

"While it is necessary to interrogate how international law is taught in US law schools, this is an exercise that must avoid replicating the very same psychosis that afflicts not only how international law is taught but how the dominant American culture views international law. There is a great risk of being caught up in a cycle of self-justification and anticipatory defense. What international law teachers in the US ought to understand is the damage that insularity brings to international law on these shores. In this respect, it is hardly sufficient -- although important -- to engage in a transatlantic soul-searching. But one cannot stop there, nor should that be the starting point, as though only the European and American academies had any credible practices worth examining. Perhaps one ought to start at looking at radically different approaches to understanding and teaching international law. This is the only way profound lessons, if they exist, can be learned.

Secondly, there needs to be a realization that the teaching of international law in US law schools is cabined by the tyranny of existing materials and text books. Many are either Eurocentric in their perspective or irredeemably closed in their outlooks. The perspectives and scholarship that gets emphasized reflects a narrow consensus among a largely conservative international law professoriate. It is as though no serious international law scholars exist outside Europe and the United States . To make matters worse, the views and positions of Third World states are either non-existent or are presently as implausible. International law teachers in the United States are complicit in perpetuating this obsolete view of the universe. Quite often, it seems as though international law is being taught for the benefit of the Empire rather than as an experiment in creating a just international order.

I am sympathetic to the torturous questions that Professor Alvarez has raised out of his experiences in teaching international law. But I find them constricting. Instead, I would like this conversation to be more open-ended and ask more fundamental questions. If we are serious about rethinking international law, we cannot be afraid of asking the big questions."

I hope these paragraphs get us going and capture what you are looking for. Thanks for asking.

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