiya Jivraj, and Ntina Tzouvala (eds). *Decolonisation, Anti-Racism, and Legal Pedagogy: Strategies, Successes, and Challenges*. London: Routledge, 2024. Pp. 296. £28.79. ISBN: 9781032498249.

Paul F. Diehl and Charlotte Ku. *Teaching International Law*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2024. Pp. 188. £76.50. ISBN: 9781802204100.

Jean-Pierre Gauci and Barrie Sander (eds). *Teaching International Law: Reflections on Pedagogical Practice in Context*. London: Routledge, 2024. Pp 424. £124.00. ISBN: 9781032551517.

Peter Hilpold and Giuseppe Nesi (eds). *Teaching International Law*. Leiden: Brill Nijhoff, 2024. Pp. 507. £156.42. ISBN: 9789004678873.

## Abstract

*This review essay explores contemporary challenges in teaching international law as discussed in four recent books on the subject. The books all address various approaches to improving pedagogical strategies within the discipline but vary in their aims and approaches. A key challenge identified is balancing the need for theoretical and critical depth while covering the broad scope of international law's 'core' topics. The books also highlight the tension between presenting international law as a unified system and integrating diverse regional and local approaches. The review argues that international law teaching today requires more than simply introducing students to fundamental concepts; it demands equipping students with the tools to critically engage with the international legal system. As international law increasingly addresses global issues like climate change, migration and*

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*international security, effective teaching should cultivate students' problem solving and critical thinking skills, preparing them to navigate complex problems.*

## 1 Introduction

In 1999, Gerry Simpson's *On the Magic Mountain: Teaching Public International Law* highlighted a malaise in teaching international law brought about by a sense of marginality among international law teachers. Caught between rigid formalism and dismissive realism, international law teachers, he argued, often adopt a 'romantic' mode of teaching, which risks theoretical incoherence and the depoliticization of the subject matter.<sup>1</sup> Over two decades later, Simpson's critique remains relevant, but the contemporary challenges have evolved.<sup>2</sup> The question today is not just how to address international law's perceived marginality but also how it should be taught in a rapidly changing and complex world. Central to this debate is the integration of critical, contextual and decolonial perspectives into the curriculum.

In this context, four recent books have revisited the challenges of teaching international law. Folúkẹ Adébí sí, Suhraiya Jivraj, and Ntina Tzouvala's edited volume *Decolonisation, Anti-Racism, and Legal Pedagogy: Strategies, Successes, and Challenges* explores the ways in which law teachers can address legacies of colonialism and racism.<sup>3</sup> Although not exclusively focused on teaching international law, its insights into decolonial pedagogies and inclusive teaching practices can be transferred to the international law classroom.<sup>4</sup> *Teaching International Law: Reflections on Pedagogical Practice in Context*, edited by Jean-Pierre Gauci and Barrie Sander, provides practical advice to international law teachers, particularly to early career academics.<sup>5</sup> The book responds to a lack of materials and guidance for those new to teaching international law.<sup>6</sup> Paul F. Diehl and Charlotte Ku's *Teaching International Law* also aims to equip teachers with practical strategies and best

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<sup>1</sup> Simpson, 'On the Magic Mountain: Teaching Public International Law', 10 *European Journal of International Law* (1999) 70, at 72; see also Orford, 'Embodying Internationalism: The Making of International Lawyers', 19 *Australian Yearbook of International Law* (1998) 1.

<sup>2</sup> See C. Schwöbel-Patel, *Teaching International Law* (2018), available at [www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199796953/obo-9780199796953-0166.xml](http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199796953/obo-9780199796953-0166.xml).

<sup>3</sup> F. Adébí sí, S. Jivraj and N. Tzouvala (eds), *Decolonisation, Anti-Racism, and Legal Pedagogy: Strategies, Successes, and Challenges* (2024).

<sup>4</sup> Tzouvala, 'Teaching International Law against Racism and Empire', in *ibid.*, 179.

<sup>5</sup> J-P. Gauci and B. Sander (eds), *Teaching International Law: Reflections on Pedagogical Practice in Context* (2024).

<sup>6</sup> The editors note that 'there is a notable lack of materials that provide advice or insights on teaching tailored to the field of international law'. Sander and Gauci, 'Introduction: Teaching International Law – Reflections on Pedagogical Practice in Context', in *ibid.*, 12.

practices, emphasizing the importance of adapting pedagogical approaches to different teaching environments and contexts.<sup>7</sup> Peter Hilpold and Giuseppe Nesi's *Teaching International Law* brings together a broad range of self-reflective essays on the role of the international law teacher.<sup>8</sup>

This review essay addresses the challenges facing teachers of international law that have been discussed in the four books under review and within the wider literature. The first challenge relates to balancing theoretical and critical depth while covering the broad scope of what is often presented as international law's core topics. Teachers of international law are exploring ways to include a range of critical and decolonial perspectives without merely adding them to the curriculum in a superficial manner. The second challenge relates to a tension between teaching international law as a universal system and presenting regional and national approaches to international law. The books and literature on international law teaching also explore practical strategies and advice to guide teachers of international law.

This review essay uses the four books as a starting point in exploring these broader questions, drawing upon the work in the books as well as recent literature on teaching international law. The essay calls for a reimagining of international law teaching that moves beyond traditional methods, embracing innovative, inclusive and interdisciplinary approaches. It highlights the need for more empirical research on teaching practices and greater engagement with existing theories of teaching and learning. Such scholarship can provide valuable insights into what works in the classroom and help bridge the gap between pedagogical theory and practice in international law education. By integrating diverse perspectives and fostering critical engagement, educators can better equip students to navigate and address complex global challenges.

## **2 What Is International Law Teaching For?**

All books in this review essay examine international law teaching, but they differ significantly in their purposes, aims and approaches. Before examining the challenges discussed in the books and wider literature, this section starts by looking at the underling purpose of international law teaching. In *Creating Wicked Students: Designing Courses for a Complex World*, Paul Hanstedt begins by inviting educators to reflect on the underlying goals

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<sup>7</sup> P.F. Diehl and C. Ku, *Teaching International Law* (2024).

<sup>8</sup> P. Hilpold and G. Nesi (eds), *Teaching International Law* (2024).

of their course and asks: why does this course matter to the work done in your field?<sup>9</sup> A similar reflection can help us understand the purpose of international law teaching: why does international law matter?

Some teachers might respond by explaining that international law is essential for modern legal practice. Legal disputes and transactions often involve multiple jurisdictions, national legislation is influenced by international treaties, and domestic courts encounter international law questions. The reality, however, is that many law students may never encounter international law beyond their final exam. The lasting impact of an international law course may not be the student's understanding of *Barcelona Traction* but, rather, their exposure to complex global problems and to a legal order beyond their national legal system. The importance of international law teaching could be said to lie in its ability to transcend its utility for legal practice; it can also be used to develop transferable skills and foster ways of thinking applicable across legal and non-legal disciplines. By introducing students to problems beyond the state – trade wars, armed conflict, climate change, biodiversity loss – students can examine how international law and global cooperation are used to address these complex challenges. Students can be prompted to think beyond their national borders and reflect on how national law is shaped by global events and legal developments.

International law can also be taught in a way that helps students understand and manage complexity. International law deals with an array of actors, including states, individuals, corporations and armed groups, often in a highly political context. Rather than stripping away this complexity, international law teachers can also embrace complexity to reveal the interconnectedness of problems. By breaking down and analysing a complex issue and constructing reasoned arguments, students can develop critical thinking skills that can be applied to other legal and non-legal problems. In the foreword to Gauci and Sander's volume, Christine Schwöbel-Patel makes the case for teaching international law critically to reveal to students how ideas and concepts are interrelated, using international law to build lateral and critical thinking skills.<sup>10</sup> International law is applied unevenly and unfairly. Rather than seeing this as a fundamental criticism of international law, it is a further reason to study it. By examining how the law is created, applied, interpreted and distorted, students can develop a

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<sup>9</sup> P. Hanstedt, *Creating Wicked Students: Designing Courses for a Complex World* (2018).

<sup>10</sup> Schwöbel-Patel, 'Preface', in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, xxi, at xxii ('[a]ccording to cognitive theory, non-linear thinking, also referred to as lateral thinking, is about creating connections between concepts and ideas, even when they appear unrelated. The trick in teaching international law critically is to show that they are connected because law exists in the real world').

deeper understanding of law's meaning. Appreciating international law's indeterminacy and political nature can allow students to apply similar critical analysis to other fields of law.

The books under review differ in their understanding of the underlying purpose of international law teaching. Adébisí, Jivraj, and Tzouvala discuss the role of university educators to teach the technicalities of the law while also instilling them with an interdisciplinary and critical mindset.<sup>11</sup> A theme running through the volume is about how students and teachers can balance these seemingly competing objectives. The book emphasizes the importance of understanding decolonization and anti-racism as an approach and process rather than an outcome – not just in law but also in all areas of education.<sup>12</sup>

Gauci and Sander see the transformative potential of international law teaching. The book examines how international law teaching can be used to expand students' horizons and think critically about the law. This is emphasized in individual chapters. Ata Hindi argues that '[t]eaching international law should be not only critical, but a movement for change'.<sup>13</sup> Yusra Suedi's chapter further 'advocates to humanise the teaching of international law, by presenting the role of individuals in all areas of the international legal discipline'.<sup>14</sup> Importantly, Gauci and Sander also examine the perspectives, emotions and experiences of students, framing teaching as a collaborative process that integrates skill building with critical thinking.<sup>15</sup>

Diehl and Ku present a dual role of international law teaching. They value the need to introduce students to core legal concepts but also emphasize that what is covered in an international law class largely depends on the context in which it is taught: in graduate or undergraduate studies; in law or political science; in a general or specialized course; or in the US or other jurisdictions. The authors also see international law teaching as a platform for developing critical thinking and addressing global challenges. Diehl and Ku argue that 'the

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<sup>11</sup> 'Legal educators have to make almost impossible choices between the technicalities of legal education, especially when these technicalities might enable the oppressed to game a system that has been stacked against them, and an inter-disciplinary, critical engagement with the law that does not aim at thinking along with the "rules" but through and against them.' Adébisí, Jivraj and Tzouvala, *supra* note 3, at 6.

<sup>12</sup> F. Adébisí, *Decolonisation and Legal Knowledge: Reflections on Power and Possibility* (2023), at 15 ('[t]he approach adopted does not attempt to exhaustively define decolonisation – this is neither possible nor desirable. Rather I recognise decolonisation as a set of strategies whose instant expression and articulation respond to the relevant space – time manifestation of the evolving and mutating superstructure it refuses'). See Arshad, 'Decolonising the Curriculum: How Do I Get Started?', *Times Higher Education* (14 September 2021), available at [www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/decolonising-curriculum-how-do-i-get-started](http://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/decolonising-curriculum-how-do-i-get-started).

<sup>13</sup> Hindi, 'A "Global South/Third World" Perspective on International Law Teaching', in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 42, at 53.

<sup>14</sup> Suedi, 'Humanising the Teaching of International Law', in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 83, at 84.

<sup>15</sup> Sutton, 'Reflections on Teaching "Emotion Bites" in an LLM Course on Human Rights and Conflict Resolution', in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 94.

better equipped our students are with all the tools available to address cross-border and global challenges, the closer we may come to effective, just and durable solutions'.<sup>16</sup> The book highlights the importance of tailoring pedagogy to equip students with both foundational knowledge and the critical skills needed to navigate the evolving demands of the field.

For Hilpold and Nesi, a discussion of international law teaching requires examining the role of the teacher. The book emphasizes the uniquely prominent position of the teacher in the international law discipline, not only as a conveyor of technical legal knowledge but also as a practitioner and critical thinker. The book opens boldly: 'In no legal discipline does the teacher enjoy such a prominent role as in International Law.'<sup>17</sup> Hilpold and Nesi are concerned with the role of the teacher not only in the classroom but also in the academic discipline and in wider society. They provide a platform for individual self-reflections on teaching international law. The focus is not so much on improving international law pedagogy but on reflecting on how international law teachers manage these multiple roles. Some individual reflections seek to understand the role of the teacher. Carlo Focarelli sees the role of the teacher as providing information and technical training and exercising critique.<sup>18</sup> Natalino Ronzitti understands a good international law teacher as one who has a combination of doctrinal knowledge and practical legal experience.<sup>19</sup> A drawback of this focus on the teacher, however, is that the volume pays comparatively little attention to the perspectives of students or to the cultivation of skills and critical thinking.

The four books present diverse and contrasting views on the purpose of international law teaching, ranging from fostering critical and interdisciplinary thinking to emphasizing the teacher's multifaceted role. These perspectives underscore a perceived tension between equipping students with 'core' legal knowledge and inspiring them to engage critically with law's broader context and meaning. However, these do not have to be treated as separate objectives; integrating technical training with critical engagement can create a more holistic and impactful approach to teaching international law. The following sections explore these themes in greater depth.

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<sup>16</sup> Diehl and Ku, *supra* note 7, at 167.

<sup>17</sup> Hilpold, 'Introduction', in Hilpold and Nesi, *supra* note 8, 3, at 3. Hilpold further argues that 'in no legal discipline does the lawyer play such a prominent role, and at the same time, nowhere is he [sic] the addressee of so much hope, of such high expectations, of so much delusion'. Hilpold, 'Teaching International Law in the 21st Century: Opening the Hidden Room in the Palace of International Law', in Hilpold and Nesi, *supra* note 8, 21, 66–67.

<sup>18</sup> C. Focarelli, 'Teaching International Law Today and the Human Person' in Hilpold and Nesi, *supra* note 8, 118.

<sup>19</sup> Ronzitti, 'What Is a Good International Law Teacher?', in Hilpold and Nesi, *supra* note 8, 171, at 175.

### 3 Decentring the Canon of International Law

The first theme that arises – from the books under review and in recent literature on teaching international law – is decentring. In particular, this involves decentring Western perspectives and calls for decolonizing international law teaching.<sup>20</sup> Critics have drawn attention to the ways in which international law has been instrumentalized to create and reproduce an unequal global order.<sup>21</sup> As Henry Jones and Aoife O’Donoghue argue, teaching international law today requires educators to answer student demands for a decolonized curriculum, including greater attention to theory, history, politics and context.<sup>22</sup> International law teaching has been criticized for being Eurocentric. Their survey of international law textbooks shows that sources used for historical information have consisted mostly of white, European men.<sup>23</sup>

These calls for decolonizing the international law curriculum stem from broader discussions about decolonization in education. The ‘decolonizing the curriculum’ movement brought to light criticisms of higher education and ignited debate about how colonialism and Eurocentrism have shaped, and continue to shape, university teaching.<sup>24</sup> In *Decolonisation and Legal Knowledge*, Adébişi calls for legal scholarship to go further than merely acknowledging colonisation’s historical impact but to continue to disrupt and dismantle the colonial nature of the world.<sup>25</sup> While this focus on decolonization in higher education is relatively recent, it stems from long-standing criticisms about the role of colonialism and Eurocentrism in the production of knowledge.<sup>26</sup> It emphasizes that university education

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<sup>20</sup> Jones and O’Donoghue, ‘History and Self-reflection in the Teaching of International Law’, 10(1) *London Review of International Law* (2022) 81, at 84 (‘[d]ecolonising the curriculum is of clear import to international law, though naturally it is a question for all areas of law’).

<sup>21</sup> Adébişi, *supra* note 12, at 47 (international law ‘has more often been implicated in the colonial encounter and therefore the emergence and reproduction of an unequal global order’).

<sup>22</sup> Jones and O’Donoghue, ‘History and Self-reflection in the Teaching of International Law’, 10(1) *London Review of International Law* (2022) 81.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, at 71–103.

<sup>24</sup> G.K. Bhabra, D. Gebrial and K. Nişancıoğlu (eds), *Decolonising the University* (2018). The Decolonising SOAS Working Group states that the term ‘connects contemporary racialised disadvantages with wider historical processes of colonialism, seeks to expose and transform them through forms of collective reflection and action’. Decolonising SOAS Working Group, ‘Decolonising SOAS: Learning and Teaching Toolkit for Programme and Module Conveners’, available at <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/decolonisingsoas/learning-teaching/toolkit-for-programme-and-module-conveners/>.

<sup>25</sup> Adébişi, *supra* note 12, at 21–22.

<sup>26</sup> See Moosavi, ‘The Decolonial Bandwagon and the Dangers of Intellectual Decolonisation’, 30 *International Review of Sociology* (2020) 332; Gopal, ‘On Decolonisation and the University’, 35(6) *Textual Practice* (2021) 876 (‘[i]n Anglophone postcolonial contexts, the question of ‘decolonising’ universities, education, and indeed, “the mind”, was first raised in post-independence Africa’).

involves a holistic approach to rethinking approaches to education, far beyond adding new articles to a list of readings.<sup>27</sup>

The books under review differ in the way they address these issues. Adébísi, Jivraj, and Tzouvala take decolonization as their starting point. In this volume, Ntando Sindane connects calls to decolonize the curriculum with the student-led #RhodesMustFall campaigns.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, in Gauci and Sander's volume, Jones and O'Donoghue trace decolonization of the curriculum to demands from students themselves.<sup>29</sup> For Diehl and Ku, issues of decolonization are addressed but in the context of discussions about introducing theory into international law teaching. Their chapter 'Theory and International Law Instruction' includes subsections on critical, post-colonial, Marxist and feminist theories, which are presented alongside discussions of constitutionalism, the New Haven School and international relations and social sciences approaches. Hilpold and Nesi do not address the issue head on. This decision reflects their underlying approach to international law teaching, focused on transmitting technical legal knowledge.

These differing approaches to decolonization and critical theory in the books reflect a broader discussion in pedagogical literature. International law is usually taught by introducing students to the main rules and principles intended to guide state behaviour. Textbooks often adopt this approach by presenting international law along key themes such as sources, statehood, jurisdiction and international responsibility.<sup>30</sup> This lends itself to teaching using positivist and doctrinal methods.<sup>31</sup> While theoretical, critical and interdisciplinary approaches might be addressed, they are usually added on to supplement the 'core'.<sup>32</sup> Adébísi and Yvette Russel (in Adébísi, Jivraj, and Tzouvala's volume) highlight how '[b]ecause the traditional instrumental approach to delivering the law curriculum says we should teach the 'neutral'

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<sup>27</sup> Schucan Bird and Pitman, 'How Diverse Is Your Reading List? Exploring Issues of Representation and Decolonisation in the UK', 79(5) *Higher Education* (2020) 903.

<sup>28</sup> See Sindane, 'The Pedagogy of Memory and Forgetfulness: A Critical Review of Selected Aspects of the LLB Curriculum in South Africa', in Adébísi, Jivraj and Tzouvala, *supra* note 3, 32.

<sup>29</sup> Jones and O'Donoghue, 'Apathy, Aphasia, and Athambia: Teaching Jamestown and Parodying the History of International Law', in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 17, at 28 ('[t]he students did not wait for the scholars to decide change was needed, they demanded it themselves').

<sup>30</sup> See M. Burgis-Kasthala and C. Schwöbel-Patel 'Against Coloniality in the International Law Curriculum: Examining Decoloniality', 56(4) *The Law Teacher* (2022) 486; Simpson, *supra* note 1, at 79 ('[y]et, many courses and case-books treat theory as a discrete topic, detached from doctrinal arguments about sources or treaties or responsibility').

<sup>31</sup> Summers, 'Writing an International Law Textbook', in Hilpold and Nesi, *supra* note 8, 406, at 411–12 ('[t]he overwhelming methodology for international law is positivist and if a textbook were to deviate strongly from this, it could be questioned how useful it would be as a teaching tool').

<sup>32</sup> See Donaldson, 'Peace, War, Law: Teaching International Law in Contexts', 18(4) *International Journal of Law in Context* (2022) 393, at 397 ('[i]n international law, it is common to teach by presenting the "orthodox", "traditional", "canonical" account of something (sources, customary international law, statehood) and then pointing out what this account misses').

foundations of the discipline first, before moving on to its critique, critical pedagogy is often more of an optional ‘add-on’ rather than a central component of the curriculum’.<sup>33</sup> This tension – between introducing students to a ‘core’ doctrine and exposing them to critical approaches – runs throughout the books and recent pedagogical literature.

What we understand as the ‘core’, however, is not neutral or value free. Teaching the canon often centres on Western, Eurocentric perspectives and marginalizes perspectives from the Global South and other legal systems. The idea that students must first understand the core before turning to other perspectives has the effect of situating those perspectives on the periphery and seeing them as merely criticizing and questioning the canon. Areas outside the West might be discussed but only as the site of military interventions or as parties before the International Court of Justice (ICJ).<sup>34</sup> Makane Moïse Mbengue and Olabisi Akinkugbe have highlighted how, while much knowledge of public international law is produced by Global South scholars, it has not been centred in scholarly materials and teaching.<sup>35</sup> Sujith Xavier and Ntina Tzouvala have discussed how teaching international law using these ‘canons’ or established texts of international law sets out to students which knowledge is viewed as accepted and unaccepted.<sup>36</sup> The approach presents certain perspectives as ‘foundational’ and other theories and approaches as merely peripheral and marginal,<sup>37</sup> embedding hierarchical practices and ways of thinking.<sup>38</sup>

The problem of ‘adding on’ is reflected upon in the literature on teaching international law.<sup>39</sup> Antony Anghie has cautioned against simply adding on theory without integrating it

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<sup>33</sup> Adébiśi and Russell, ‘Troubling Law’s Traditional Canon by Teaching Law and Race’, in Adébiśi, Jivraj and Tzouvala, *supra* note 3, 256, at 256.

<sup>34</sup> Hindi, *supra* note 13, at 46 (‘[w]hen following dominant international law textbook-designed curricula, little room is left for Global South/Third World students to explore meaningful, and potentially impactful, discussions pertinent to their part of the world’).

<sup>35</sup> Moïse Mbengue and Akinkugbe, ‘The Criticism of Eurocentrism and International Law: Countering and Pluralizing the Research, Teaching, and Practice of Eurocentric International Law’, in A. Van Aaken *et al.* (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of International Law in Europe* (2023) 225.

<sup>36</sup> X. Sujith Xavier and N. Tzouvala, ‘Series Introduction: Teaching International Law: Between Critique and the Canon’, TWAILR: Reflections no. 26/2020 (2020), available at <https://twailr.com/series-introduction-teaching-international-law-between-critique-and-the-canon/>.

<sup>37</sup> S. Burra, ‘Teaching Critical International Law: Reflections from the Periphery’, TWAILR: Reflections no. 29/2021 (2021), available at <https://twailr.com/teaching-critical-international-law-reflections-from-the-periphery/>.

<sup>38</sup> Otto, ‘Handmaidens, Hierarchies and Crossing the Public-Private Divide in the Teaching of International Law’, 1 *Melbourne Journal of International Law* (2000) 1, at 36. Otto describes how normative hierarchies in international law are exclusionary and ‘shaped by colonialist, nationalist, racist, sexist and hetero-normative ideologies’.

<sup>39</sup> See Schwöbel-Patel, ‘Teaching International Law Critically: Critical Pedagogy and Bildung as Orientations for Learning and Teaching’, in B. van Klink and U. de Vries (eds), *Academic Learning in Law: Theoretical Positions, Teaching Experiments and Learning Experiences* (2016) 99.

fully into the curriculum.<sup>40</sup> Florian Hoffmann has shown how theory is often used to complement the canon rather than to uncover its structural biases.<sup>41</sup> Mohammad Shahabuddin argues that, in decolonizing the international law curriculum, ‘the project is often reduced to a couple of new ornamental modules on decolonisation and race relations without any comprehensive revision of the curriculum as a whole’.<sup>42</sup> This ‘adding-on’ approach is also reflected in international law textbooks. Malcolm Shaw’s *International Law* textbook, for instance, reduces feminist approaches to international law, one of the main theoretical approaches, to a single sentence.<sup>43</sup> This approach to theory presents feminist approaches as just another theoretical lens to criticize and evaluate the canon.

The literature on teaching and learning in international law has not only identified the problem of adding on but has also explored ways in which to adequately bring in theoretical and critical approaches. Anghie, for instance, has argued that ‘[c]ritical theory ... is at its most effective when it is studied precisely through the positivist approach’.<sup>44</sup> Rather than presenting various theories as peripheral to the mainstream view, integrating theory throughout the course helps to uncover how colonialism has shaped and continues to shape international law. Mark Fathi Massoud has discussed the importance of integrating Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL) theory into the ‘canons’ of international law.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Hoffmann sees problems in teaching international law only through ‘practice/doctrine’ or ‘theory’, arguing in favour of critical knowledge construction. This requires students to have the ability to understand the rules and language of the game while also having the tools to critically evaluate and reflect on the game.<sup>46</sup> The debate has moved on

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<sup>40</sup> Anghie, ‘Critical Pedagogy Symposium: Critical Thinking and Teaching as Common Sense – Random Reflections’, *Opinio Juris* (31 August 2020), available at <http://opiniojuris.org/2020/08/31/critical-pedagogy-symposium-critical-thinking-and-teaching-as-common-sense-random-reflections/>.

<sup>41</sup> Hoffmann, ‘Teaching General Public International Law’, in J. Kammerhofer and J. D’Aspremont (eds), *International Legal Positivism in a Post-Modern World* (2014) 349, at 354 (‘[they] do not purport to substitute international law as a positivised system of rules with anything else, but they merely aim to either complement the current canon – such as by proposing a more pluralist sources doctrine – or to critique it by uncovering its structural bias and its inherent indeterminacy’).

<sup>42</sup> M. Shahabuddin, ‘Teaching and Researching International Law: Some Personal Reflections Via Bangladesh and the UK’, *Afronomicslaw Blog* (25 September 2020), available at [www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/25/teaching-and-researching-international-law-some-personal-reflections-via-bangladesh-and-the-uk](http://www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/25/teaching-and-researching-international-law-some-personal-reflections-via-bangladesh-and-the-uk).

<sup>43</sup> M. Shaw, *International Law* (9th edn, 2021), at 54 (‘[o]ne particular area of study in recent years has been that concerned with the position of women within international law, both in terms of the structure of the system and the, for example, relative absence of females from the institutions and processes of international law and in terms of substantive law, which has until recently paid little attention to the needs and concerns of women’).

<sup>44</sup> Anghie, *supra* note 40.

<sup>45</sup> M. Fathi Massoud, ‘Teaching Three Canons of International Law’, TWAILR: Reflections no. 28/2021 (2021), available at <https://twailr.com/teaching-three-canons-of-international-law/>.

<sup>46</sup> Hoffmann *supra* note 41, at 376.

from whether to include critical and decolonial approaches in teaching towards discussions about how these approaches should be included in a curriculum.

The books under review also highlight the importance of introducing critical and contextual approaches without merely ‘adding on’ and explore the ways in which to address this. Adébiśí, Jivraj, and Tzouvala emphasize this throughout their volume: ‘Just adding critical legal theories as “extra” reading even with the prompts ... without more, simply maintains those critical perspectives as if dangling in the periphery of the classroom.’<sup>47</sup> Gauci and Sander excellently combine discussions about the critique of international law with practical guides to integrate this in the classroom. Jones and O’Donoghue argue that ‘critique is more than a mere footnote’, arguing that it is fundamental to a deeper knowledge of international law.<sup>48</sup> Philipp Kastner explores the ways of decentring the teacher and the law.<sup>49</sup> He argues that it is a mistake to expect students to know the law before engaging and reflecting on it critically as if these were two separate enterprises.<sup>50</sup> Udoka Owie emphasizes that ‘[t]he introduction of critical approaches to international law requires more than just its inclusion in the reading material’.<sup>51</sup> Adébiśí, Jivraj, and Tzouvala and Gauci and Sander’s volumes are both excellent starting points for teachers to find practical ways to integrate critical approaches into international law teaching.

Diehl and Ku highlight the importance of integrating theory into an international law course while also acknowledging a challenge: ‘Is there a way to include theoretical elements in international law instruction without either dominating the course or ignoring it altogether?’<sup>52</sup> They emphasize the importance of theory – or the ‘ways of thinking’ about international law<sup>53</sup> – to allow students to understand how and why international is formed, adapted and broken and to help foster critical thinking and analytical skills that can transfer to other courses.<sup>54</sup> Theory is not presented as an ‘add on’ to the canon but, rather, as an important element in understanding it. Like Gauci and Sander, Diehl and Ku not only mention

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<sup>47</sup> Huq, ‘Decolonizing Objective Theory: Race and Coloniality in US Contract Law’, in Adébiśí, Jivraj and Tzouvala, *supra* note 3, 77.

<sup>48</sup> Jones and O’Donoghue, *supra* note 29, at 19.

<sup>49</sup> Kastner, ‘Teaching International Criminal Law from a Critical Perspective: Decentering the Law and the Teacher’, in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 31.

<sup>50</sup> Kastner, *supra* note 49, at 34.

<sup>51</sup> Ndidiamaka Owie, ‘Teacher, Don’t Teach Me Nonsense! A Personal Reflection on Teaching International Law in Nigeria’, in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 201, at 212.

<sup>52</sup> Diehl and Ku, *supra* note 7, at 106 (‘[i]s there a way to include theoretical elements in international law instruction without either dominating the course or ignoring it altogether?’).

<sup>53</sup> A. Bianchi, *International Law Theories: An Inquiry into Different Ways of Thinking* (2016).

<sup>54</sup> Diehl and Ku, *supra* note 7, at 111 (‘students will develop the critical thinking and analysis skills that provide for transference to other courses and subjects’).

theories but also give practical examples of how to integrate them in teaching. They acknowledge that some students (mostly from the Global North) ‘don’t get’ critical perspectives. They advocate the use of critiques or ‘interrogations’ from critical theories (such as discussing whether the Non-Proliferation Treaty is fair) to advance critical thinking.<sup>55</sup> Diehl and Ku show how students can be engaged to think critically without simply adding on theory to a reading list.

I have argued that the integration of theoretical, critical and decolonial approaches in teaching international law is a key theme in broader discussions about teaching international law. Hilpold and Nesi’s volume stands out in this regard as they do not consider these issues in depth. The choice to avoid critical theories or historical context may have been made to present international law in a ‘neutral’ manner or to avoid politics. However, by seeking to present a ‘neutral’ vision of international law, the book can have the effect of emphasizing and reinforcing doctrinal and Eurocentric ways of thinking. Simpson points out that theory is pervasive in international law, even when it remains unarticulated.<sup>56</sup> Presenting international law as ‘value neutral’ is still political as rules were developed and shaped in a particular economic and political context.<sup>57</sup> Avoiding discussions of theoretical and decolonial approaches also means that the volume appears detached from the debates in the current scholarly discourse. Importantly, the approach does not fully consider the evolving needs of students, who are increasingly seeking a more inclusive and reflective approach to their legal education.

Introducing theoretical and critical discussions in the classroom is also important because it connects students to current debates in international law. Contemporary international law scholarship now seeks to integrate numerous critical approaches, including TWAIL<sup>58</sup> as well as feminist, queer,<sup>59</sup> post-colonial, Marxist and critical race theory.<sup>60</sup> Much

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<sup>55</sup> Diehl and Ku, *supra* note 7, at 111.

<sup>56</sup> Simpson, *supra* note 1, at 79.

<sup>57</sup> ‘An understanding of law that focuses solely on the “knowledge” of legal rules as well as on the ways of applying those in solving problems – without paying attention to power-political dimensions of the law making process or to the political-economy of the law itself – is bound to fall short of a comprehensive understanding of law.’ M. Shahabuddin, ‘Teaching and Researching International Law: Some Personal Reflections Via Bangladesh and the UK’, *Afronomics Law* (25 September 2020), available at [www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/25/teaching-and-researching-international-law-some-personal-reflections-via-bangladesh-and-the-uk/](http://www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/25/teaching-and-researching-international-law-some-personal-reflections-via-bangladesh-and-the-uk/); Zongwe, ‘The Irrelevance and Coloniality of International Economic Law: How African Teachers Must Drum Them Away in Nigeria’, in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 321, at 327.

<sup>58</sup> Burgis-Kasthala and Schwöbel-Patel, ‘Against Coloniality in the International Law Curriculum: Examining Decoloniality’, 56(4) *The Law Teacher* (2022) 486.

<sup>59</sup> D. Otto (ed.), *Queering International Law: Possibilities, Alliances, Complicities, Risks* (2019).

<sup>60</sup> Gordon, ‘Critical Race Theory and International Law: Convergence and Divergence’, 45 *Villanova Law Review* (2000) 827.

of this literature examines international law's role in creating and reproducing global inequality and discrimination.<sup>61</sup> International law should also be taught in a way that highlights its historical and political context and exhibits the experiences and perspectives of communities outside the West.<sup>62</sup> This includes engaging with alternative ways of teaching international law that can highlight the historic reality of colonialism and draw attention to international law's function in preserving colonial relations and Eurocentricity.<sup>63</sup>

Another common theme that arises from the books and the literature relates to the way in which this history is presented in the international law classroom. International law as a discipline has experienced a 'turn to history' in recent decades.<sup>64</sup> Connected to the earlier discussion on theory, there are discussions about the Eurocentrism of the traditional stories about international law.<sup>65</sup> Literature on international law teaching uncovers the importance of reflecting not only on which stories to tell but also on whose stories. This might involve discussions from the perspectives of those involved in creating international law as well as those affected by it. An important question in these discussions relates to when to begin the story of international law.<sup>66</sup> Introductory courses on international law often start with a focus on Europe. Anders Henriksen's *International Law*, for instance, states that, 'since international law as we know it today was invented in Europe, it is where our brief overview of its history begins'.<sup>67</sup>

Presenting international law as primarily European in origin sidelines narratives of international law such as those of China,<sup>68</sup> the Islamic world<sup>69</sup> or Indigenous communities.<sup>70</sup> Eurocentric teaching of international law, focusing on the European 'fathers' of international

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<sup>61</sup> Pahuja, 'The Postcoloniality of International Law', 46 *Harvard International Law Journal* (2005) 459.

<sup>62</sup> Al Attar, 'Must International Legal Pedagogy Remain Eurocentric?', 11(1) *Asian Journal of International Law* (2021) 176, at 178 ('TWAIL's corpus of critique and of counter-narratives has altered academic debate about international law. Yet, many TWAIL scholars regard legal pedagogy as *terra nullius*').

<sup>63</sup> Al Attar and Abdelkarim, 'Decolonising the Curriculum in International Law: Entrapments in Praxis and Critical Thought', 34(1) *Law and Critique* (2023) 55–56.

<sup>64</sup> Arvidsson and Bak McKenna, 'The Turn to History in International Law and the Sources Doctrine: Critical Approaches and Methodological Imaginaries', 33(1) *Leiden Journal of International Law (LJIL)* (2020) 37; A. Orford, *International Law and the Politics of History* (2021).

<sup>65</sup> Otten, 'Narratives in International Law', 99(3) *Critical Quarterly for Legislation and Law* (2016) 187.

<sup>66</sup> De la Rasilla, 'The Shifting Origins of International Law', 28 *LJIL* (2015) 3; al Attar & Abdelkarim, *supra* note 63, at 42 ('[w]hen lecturing about international law, deciding *where to begin* is as difficult as deciding *where to end* and *which path to take*').

<sup>67</sup> A. Henriksen, *International Law* (4th edn, 2023), at 3.

<sup>68</sup> H. Xue, *Chinese Contemporary Perspectives on International Law: History, Culture and International Law*, (Martinus Nijhoff 2012),

<sup>69</sup> See K. Ramadan Bashir, *Islamic International Law: Historical Foundations and Al-Shaybani's Siyar* (2018).

<sup>70</sup> A. Bhatia, 'International Law Can Be Something Different: An Interview with Beverly Jacobs, Jeffery Hewitt, and Sylvia McAdam', TWAILR: Dialogues no. 11/2023 (2023), available at <https://twailr.com/international-law-can-be-something-different-an-interview-with-beverly-jacobs-jeffery-hewitt-and-sylvia-mcadam/>.

law (Hugo Grotius, Emer de Vattel, Francisco de Vitoria) can also contribute to a sense of remoteness for students outside the West.<sup>71</sup> Reflecting as a student, Jing Min Tan describes how his course glossed over stories about how international law came to be and the place of colonization in that story: ‘According to my worn copy of Shaw’s *International Law*, decolonisation was a political fact – achieved through UN Resolution 1514 (XV).’<sup>72</sup> Here, colonization is relegated to the past without an examination of its legacies and its relations to forms of economic and political inequality. Just as students require more contextual, critical and theoretical approaches in their learning, the books and literature also pay attention to the issue of historical narratives.

#### 4 Geography of International Law Teaching

The previous section discussed the theme of decentring – in particular, with respect to the canon of international law and the need to include diverse and critical perspectives. A related theme arises with respect to the geography of international law teaching. In the books under review and in the broader literature on international law teaching, there is also a discussion of geographical location. Teaching takes place in a space. Scholarship on teaching international law confronts the relationship between teaching and space, considering the spaces in which the teacher and student are located as well as the geographical origins of the authors and the cases studied. Scholars writing about their experiences outside the West have pointed to how the teaching materials and curriculum remain entrenched in Eurocentric narratives that often exclude perspectives or contributions from other regions. Babatunde Fagbayibo has described how teaching international law in Africa remains anchored in Eurocentric assumptions and ways of thinking.<sup>73</sup> Reflecting on his experience in Brazil, George Bandeira Galindo notes how the teaching of public international is based on textbooks written in Portuguese, reproducing international law’s Eurocentrism.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Anghie, *supra* note 40 (‘[t]his sense of remoteness is furthered by the classic Western textbooks used in these countries that inevitably present a Eurocentric vision of the discipline and its history, the familiar great men and events: Grotius, Vattel, the Peace of Westphalia, the League of Nations’).

<sup>72</sup> Jing Min Tan, ‘The Many Layers of Invisible Labour Decolonising the Academy’, TWAILR: Reflections no. 31/2021 (2021), available at <https://twailr.com/the-many-layers-of-invisible-labour-decolonising-the-academy/>.

<sup>73</sup> Fagbayibo, ‘Some Thoughts on Centring Pan-African Epistemic in the Teaching of Public International Law in African Universities’, 21(2) *International Community Law Review* (2019) 170.

<sup>74</sup> G.R. Bandeira Galindo, ‘Some (Short) Reflections on (My) International Law Teaching Experience in Brazil’, *Afronomicslaw* (19 September 2020), available at [www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/19/some-short-reflections-on-my-international-law-teaching-experience-in-brazil/](http://www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/19/some-short-reflections-on-my-international-law-teaching-experience-in-brazil/).

Literature on teaching international law tends to focus on examples from specific countries and regions. The books under review include chapters on teaching international law in Qatar,<sup>75</sup> Palestine,<sup>76</sup> the Middle East,<sup>77</sup> Africa,<sup>78</sup> Nigeria,<sup>79</sup> the Philippines,<sup>80</sup> Brazil<sup>81</sup> and Wuhan, China.<sup>82</sup> Ku focuses on teaching in the USA.<sup>83</sup> Hilpold and Nesi focus on teaching experiences in Europe, with an emphasis on German-speaking jurisdictions.<sup>84</sup> This geographical focus reflects earlier studies on international law teaching. Anghie and Robert Real produced a report titled ‘Teaching and Researching International Law in Asia’.<sup>85</sup> The online symposium ‘Teaching and Researching International Law: Global Perspectives’<sup>86</sup> includes reflections on teaching international law in Myanmar,<sup>87</sup> post-Soviet Central Asia,<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Rachovitsa, ‘Teaching and (Un)learning International Law in Qatar’, in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 55.

<sup>76</sup> Hindi, *supra* note 13.

<sup>77</sup> Hadad, ‘International Law in the Middle East: A Pedagogy of Critical Absences’, in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 217.

<sup>78</sup> Zongwe, *supra* note 57.

<sup>79</sup> Ndidiamaka Owie, *supra* note 51.

<sup>80</sup> Regalado Bagares, ‘Between History and Pedagogy: Teaching the Philippine National Territorial Imaginary – Its “Geo-Body” – After the 2016 South China Arbitral Award’, in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 229.

<sup>81</sup> Frisso, ‘Teaching Public International Law in Brazil and the Unintended Impact of the Bar Exam’, in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 245.

<sup>82</sup> Spijkers and Fan, ‘Teaching to Wuhan in the Time of Corona’, in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 268.

<sup>83</sup> Ku, ‘U.S. Approaches to Teaching International Law in a Global Environment’, in Hilpold and Nesi, *supra* note 8, 82.

<sup>84</sup> Three chapters are dedicated to international law teaching in Germany: R. Wolfrum, ‘Teaching International Law in Germany: Is the Legal Regime in Teaching Law Still Adequate?’; H. Hirte, ‘Teaching International Law in Germany: Some Additional Remarks by a Former Parliamentarian, Practitioner and Teacher’ and G. Morgenthaler, ‘Teaching International Law in Germany: Constitutional Safeguards for the Freedom of Research and Teaching.’

<sup>85</sup> A. Anghie and J.R. Robert G. Real, ‘Teaching and Researching International Law in Asia: 2020 Report’, *Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore*, available at <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/publication/teaching-and-researching-international-law-in-asia-trila-project-2020-report>.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Symposium Introduction: Teaching and Researching International Law – Global Perspectives’, *Afronomicslaw* (September 2020), available at [www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/14/symposium-introduction-teaching-and-researching-international-law-global-perspectives](http://www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/14/symposium-introduction-teaching-and-researching-international-law-global-perspectives).

<sup>87</sup> Yin Yin Win, ‘Teaching and Researching International Law in Myanmar’, *Afronomicslaw* (16 September 2020), available at [www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/16/teaching-and-researching-international-law-in-myanmar/](http://www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/16/teaching-and-researching-international-law-in-myanmar/).

<sup>88</sup> S. Sayapin, ‘The Post-Soviet Central Asia and International Law: Practice, Research and Teaching’, *Afronomicslaw* (15 September 2020), available at [www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/15/the-post-soviet-central-asia-and-international-law-practice-research-and-teaching/](http://www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/15/the-post-soviet-central-asia-and-international-law-practice-research-and-teaching/).

Brazil,<sup>89</sup> Kenya,<sup>90</sup> Vietnam<sup>91</sup> and many others. Studies have reflected on teaching in India,<sup>92</sup> Africa<sup>93</sup> and Indonesia.<sup>94</sup> This approach suggests that international law teaching can be shaped by regional approaches and influences.<sup>95</sup> Another perceived tension in international law teaching is between providing local, context-specific teaching and presenting international law as a coherent and universal legal system.

The books under review all differ in terms of how they address this issue. Adé́bísí, Jivraj, and Tzouvala and Gauci and Sander include perspectives from writers from different regions and jurisdictions from around the world, reflecting the diversity of experiences and approaches to teaching international law. Some authors, such as Hindi, reflects on how international law textbook-designed curricula leave little room for discussions about regions outside the Global North.<sup>96</sup> Priyasha Saksena mentions how discussions of regional approaches to international law can also address Eurocentrism.<sup>97</sup> One of the main themes of Diehl and Ku's volume is that teaching needs to adapt to the local context and academic tradition in which it is taught, including geographical location.<sup>98</sup> Hilpold and Nesi focus primarily on how international law is taught in Europe. By focusing on the experiences of male European authors, however, the volume goes against the trend of presenting a diverse range of voices and experiences, including in geographical scope. As with bringing in critical voices discussed in the previous section, there is a growing expectation from students to learn from a variety of perspectives, including those from different regions. The book section

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<sup>89</sup> G.R. Bandeira Galindo, 'Some (Short) Reflections on (My) International Law Teaching Experience in Brazil', *Afronomicslaw* (19 September 2020), available at [www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/19/some-short-reflections-on-my-international-law-teaching-experience-in-brazil/](http://www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/19/some-short-reflections-on-my-international-law-teaching-experience-in-brazil/).

<sup>90</sup> F. Shako, 'Teaching and Researching International Law – A Kenyan Perspective', *Afronomicslaw* (1 October 2020), available at [www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/10/01/teaching-and-researching-international-law-a-kenyan-perspective](http://www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/10/01/teaching-and-researching-international-law-a-kenyan-perspective).

<sup>91</sup> T. Viet Dung, 'Teaching and Researching International Law in Vietnam: An Assessment Based on Ho Chi Minh City University of Law's Experience', *Afronomicslaw* (15 September 2020), available at [www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/15/teaching-and-researching-international-law-in-vietnam-an-assessment-based-on-ho-chi-minh-city-university-of-laws-experience](http://www.afronomicslaw.org/2020/09/15/teaching-and-researching-international-law-in-vietnam-an-assessment-based-on-ho-chi-minh-city-university-of-laws-experience).

<sup>92</sup> Chimni, 'Teaching, Research and Promotion of International Law in India: Past, Present and Future', 5 *Singapore Journal of International and Comparative Law* (2001) 368.

<sup>93</sup> Fagbayibo, *supra* note 73.

<sup>94</sup> Juwana, 'Teaching International Law in Indonesia', 5 *Singapore Journal of International and Comparative Law* (2001) 412.

<sup>95</sup> See A. Roberts, *Is International Law International?* (2017).

<sup>96</sup> Hindi, *supra* note 13, at 46.

<sup>97</sup> Saksena, 'Teaching International Law through the Prism of Global Events' Exam', in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 283, at 286 ('although scholars have sought to rethink pedagogy by advocating for regional approaches or by relying on insights from anti-racist pedagogy, international law teaching across the world remains Eurocentric').

<sup>98</sup> Diehl and Ku, *supra* note 7, at 6 ('[t]he teaching of international law occurs in different contexts. This can vary geographically, and this is perhaps more reflective of different academic traditions that are manifested in different areas around the globe').

entitled “The ‘Global’ Perspective” only includes Western authors, overlooking the rich debates about teaching international law in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Hilpold does acknowledge the focus on the USA and Europe but hopes that useful insights might still be gained.<sup>99</sup> As with the approach to teaching critical perspectives, the focus on the USA and Europe has the potential to reinforce the marginalization of voices from other regions, giving the (false) impression that there is no worthwhile scholarship on teaching international law outside those jurisdictions.

The wider literature on teaching international law has also focused on this issue of geography and on where teaching is taking place. Juan Amaya-Castro explores how the international law classroom has become a site ‘where the paradox of emplacement is enacted’.<sup>100</sup> This emplacement paradox refers to the notion that international law simultaneously is not situated in any geographical space (is nowhere) but is always practised and enforced in a space (is somewhere).<sup>101</sup> Hoffmann has discussed how international law is highly concerned with geographical dimensions, with various approaches to international law being associated with particular places.<sup>102</sup> Rather than present the universality and neutrality of international law that exists in textbooks, Hoffmann argues that teachers should expose the role of geographical locations – of authors, teachers, students and the individuals who are affected by international law – and how they affect attitudes and experiences. As an example of this, B.S. Chimni prefaces the second edition of *International Law and World Order* with a reflection on how studying, research, living and teaching in India has shaped his ways of thinking about international law.<sup>103</sup> As with including context and critical theory, there is also a risk of merely ‘adding on’ different geographical perspectives in a superficial way. This risks Simpson’s ‘romantic’ mode of teaching international law where international law is taught ‘as the converse of a holiday brochure – brief illustrations from places we would not want to visit’.<sup>104</sup> Simply including readings from authors from different geographical regions,

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<sup>99</sup> Hilpold, *supra* note 17, at 46 (Hilpold acknowledges that ‘the situation of teachers and teaching varies considerable on a global scale’).

<sup>100</sup> Amaya-Castro, ‘Teaching International Law: Both Everywhere and Somewhere’, in J. Sainz-Borgo *et al.* (eds), *Liber Amicorum in Honour of a Modern Renaissance Man Gudmundur Eiriksson* (2017) 521.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, at 536 (‘[a]cknowledging that place matters can be as simple as discussing what students, and others, expect from international law; acknowledging it as a site of ambition, desire, fear and passion. In the international law classroom, teachers and students can travel together through all the various “places” of international law’).

<sup>102</sup> Hoffmann, *supra* note 41, at 369.

<sup>103</sup> B.S. Chimni, *International Law and World Order: A Critique of Contemporary Approaches* (2nd edn, 2017), at xi (‘geographical location of an author has an important influence on how different theories of international law and world order are received and evaluated’).

<sup>104</sup> Simpson, *supra* note 1, at 91.

or examining case studies from different parts of the world, does not necessarily mean that students will be exposed to new perspectives and ways of thinking.

## 5 From Reflection to Evidence-based Pedagogy

The books under review all aim to provoke discussions about international law teaching rather than providing authoritative guidance. Arguably, no book could offer a definitive answer as the nature of teaching is inherently dynamic and context dependent, shaped by evolving global challenges, regional contexts and the diverse needs of students. The common theme from the books and recent literature is the challenge of decentring – in terms of theoretical approaches, histories and geographical focus. This decentring is not merely a matter of ‘political correctness’; it is essential for teaching international law properly and doing justice to our students, ensuring that they are equipped with the diverse perspectives and critical tools needed to navigate the complexities of the field. While scholars may agree that international law teaching requires more than an overview of key concepts, the debate remains about how this can be done without sacrificing depth.

One approach is the ‘deep dive’. This acknowledges that no course can go into sufficient detail on the broad range of theoretical approaches and case studies. It invites teachers to address a narrow range of issues but to address them in depth. Simpson advocates ‘a severe, probably traumatic, narrowing of focus followed by a broadening of perspective’.<sup>105</sup> Megan Donaldson called for teaching international law in context, narrowing the range of topics discussed but using multiple perspectives to discuss them.<sup>106</sup> For example, a course could use a single case, such as *Nicaragua* before the ICJ but analyse it from a range of perspectives. This would allow traditional doctrinal issues such as the law of treaties or state responsibility to be covered while also analysing the broader conflict including Cold War politics. A similar approach would be to narrow the focus on a geographical region, such as the place of teaching, but to focus on the relationships between the site of teaching and other regions. By focusing on these relationships, students can reflect on the situatedness of knowledge and understand how their state/region encounters international law.

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, at 89.

<sup>106</sup> Donaldson, *supra* note 32, at 397 ([o]ne “contextual” possibility might be to narrow the array of topics [to the extent this is possible], but systematically inject multiple different perspectives into the discussion [whether of states, normative orientations, critical interlocutors or actors who use international law, from claimants before human rights tribunals to corporate counsel and foreign ministry legal advisers]).

Another theme that arises from the books and recent literature is the role of students as co-creators of knowledge and the potential to empower them to critically engage with materials and question their own perspectives and assumptions. Writers have focused on co-intentional and dialogical teaching that emphasizes active engagement between students and teachers. Rather than seeing students as empty vessels to be filled with new information, the classroom is based on dialogue and partnership between students and teachers. This draws on work such as Paulo Freire's 1968 *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which criticizes traditional approaches to education, such as the banking model.<sup>107</sup> Mohsen al Attar and Vernon Tava discuss their use of using 'co-intentional education' in the international law classroom.<sup>108</sup> Dianne Otto argues that hierarchical thinking can be addressed through dialogical teaching to show how international law is developed through a constant negotiation between a diversity of views.<sup>109</sup> In this way, teaching international law can shift from a purely doctrinal exercise to become more practice oriented and contextual. Some techniques used in other fields of law – collaborative projects and exercises, clinical legal education<sup>110</sup> and problem-based learning – can be applied to international law. The books discussed in this review essay have engaged with various teaching, including podcasting,<sup>111</sup> reading groups,<sup>112</sup> movies and television,<sup>113</sup> virtual reality<sup>114</sup> and simulations and role play.<sup>115</sup> Chapter 6 of Diehl and Ku's book, 'Instructional Delivery Modalities', provides an excellent starting point for discussing different learning and teaching methods and the contexts in which they can be used.

More needs to be done, however, to understand how and when these various methods are to be used in the international law classroom. The books under review all employ a level of personal reflection. As Lucas Lixinski observes, much of the literature on international law teaching is from 'teacher authors' who tend to write self-reflective pieces as practitioners but

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<sup>107</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970); Bartlett, 'Dialogue, Knowledge, and Teacher-Student Relations: Freirean Pedagogy in Theory and Practice', 49 *Comparative Education Review* (2005) 344.

<sup>108</sup> Al Attar and Tava 'TWAAIL Pedagogy: Legal Education for Emancipation', 15 *Palestine Yearbook of International Law* (2009) 7.

<sup>109</sup> Otto, *supra* note 38, at 43.

<sup>110</sup> Malna, 'Inspiring Anti-Racist Lawyers through Clinical Legal Education', in Adébisí, Jivraj and Tzouvala, *supra* note 3, 223, at 235 ('CLE teachers can use experiential learning techniques to educate students in an anti-racist approach to lawyering').

<sup>111</sup> Memon and Loefflad, 'From Podcast to Utopia: Hope and Doubt behind Knowledge Production in International Legal Academia', in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 111, at 112.

<sup>112</sup> Mukherjee, 'Reading Groups on International Law: The Role of Co-Creation in Decolonizing the Curriculum', in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 133.

<sup>113</sup> Behan, Fink and Janik, 'Visualising International Law: Movies and Image References in Teaching International Law', in Hilpold and Nesi, *supra* note 8, 391.

<sup>114</sup> Argen, 'Teaching Law of Armed Conflict with Virtual Reality', in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 166.

<sup>115</sup> Oidtmann, 'Interdisciplinary Simulations as Innovative Teaching Formats: Experiences from an International Law Classroom', in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 154.

with little engagement with pedagogical literature or theories.<sup>116</sup> Adébísí, Jivraj, and Tzouvala's volume provides an impressive level of detail about what is done in the classroom, describing personal experiences and emphasizing that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to decolonizing the curriculum. Discussions on teaching international law would be strengthened by engaging more with pedagogical theories and scholarship on teaching and learning. Scholarship on teaching international law remains too focused on individual experiences of the teacher authors and requires research on how teaching methods impact student experiences. Few seriously engage with pedagogical theories, and even fewer use student interviews, surveys, case studies, experiments or other empirical methods. An excellent example from the books under review is Lynsey Mitchell's examination of legal academics' views on teaching women's rights in international human rights law, which used a survey and semi-structured interviews to uncover perceptions of feminist approaches and methods in the legal curriculum.<sup>117</sup> George Wilkes and Magnus Linden employed a survey to understand the views of educators teaching international humanitarian law and ethics.<sup>118</sup> As the authors themselves acknowledge, these are small-scale studies and require further empirical research. The use of such methods in researching international law teaching will move our discussions from individual self-reflection to a more evidence-based, theoretically informed and student-centred pedagogy.

## 6 Conclusion

The discourse around international law is undergoing significant transformation. As the field shifts towards incorporating broader perspectives – historical, theoretical and geographical – there is an increasing need to reassess traditional approaches to teaching. Reimagining international law pedagogy extends beyond simply updating reading lists. It requires a fundamental shift in the purpose of international law teaching. International law teaching today requires more than introducing students to the core concepts of international law –

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<sup>116</sup> Lixinski, 'Scholarship on the Teaching of International Law: An Overview of the State of the Art', in Hilpold and Nesi, *supra* note 8, 435, at 435–436.

<sup>117</sup> Mitchell, 'The Gender of International Human Rights Law? Uncovering Legal Academics' Views on Teaching Women's Rights', in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 340, at 351, at ('Although there is a demand for feminist approaches and methods in the legal curriculum, fears about student and colleague receptiveness still pervade').

<sup>118</sup> Wilkes and Linden, 'Should Militaries Teach International Humanitarian Law and Ethics Together? Comparing the Attitudes of Educators Internationally', in Gauci and Sander, *supra* note 5, 366, at 366 (the study 'reflects on the views of educators with experience in courses designed to address the practical needs of students of different ranks and working in different institutions, organisational contexts and cultures').

assuming they exist – but also equipping students to engage critically with the international legal system. It involves integrating perspectives that challenge Eurocentric narratives and highlight contributions and legal practices from the Global South.

The four books under review provoke important discussions about how to reassess traditional approaches to make international law teaching more relevant and inclusive. They differ significantly in their engagement with these debates. *Decolonisation, Anti-Racism, and Legal Pedagogy* (edited by Adébisí, Jivraj, and Tzouvala) tackles decolonization and racism directly, exploring how teaching can challenge systems that produce subordination and marginalization. At the other end of the spectrum, *Teaching International Law* (edited by Hilpold and Nesi) often overlooks these critical debates, presenting international law in a ‘neutral’, detached manner that lacks engagement with the broader academic discussions on the subject. Situated between these poles, *Teaching International Law* (by Diehl and Ku) and *Teaching International Law: Reflections on Pedagogical Practice in Context* (edited by Gauci and Sander) provide practical guidance for international law teachers, aiming to combine doctrinal understanding with more in-depth theoretical engagement.

International law is relevant to addressing global problems such as climate change, global migration and international security. Teaching it effectively should develop students’ problem solving and critical thinking skills as well as their ability to navigate these complex, ‘wicked’ problems. By reimagining international law pedagogy, we not only improve how we teach the discipline but also ensure that students are equipped to contribute meaningfully to solving pressing global issues. This shift is essential to producing future legal professionals who are not only knowledgeable but also critically engaged and prepared to respond to an increasingly interconnected world.