

Political science education and the conceptual analysis of ideology:

A pedagogy and curriculum of understanding

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A conversation amongst political scientists with roots that reach back into the historical foundations of the field focuses on the instruction of political science in the classroom. Two related problems emerged through this conversation that continue to occupy political scientists today. First, it became clear that many political scientists believe that the field has a responsibility to educate citizens. Civic education continues to be a main, if not the main, motive for an education in political science. Although most political scientists embrace the idea of civic education, many problems accompany its implementation and realization. A related problem that emerged in the discussions on politics education is the relationship between political science in the classroom and politics. Increasingly political scientists worry about the perception that political science does not engage with the political world in a meaningful way.

These two problems form the foundation of many studies, task forces, and projects in Political Science associations. Given the centrality of these debates and problems to political science both historically and institutionally, it is surprising that political theorists do not actively engage these issues on a wider basis. Few political theorists consider civic education and the relationship between political science education and politics. Although many scholars focus on the relationship between political theory and politics in terms of the analytical, conceptual, practical, and theoretical issues raised, few consider the educational issues associated with the ways political theorists engage politics. Political theorists' interest in the pedagogical and curricular aspects of political theory needs to mirror their interest in the research agenda for the sub-field. Both issues focus on the same question ultimately: how do students of political theory relate political theory to politics?

I address this question and those raised in the debate about the instruction of political theory by extending a conceptual approach to political theory and ideology to political theory classroom activities. The analysis of political concepts as they exist in ideological structures provides a pedagogical and curricular framework suitable to addressing the dual problems outlined above. Mainly, a conceptual analysis of political theory develops a useful notion of civic education and addresses concerns about the political relevance of political theory. By asking students to locate the conceptual components of an ideology and their linkages to other conceptual components, students come into contact directly and form an understanding of ideologies as they exist, function, and develop. The activity of seeing and understanding ideology not only brings students into direct contact with political concepts, theory, and debates, but it also does away with the foundationalism so often associated with programmes of civic education. A further point developed below is that the pedagogy and curriculum of the conceptual analysis of ideology are flexible. Although the primary interest here is in demonstrating the application of this pedagogy and curriculum to the study of ideologies in conflict and conflict plagued political environments, the classroom activities of the conceptual analysis of ideologies applies equally to the study of peaceful, democratic politics and the ‘canon of political theory’.

I. Civic Education

As early as 1903, the American Political Science Association (APSA) sought to catalogue the methods of political science instruction. These cataloguing exercises sought to outline how universities teach politics and to improve on those efforts. Specifically, the early reviews of political science in the classroom evaluated the extent to which

universities instructed students on “their duties and responsibilities as social beings and citizens”.¹ Many held that students ought to leave university with an interest and understanding of how political institutions function and with a “virile and aggressive citizenship” required by democratic states.² A concern that emerged during the early years of the discipline was the production of citizens capable of handling the demands of a democratic polity.

Although contemporary discussions on civic education focus less on the active and assertive citizenship hoped for in the early reviews of the state of the political science classroom, many assume that political science must produce citizens educated and interested in democratic politics. Hindy Schachter says, “the early committees saw a polity with too many apathetic citizens who were unwilling to engage public questions; such apathy is an impetus for concerns in our own time”.³ In the *Task Force Statement on Civic Education*, Lief Carter and Jean Elshtain express concern for a perceived lack of interest and knowledge about politics. A lack of knowledge about the “central truths” of political life threatens civic engagement and the healthy functioning of liberal democracy.⁴ As Sheila Mann says, “the importance of political knowledge and attention to political information for enlightened political participation . . . have characterized professional statements about the study of political science”.⁵

Opposed to a skills-based civic education is a civic education rooted in norms, values, and ethical claims about what constitutes a political society. Civic education does more than equip students with participatory skills; it tells students certain political concepts are normatively prior to others. Reactions to the *Task Force Statement on Civic Education* stressed the need to abandon “value neutrality” and promote “basic democratic

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values”.⁶ “Liberal aspirations to freedom, dignity, and equality” as well as the political traditions of a society constitute the core of civic education.⁷ The claim, made by some, that civic education requires specific instruction to value certain political concepts goes well beyond the claim that political science ought to teach “competence in public problem solving”.⁸

Both of these models of civic education introduce foundationalism to the pedagogy and curriculum of political science. Although, I do not seek to resolve the debate on what civic education is in this article, I suggest that a foundationalist approach to civic education generates persistent disagreements and controversies that undermine the civic education project. Foundationalism in civic education creates problems by demanding that specific political concepts valued by academic authorities have priority over specific political concepts valued by political authorities and actors. As John Gunnell warns, the academy does not “lead political life”.⁹ Furthermore, Karl Mannheim says that “those who demand of politics as a science that it teach norms and ends should consider that this demand implies actually the denial of the reality of politics”.¹⁰ Alan Smith echoes these warnings by pointing out that in Northern Ireland civic education programs failed because they ignored the political environment and the public’s political desires.¹¹ Foundationalism is ineffective and counterproductive as a practice in political science programs.

Foundations, norms, political conflict, and the authority of political science

Attempts to institute programs of civic education in Northern Ireland date back to the Schools Cultural Studies Project of 1974.¹² With the signing of the Belfast Agreement (i.e., the Good Friday Agreement), however, in 1998, the Department of Education for

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Northern Ireland pursued the idea of civic education with greater enthusiasm. A Department of Education “Working Party Progress Report” says that the Belfast Agreement demands educational institutions promote reconciliation, a “culture of tolerance”, pluralism, and integration.¹³ Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU), a Department of Education civic education program, stressed a curriculum that focused on diversity and difference, and integration and unity.¹⁴ Although reconciliation, tolerance, and pluralism seem like neutral and universally applicable political concepts, they are, in fact, foundations and norms valued by some and imposed on the region’s education system.

The programs pursued in Northern Ireland failed to function as envisioned; the pluralist and integrated ethos, the sense of shared citizenship, favored by the Department of Education was not supported politically. Alan Smith makes the point that while programs in civic education stressed ideas such as belonging, integration, and pluralism “where there is unity and diversity in public life so that communities and identities overlap”, the majority of people in Northern Ireland expressed ambiguity and hostility to such ideas.¹⁵ In Northern Ireland, “the evidence for a commitment to integration is not encouraging”.¹⁶

The disjuncture between the pluralist civic education favored by the Department of Education and the public’s lack of agreement on the foundations of politics reduced Northern Ireland’s civic education programs to a mere token. Instead of developing citizenship and a “culture of tolerance” through education, civic education programs such as EMU avoided discussing those issues most central to the conflict in Northern Ireland: political, cultural, and religious concepts.¹⁷ Although Smith points out that there are

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many pedagogical and curricular barriers to the development of civic education, he stresses that civic education in Northern Ireland devolved into a “minimalist approach” that avoided contentious political issues because of the “civic challenge” facing Northern Ireland’s politics.¹⁸ Department of Education guidelines for EMU programs focused on cross-community sporting events, carol services, and dramatic performances.¹⁹ Students received exposure to different activities and traditions, but they did not seek to isolate, comprehend, or interpret political concepts and ideologies held by members of the political opposition or their own political community. The lack of political agreement about what constitutes the state, a healthy polity, and the future of the region, plagued Northern Ireland’s ability to develop civic education.

Models of civic education that seek to impose specific political foundations and norms may ignore the debates and disagreements in the political environment. In deeply divided societies such as Northern Ireland, it is apparent that there is little agreement on what constitutes and ought to constitute political structures and what political concepts ought to define those structures. I do not mean to suggest that political institutions require unanimity in decision-making about political values and concepts, or that education cannot affect political decision-making. It makes little sense, however, to impose through civic education and political science classes political concepts and values that represent only a segment of the community’s politics or are alien to the political environment. Political values and concepts in the classroom may differ greatly and relate ambiguously to practiced politics.

Skills-based civic education and the authority of political science

A foundationalist approach to civic education fuels disagreements about those political concepts valued in a society and encourages educational structures to frustrated and impotent ends. Despite the controversies associated with political norms and civic education, however, scholars and political science associations continue to seek a politically active and involved pedagogy and curriculum for political science. A continuing desire to provide a civic education through a skills-based pedagogy and curriculum in political science has many complications.

Scholars such as Barry Checkoway, Daniel O'Connell, and Robert McKenzie argue that political skill building constitutes civic education. Checkoway makes the point that political education requires that citizens develop a sense of civic competence. Students must develop the skills necessary to participate in civic debates.²⁰ Likewise, O'Connell and McKenzie limit civic education to the process of learning about political and policy development and evaluation with the purpose enabling political participation.²¹ Civic education has a place in the political science classroom, and that place is to give students the tools necessary to make informed political decisions.

The skills-based approach to civic education provides a seemingly encouraging model for political science instruction. It avoids many of the problems associated with the foundational and normative approach outlined above. A focus on skills does not require political science pedagogy and curriculum to embrace value-specific political concepts. Furthermore, it responds to student demands for an active, practical, and interesting political science curriculum. Many scholars point out that students find themselves attracted to political science classes that offer an active engagement with politics.²² A

pedagogy and curriculum rooted in the skills of civic engagement attracts potential students to political science programs.

Accompanying the skills-based version of civic education is a problem similar to that faced by the foundationalist and normative civic education model. A skills-based civic education suggests that political science has the authority and ability to exert control over politics. Arguing that political science pedagogy and curriculum must engage politics to enable students to act politically introduces foundationalism into the field of political science, and represents the unrequited desire for political science to have practical meaning in the political world.

John Gunnell has made the point persuasively that part of the history of political science is the history of an academic discipline attempting to control and regulate its object of study: politics. Metapractices, such as political science, “both long to return to their origins and yearn for authority over the universe from which they sprung”.²³ The desire for political science and theory to control politics through a rationalist approach not only exists as an object of metatheoretical concern about epistemological and normative foundations of the social and political world, but also underwrites much of the skills based approach to political science education. In Haines’s 1913 report on political science instruction, the ‘committee of seven’ made several recommendations for the improvement of political science programs. Tellingly the report considers recommendations six and seven together:

6. That instructors in political science encourage students to prepare reports and surveys on actual political conditions.
7. That the department of political science furnish aid and be in

readiness, in equipment and spirit, to render advice to government officials not only in the making and enforcing of laws but also in extending assistance in whatever special fields the instructors in the department are competently equipped.²⁴

The ‘committee of seven’ linked student education in politics with political science’s foundationalist desires. The report continues:

Suggestions 6 and 7 . . . both refer to ways and means by which the department of political science may become interested and helpful in an effective way in local and state governmental affairs. The first suggests a method by which knowledge of political affairs may be translated into civic action by the students themselves, and the second calls attention to a responsibility which instructors in political science have been slow to recognize—that of placing the department in readiness to serve public officials. The charge has been made that while the universities, in an organized and systematic manner, blaze the way in agriculture and in many other lines they very rarely serve as laboratories and investigating outposts for the political affairs of the state.²⁵

Expressing a desire to move beyond the university, the ‘committee of seven’ sought to give education a practical implication and to help provide government with a foundation of rational, expert advice. One member of the ‘committee of seven’ lamented that political science could end “government blunders” if only the academy would act. The action taken, however, did not end government misguidance. It united civic education, foundationalism in political science, and the quest for power.

The dream for political science of authorizing politics through a skills-based civic education suffers from two major faults. First, Gunnell suggests that academic “privilege is not easily reconciled with an image of democratic deliberation”.²⁶ Clearly, to remove authority from citizens and instill it in a group of trained political scientists would threaten public sovereignty in democratic states. A second fault, however, raised and then ignored by the ‘committee of seven’, is that an academically mounted campaign to assist political institutions fails. One political science Department Head said that the university gave up on “community service” because of the resistance it faced from political bodies.²⁷ Providing expert advice to improve political structures and outcomes for the community is not an easy task. In fact, the ‘committee of seven’ offers no positive examples of a political science department or an expert offering scientific, non-partisan, rationalist advice. Schachter points out that the American Political Science Association’s attempts at civic education historically “produce only deluded versions of the envisioned changes”.²⁸ Yet, despite the lack of any encouraging examples, the ‘committee of seven’ believes that “most communities would really appreciate” expert assistance.²⁹ They conclude, “the fact that service of this character is difficult, or that it may lead to trouble, is no excuse for shirking entire responsibility for that assistance and guidance”.³⁰

Civic education, whether a version that promotes specific foundations and norms or political skills and assistance, that relies on political science to provide the foundations of politics fails consistently. The Northern Ireland Department of Education’s attempts to promote tolerance, pluralism, and reconciliation through the EMU plan did not reflect the basic political environment of the region. Instead of confronting difficult and dangerous political issues and effecting changes in Northern Ireland’s ideologies, the EMU program

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collapsed into insignificance; its authority unrealised. Likewise, many scholars linked the promotion of skills-based learning in political science departments to the authority of political science over politics. Again, political scientists failed to realize much, if any, authority. Rooting civic education in foundationalism does not work.

Understanding and 'mapping' in civic education

Although there may be many ways to design a political science pedagogy and curriculum that actualises civic education, realizes students' demands for a politically focused political science, and avoids the problems associated with foundationalism, I suggest that embracing the notions of understanding and 'mapping' resolves these issues. Understanding and mapping involve observation and cartography with the purpose of replicating intellectually the political world. These activities encourage students to engage with politics as people practice it without making the claim that political science ought to dominate politics in some way. The resulting analysis and maps may prove useful to political practitioners. The use comes not from corrective advice and conceptual improvements offered by political scientists. Instead, a rendering of the political environment conducted by a student not of that political environment may allow political activists to see and understand themselves, their opposition, and their political sphere as it is, not as they believe it to be. As Mannheim points out, "the only thing we can demand of politics as a science is that it see reality with the eyes of acting human being, and that it teach men . . . to understand even their opponents".³¹

Mapping and understanding involve student observation of political discussions, utterances, and discourses. By viewing political discourse and other artefacts of politics, students will have the opportunity to isolate political concepts, their conceptual linkages

with other political concepts and policy initiatives without asserting the privilege of political science to anything but the ability to understand political discourse. Through understanding and mapping political science students will interact with political debates and ideology gaining a knowledge of the structure of those debates. Importantly, students arrive at a unique understanding of political discourses, conflicts, and ideologies. Their understanding breaks free of restricted views of the political world generated within the ideologies and discourses. Students will not arrive at some absolute truth; instead they will grasp what political participants may not be able to see—the ideological structures as they exist Mannheim, for example, “found that only certain limited aspects and areas of historical reality reveal themselves to each of the various [political] parties”.³² Political actors and ideologies rely on their conceptual make-up to tell them about the political world, and, as a result, that conceptual make-up often mistakes and distorts political reality. In Northern Ireland, for example, some suggest Unionists, Loyalists, Republicans, and Nationalists do not understand one another’s ideology and politics. Karin Eyben and Peter McGuire found that prospective members of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in North and Mid Ulster knew little about Republican and Loyalist ideology.³³ Furthermore, Eyben and McGuire found that understanding, in some cases, promoted confident and positive dialogue.

Colin Irwin found, however, that in some instances understanding between political opponents generated antipathy and helped to entrench the relative political positions.³⁴ Likewise, Eyben and McGuire noted that some Loyalists having come to an understanding of Republican politics opted to eschew conflict resolution and political compromise. They found it easier to perpetuate the status quo.³⁵ This should warn us that

understanding does not result necessarily in dialogue and conflict resolution, and reinforces the findings from above: political science does not exhort authority over political power. Thus, civic education should seek political intervention cautiously, if at all. Consequently, understanding and representing political concepts and ideologies can actualise civic education as understanding to the extent that the study of politics does not insist on political science's authority.

II. A Conceptual Analysis of Ideology in Political Theory

Having demonstrated that a foundationalist civic education frustrates itself, the article focuses on student demands for a politically focused program in political science, and more specifically, political theory. I suggest that it is possible through the use of a conceptual analysis of ideology to study, interpret, and understand political concepts as people use them and practice politics. Conceptual analysis encourages students to study political discourse in democratic, non-democratic, and conflict plagued political environments. Through active and experiential learning processes, students encounter, interpret, map, and seek to understand political concepts and ideologies. When viewed in a comparative, international, or cross-conflict manner, this not only introduces students to the specific political concepts and ideologies under examination but also to the diverse possibilities of conceptual configurations that constitute politics. Perhaps most importantly, however, a conceptual analysis of ideologies does this without introducing foundationalism into political science and theory or asserting the academy's authority over politics. The explanation below of what an ideology is, how it functions, and how one examines it, stresses an active, inquiry-based pedagogy and curriculum where students have the opportunity to study politics in an immediate and exploratory way.

Ideology and political concepts

Ideology is a universal object. Although particular ideologies exist in particular political contexts, ideology is a thing that different people produce and consume at different times and places.³⁶ As both a universal and particular object, students study a particular ideology to understand and map its conceptual arrangements and they may also employ their findings to illuminate ideology as a mode of universal political thinking. By asking students to study specific ideological structures, a conceptual analysis of ideology provides the framework for an exploratory and active pedagogy and curriculum that enables students to learn about positive, negative, and creative potential in politics. This approach, critically, allows students to investigate particular political concepts and arrangements in an ideology or set of ideologies in a political environment or discourse and to connect their results with the field of political theory and the history of politics.

A conceptual analysis of ideology focuses on the concrete and practiced political idea configurations, “thought-practices”, or ideologies that groups of political practitioners “produce and consume”.³⁷ Structuring the holder’s view of the political world an ideology arranges largely political concepts such as the nation, race, and history.³⁸ It tells the consumer what is and is not political and what the meaning of the political is. They “inject order and meaning” to political phenomena.³⁹ An ideology is practiced political thinking and enables practitioners to negotiate their political environment, attract political support, and advance policy positions. Necessarily an ideology includes an estimation of itself and the political structures and institutions that it encounters such as other ideologies.

The conceptual organization, linkages, and ranking of importance of political concepts constitute the ideological structure. Through an analysis of conceptual arrangements, a picture emerges of an ideology. For example, the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) in Northern Ireland embraces something like an Irish nationalism linked conceptually with liberalism.⁴⁰ They rank the Irish nation among their most valued political concepts and conceptual associate it with individual liberty, progress, equality, and pluralism. Members of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) in London/derry and North Antrim, however, link the nation with concepts such as race, religion, and permanence. Thus, this branch of the UDA favours a kind of conservative type of nationalism that they call Loyalism.

Identifying an ideology, such as Irish Nationalism or Loyalism, requires interrogating practices, utterances, speeches, and discourses understood to be political. Consistent patterns of conceptual arrangements emerge and coalesce into an ideology through the study of a discourse. With careful attention to the framework environment, the historical, cultural, and political traditions, student can identify groups of concepts as sensible ideologies. This approach avoids the hazards of foundationalism discussed above by treating ideology as naturally forming within political entities.

Although ideologies may appear to be fixed and stable structures, they are not. Flexibility typifies an ideology as it attempts to gain political support, realize policy goals, and control the flow of political discourse and environment. Ideological structures and political concepts do not exist as ideal types or generic categories; they are functioning, developing, and reactive idea combinations. The conceptual analysis of

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ideologies, therefore, is an ongoing and continual activity that seeks to understand the many ways in which people combine and recombine political concepts.

Locating politics in the world

The flexibility of ideology recognized by a conceptual analysis draws attention to the preconstituted, natural, and active attributes of practiced politics and ideological conflict. “Politics is a conventional form of life that arguably had a beginning, evolution, and dispersion . . . and that has been characterized by an internal preconstituted self-understanding of its qualitative features as well as its operative elements”.⁴¹ These qualities make politics and ideology a difficult object to study. Although students and researchers require direction and an idea of what it is they are studying to begin their inquiries, instructors can not offer a stipulative definition of politics. Rather than beginning with definitions, the conceptual approach to politics works towards interpretative understanding of political practice, ideology, and politics.

Certain attributes constitute political activity in particular domains or environments and discourses. Locating politics in any society begins with the understanding that politics “is a matter of internal conceptual relations and conventions rather than external categorization”.⁴² Students, research, and instructors must begin to understand and map politics by identifying what politics is in the domain that they are analysing. This is a confusing and difficult process at first. Students unfamiliar with the discourses and environments they study will find it difficult to determine what is political at the start of any research project. By relying, however, on the significance, meaning, and intention given to a discourse by those participating in the discourse, a student can identify what is political. In many western polities, for example, religious concepts do not

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have a central political role. Nevertheless, we cannot then say that religious concepts are non-political in western polities. For many years, the notion that 'Home Rule, is Rome Rule', where the Roman Catholic Church acting through the Irish Republic sought to undermine Northern Ireland's union with Great Britain and the religious and civic liberties of Irish Protestants, provided gravitational force and unity for Unionism. The political is entirely conventional and depends on the context of the political environment and ideological domain.

An added element of confusion with identifying the political is the possibility that there is no agreement within the political environment about what is political. Some ideologies may define certain actions and concepts as political whereas others may identify those actions and concepts as non-political. Turning again to Northern Ireland, many held and still hold, such as the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA), the belief that guerrilla warfare and tactical violence are political actions and amount to political concepts. The British Government, Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), and others, believe that those concepts are non-political. Even though the UUP and the RIRA embrace ideologies that encounter one another in the same discursive field they embrace different notions of what is political. Clearly, politics and ideology are concepts and structures that exhibit manifold understandings and lack metapractical foundations.

An active pedagogy and a comparative and international curriculum

A pedagogy derived from the conceptual approach to ideology recognizes this by stressing experiential and active learning. An active approach to learning requires that teachers do not instruct students on what politics is or what political concepts constitute a specific ideology. Instead they discover the meaning of politics through direct experience

and research of political discourse. Exposing students to a particular political environment allows them to conduct original research using primary sources to uncover recurring configurations of political concepts and ideologies. In this way, the conceptual analysis of ideology addresses student interest in studying lived politics and their excitement for conducting research projects.

In order for the student to develop a sense of the potential for politics, however, the curriculum must be comparative and international in scope. If students are going to learn anything more than a specific understanding of politics, a particular ideological structure, or a discursive domain, they must encounter multiple ideologies and versions of politics. Having students analyse conceptual configurations of politics across state and national boundaries allows them to understand the creative possibilities of ideology and political concepts. Students will see the many ways in which people arrange political concepts, confront their tradition and culture, regulate and are regulated by ideological structures. Through this comparative and international study of ideology, students learn about what politics is and what it means to humanity.

A comparative and international study of ideology will also help students understand future ideologies that they encounter because they will have a repository of political knowledge with which to relate to new political concepts and configurations. This is not to say that a student's knowledge of prior ideologies relates directly to future ideologies. It is misguided to suggest, for instance, that one's understanding of socialism bequeaths one an understanding of the Zapatistas' ideology. An understanding of socialism, however, helps one to relate to the Zapatistas' ideology by helping to isolate and illuminate some of their key political concepts such as equality, welfare, and a focus

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on the social unit. It may be the case, however, that the Zapatistas' ideology only employs some concepts that socialism also employs. Perhaps the Zapatistas utilize concepts associated with nationalism, conservatism, or even a reactionary or fascist ideology. Only a detailed analysis of the Zapatistas' ideological structure reveals the full range and configuration of their political concepts. Without conducting a conceptual analysis of Zapatistian ideology, it is incorrect to call them socialist, but an understanding of socialism may allow one to begin to see and understand the ideological structure they embrace.

One-way of accomplishing a comparative, international, and active or practically oriented analysis of ideology is to encourage students to research different political environments and ideologies and report their findings to one another. By allowing, for example, one student or group of students to study American Conservatism, another student or set of student to study Irish Republicanism, and a third student or team of students to research Iranian Shi'ism where the students share their findings, they will introduce themselves to the complex diversity of politics. It is in reporting their findings, mappings, and understandings that the activity of politics takes shape in its broad complexity for the students.

Many difficulties beset this kind of research project. Students may be unfamiliar with the culture, history, contemporary political discourse, and language of the political environment they choose to study. Freedman points out that understanding and mapping an ideology requires "decoding of the cultural, spatial, and psychological dimensions of meaning in which they occur. Much of that will never be retrievable".⁴³ With the exception of a language barrier, where a student will not be able to read the ideological

artefacts, students can mitigate against these challenges by immersing themselves in the history, culture, and politics of their subject.⁴⁴ Although this requires a great deal of energy, focus, and time, immersion can help a student understand a political discourse and ideology to the extent that it is possible to understand the discourse and ideology.

Ideological artefacts

There are a number of resources or artefacts that students may turn towards to study an ideology and political discourse. Newspapers, monographs, party policy-papers, newsletters, manifestos, speeches, websites, interviews, and even fictionalised-narratives all bear ideological discourse as text. Many organizations that produce these artefacts distribute them widely to libraries and community centres. They may, as is becoming the case increasingly, publish them on the Internet. Most political parties have well maintained websites, and many smaller organizations, like pressure groups, post material on bulletin boards and blogs. These artefacts are the main sources for a conceptual analysis of ideology as they are readily available, reasonably coherent, and serve the purpose of delivering a political message.

Activities, events, and symbols all carry political concepts as well. The murals of Belfast, Derry, and Portadown illustrate political concepts and emotions that reinforce and are reinforced by the well-developed ideologies of Northern Ireland. Although a UVF mural simply reads “For God and Ulster: 1912-1994: Still Undefeated”, it carries many political concepts such as notions of defence, siege, a long-standing history, nation, and religion. Of course, to unpack the multiple meanings and concepts of a mural, a student must make themselves familiar with the political environment and discourse.

Students may find the ideological analysis of these sorts of artefacts more difficult than of textually based resources as they often display incomplete or ambiguous messages.

Depending on a student's needs, they can expand or contract the number and type of items they examine to locate and map the ideologies within a certain political arena. For students who must complete large research projects, such as a senior thesis, Master's thesis, or even a dissertation, it may be appropriate for them to research a greater number of resources and ideologies. Teachers may even afford advanced students the opportunity to study the way ideologies interact and seek to shape one another within a political environment. Students just beginning their studies, however, may examine only one ideology and its conceptual arrangements during a specific time period, like American Conservatism(s) since September 2001.

There are two important issues, however, that students must be aware of as they analyse ideological artefacts. First, a student must examine enough material to locate and map an ideology. One source, a book, a newsletter, or speech, is not significant enough to establish patterns of political concepts and arrangements, especially if those concepts fluctuate and recombine over time. Only by researching numerous original items and secondary sources, will students have the materials necessary to comprehend the historical, cultural, and political environment and understand and map ideologies and concepts. This can be a time-consuming and involved process, and students should be prepared to dedicate the necessary energy for this project or teachers should assist their students by providing them with the historical and cultural elements that affect ideology or with some of the ideology's important conceptual arrangements.

Second, not every artefact or group that produces ideological artefacts holds one ideology: artefacts and groups may embrace multiple ideological structures. Freedman says, “we need to jettison the anthropomorphization of groups, as if they had a homogenous structure, let alone a fixed personality, that is amendable to the formation of dogma”.⁴⁵ A newsletter or a political party or pressure group may articulate multiple ideologies and arrange concepts in a variety of ways. Ambiguity in an organization’s ideology may reflect ideological uncertainty within the group, an organization with a decentralized power structure that encourages multiple ideological producers, a conscious effort by the party to embrace a wide a set of political concepts to encourage greater amounts of political support, or the organization may be in ideological flux. Take for instance the confusion that surrounds the SDLP’s ideology. Jennifer Todd notes, “characterisation of this ideology has been difficult because commentators have attempted to fit it into clear nationalist or post-nationalist categories”.⁴⁶ Correctly, Todd finds that the SDLP generates an ideology that embraces non-nationalist and nationalist concepts, and does not operate strictly along nationalist or post-nationalist lines. Although Todd finds wrongly that nationalist concepts “come in only as the background” within the ideology, she notes that the confusion surrounding the SDLP’s politics gives the organization “political flexibility”.⁴⁷ Furthermore, because of the historical and cultural pressures, Irish Nationalist political parties must embrace the idea of the Irish nation to stake their claims to Irish Nationalism and to maintain credibility with and the support of non-Unionist voters in Northern Ireland. This demonstrates the potential ambiguity of a group’s ideology, and should caution students in their treatment of an organization’s political utterances.

III. Conclusion

A conceptual analysis of ideology provides only the outlines or broad-strokes of a pedagogy and curriculum. Outside of a focus on practiced politics, its ideology, political concepts, and historical and cultural forces, a conceptual analysis of ideology calls for little from a pedagogy and curriculum. What it does call for, however, addresses the concerns relevant to students of political science and theory today. By mapping and understanding ideology, students come into contact with politics. In much the same way that Galileo studied the physical world to understand physics, students of politics can study politics to understand politics.

A conceptual analysis of ideology does away with the foundationalism of other pedagogical approaches to civic education. By rejecting the authority of political science over politics, a conceptual analysis of ideology seeks to educate by enhancing the political concepts used to form ideologies. It does not rely on norms to guide students to the correct understanding of politics. This does not engender an aggressive, value-specific form of civic education, and it suggests that civic education is nothing more than understanding. Although this may not seem like a lofty goal, it is acutely necessary. One only needs a quick glance at contemporary discussions of politics to see the critical need for understanding.

¹ Charles G. Haines, 'Report on instruction in political science in colleges and universities: Portion of preliminary report of Committee of American Political Science Association on Instruction in Government', *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association*, 10, Tenth Annual Meeting (1913): p. 253.

² Haines, *ibid.*, p. 254.

³ Hindy Lauer Schachter, 'Civic Education: Three early American Political Science Association Committees and their relevance for our time', *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 31, no. 3 (September 1998), p. 637.

⁴ Leif H. Carter and Jean Bethke Elstain, 'Task Force statement on civic education statement of purpose', *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 30, no. 4 (December 1997), p. 745,

⁵ Sheilah Mann, 'What the survey of American college freshman tells us about their interest in politics and political science', *PS: Political Science and Politics* 32, no. 2 (June 1999): p. 266.

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²⁵ Haines, *ibid.*, pp. 262-63.

²⁶ Gunnell, *op. cit.*, Ref. 9, p. 220.

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³¹ Mannheim, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

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³³ Karin Eyben and Peter McGuire, *What Now? Reflections Report: A Political Education with Young Adults in the Rural Loyalist Community* (Belfast: International Voluntary Service, 2002), pp. 35-37.

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³⁵ Eyben and McGuire, *op. cit.*, Ref. 31, pp. 35-36.

³⁶ Michael Freeden, 'Ideology and political theory', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11, no. 1 (February 2006), p. 13.

³⁷ Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996).

³⁸ Some scholars suggested recently that emotions play a role in uniting ideological structures. Evidence from my forthcoming dissertation, *Ideology and the Northern Ireland Conflict since 1994*, suggests that emotions, history, and culture play parts in shaping ideological structures.

³⁹ Freedden, *op. cit.*, Ref. 34, p. 52.

⁴⁰ For a useful discussion of the relationship between nationalism and ideologies with world-wide reach—see Freedden, ‘Is nationalism a distinct ideology?’, in *Liberal Languages: Ideological Imaginations and Twentieth-Century Progressive Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2005), pp. 204-24.

⁴¹ Gunnell, *op. cit.*, Ref. 9, p. 44.

⁴² Gunnell, *ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴³ Freedden, *ibid.*, p. 44.

⁴⁴ Students require immersion only to the extent that it enables them to understand the politics and ideologies of an environment. They do not need to express agreement with their subjects. One way of helping students maintain distance from the politics they study is to encourage them to examine different and adversarial ideologies. For instance, students can study types of Basque, Catalanian, and Spanish Nationalism to maintain their status as an academic observer.

⁴⁵ Freedden, ‘Confronting the chimera of a ‘Post-ideological’ age’, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 8, no. 2 (June 2005), p. 257.

⁴⁶ Jennifer Todd, ‘Nationalism, republicanism, and the Good Friday Agreement’ in *After the Good Friday Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin, 1999), p. 53.

⁴⁷ Todd, *ibid.*, p. 55. Nationalist concepts play a much more central role in the SDLP’s ideology than Todd suggests. Although it is incorrect to claim that the SDLP’s core political concept is nationalism typified by homogeneity and holism, the SDLP relies on a core that consists of a pluralist nation, progress, liberty, equality, individuality, and human rationality. The SDLP augments these core ideas with adjacent concepts such as a supra-national state or political institutions, human welfare, “parity of esteem” or national expression, and popular sovereignty. When mapped like this, the SDLP’s brand of Irish Nationalism appears to embrace concepts within liberalism ideological structure.