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Is Global Studies a Field? (part 2)

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A strong case could be made for Global Studies (GS) as a distinct field in regard to curriculum and degrees. Examining the websites and other materials of GS programs around the world, reveals several general characteristics of program design and focus. First, GS programs draw heavily on the social sciences, especially the anthropology, history, political science, and sociology, with some representation of economics and business studies. Second, although less represented in GS

programs, humanities appears to embody a more critical perspective on GS, as for example, the humanities-centered GS program at Hanyang University, Korea. This underscores the considerable room for fruitful co-existence between humanities and social science scholars in GS programs due to thematic coherence through the aforementioned (see part 1 of this essay) conceptual focus on "globalization" and shared explanatory frameworks.
What does a GS curriculum look like? By viewing GS programs around the world I can discern six types of courses or curriculum building blocks.

1. Thematic courses consider such broad frameworks as transnationalism, world systems, global history, global-local, world literature, and global intellectual history.

2. Topical courses focus on democratization, migration, media, nationalism, gender, NGOs, diaspora, food security, ethnic conflict and so on.

3. Issues courses emphasize problems requiring solutions such as environment, population, disease, disasters, genocide, human rights.

4. Training courses emphasize job-related skills in program evaluation in NGOs, managing multicultural organizations, conflict resolution.

5. Methodology courses present ways to study globalization, mostly focusing on qualitative approaches.

6. Area courses focus on specific countries and regions in globalization. (This constitutes a fruitful overlap with Area Studies curriculums).

A number of program curriculums contain foundational or core courses, often drawn from Block 1 and then a mix of courses from other blocks.

Of course all fields in the Academy are not only structures of knowledge but also of power, but my point is how an awareness and recognition of these criticisms could be institutionalized as a critical perspective in a GS curriculum.

Discussion of curriculum is an opening to reflect on the aforementioned question (see part 1) of whether or not GS represents the ideology of U.S. political and economic interests. Theories of globalization might appear as U.S-centric, human

rights as culturally specific notions of personhood, the training for NGO work as undermining state sovereignty, and the emphasis on English-taught curriculums as Anglo-American cultural hegemony. Of course all fields in the Academy are not only structures of knowledge but also of power, but my point is how an awareness and recognition of these criticisms could be institutionalized as a critical perspective in a GS curriculum. Within the aforementioned thematic curriculum block "globalization" could be analyzed as a structure of power and knowledge through such readings as *Empire* by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, and *The Shock Doctrine* by Naomi Klein. In topics courses, teaching about anti-globalization movements fits the bill. Courses in the issues curriculum block could also highlight alternative solutions to problems that lie in indigenous practices and ideas rather than simply through "intervention" by wealthy nations, international organizations, and NGOs. In regard to practical courses, training in non-violent anti-globalization strategies could be included. Area courses can further understanding of how globalization is variously understood and enacted in different parts of the world, through such concepts as global-local and critical regionalism.

The final issue that I would like to touch on is institutional signification of GS knowledge in the names and types of degrees offered by GS programs. For a multi-disciplinary field this signification becomes problematic at the graduate level because the various tensions surrounding a multi-disciplinary field in the disciplinary-oriented Academy. An M.A. or Ph.D is expected to signify professional expertise in specific knowledge considerably beyond the general intellectual skills signified by an undergraduate B.A.

Insight on this issue can be gained by briefly considering Area Studies, which emerged in the 1950s and has a decades-long history of a multi-disciplinary field in the Academy. It is noteworthy that most Area Studies programs offer the terminal Area Studies M.A. and very few continue up to a named Area Studies Ph.D. Although an Area Studies graduate degree signifies rich understanding of a specific country or region, its holders can be seen as lacking training in any particular curriculum or methodology, hindering acceptance in the academic job market. At this moment, the creation of M.A. and Ph.D degrees in GS shows a similar tendency. There are considerably more GS programs offering terminal Global Studies M.A. degrees then those that also offer a Global Studies Ph.D. The few doctoral programs in GS that do exist seek to combine a focus on globalization as the object of study with grounding in the research strategies of an established disciplinary field. This reflects the

aforementioned observation (see part 1) that methodologies to study globalization are still best obtained through disciplinary training.

The 1980s saw the emergence of "globalization" as an intellectual trend. In the 1990s it became a movement with the emergence of specialized journals, research associations, and undergraduate GS majors.

Two ways of institutionalizing this combination can be seen in extant Global Studies Ph.D degrees. One is through a named degree, such as the Ph.D in Global Studies at Sophia University. We only admit candidates already trained in a social science discipline through prior graduate and undergraduate education. Once admitted, candidates take qualifying exams in both their discipline and in GS, and the dissertation committee is composed of faculty members from the discipline. The other way is to attach a Global Studies certificate to a disciplinary degree, as at University of California-Santa Barbara. Doctoral candidates in Anthropology, English, History, Political Science, Religious Studies, or Sociology can obtain this certificate by taking designated GS courses and including one faculty member on their dissertation committee from outside their discipline. In these two distinct ways Sophia and UC Santa Barbara institutionalize the same principle of focus on globalization as an object of study with grounding in an established disciplinary field.

So is GS a field? The 1980s saw the emergence of "globalization" as an intellectual trend. In the 1990s it became a movement with the emergence of specialized journals, research associations, and undergraduate GS majors. The past ten years has resembled something of a bandwagon as universities have created GS graduate programs, which is the gold standard for representing a distinct body of knowledge in the Academy. The next few years will be crucial to deciding if GS becomes fully institutionalized as a field in the Academy. The Global Studies Consortium will have to a key role to play in this effort.

Note: This is a shortened version of a plenary presentation at the "Global Studies Graduate Education Conference", held at Sophia University, Tokyo May 16-18 2008. Conference attendees consisted of 25 representatives of current or planned graduate programs in Global Studies from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America.

References

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