



**Michael Maniates, ed.** *Encountering Global Environmental Politics: Teaching, Learning, and Empowering Knowledge*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002. xii + 262 pp. \$34.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8476-9542-3; \$89.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8476-9541-6.



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## Thinking Locally, Acting Globally

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How can instructors better enable students to move beyond the talk of the lecture-dominated, expert-centered classroom “to walk their civic talk” (p. 132)? This question percolates throughout *Encountering Global Environmental Politics*, edited by Michael Maniates. Sensitive to the dichotomy between intellectual conception and achievement, Maniates, who is a professor of political science and environmental science, believes that teaching and learning about environmental challenges should do more than exercise the intellect. Education should empower the learner and lead to civic engagement.

In his preface, Michael Maniates quickly and explicitly identifies his goals and intended audience—which is broader than the denizens of academia. He is addressing those who have “faith in education to better the world, a wish to make a difference, deep concerns about global environmental trajectories, and vulnerability to feelings of insignificance and futility” (p. 5). His goal is the inculcation of “the faith and nerve we need to act on our growing knowledge of global environmental decay” (pp.

xi, xii). The book’s thirteen thoughtful, yet fast-paced, chapters are woven together with apt editorial introductions and concluding “Questions for Reflection and Discussion.” These contributions by Maniates confirm his subtitle, *Teaching, Learning, and Empowering Knowledge*, and suggest as well the book’s potential as a supplemental academic text for classes in international studies and global environmental politics.

Part 1, “The Classroom: Four Walls, Many Possibilities,” presents two chapters. The first, by Paul Wapner (chapter 2), is primarily, but not exclusively, addressed to students. Wapner urges students to move beyond concerns for “what’s on the test” to develop a “wild mind ... an intellectual attitude that is willing to address issues outside of established categories” (p. 19). Chapter 3, written by William Ayers, is an evocative challenge to teachers, directly, and students, indirectly, “to stay alert to the world” (p. 37). Echoing Wapner and Maniates, he reminds us of the ethical dimension to teaching. To move beyond teaching as a meta-ethical enterprise, Ayers calls for a political act: “[t]o teach consciously for ethical action” (p. 41).

A discussion of pedagogical obstacles to the learning and teaching of global politics initiates part 2, "Knowledge That Empowers: Relearning the Basics of Global Politics." Lamont Hempel, in chapter 4, proffers that "teaching is being shortchanged in order to perpetuate an intellectual caste system that caters to publishable forms of microspecialization, most of it in isolation from broad social and environmental needs" (p. 55). Following a discussion of basic constraints on student learning, Hempel briefly discusses the use of innovative pedagogies such as geographic information systems (GIS), ecological footprint analysis, and custom-made, short documentary films which promote visual learning.

Although they acknowledge the potential dangers of curricular overload, Ken Conca (chapter 5) and co-authors Geoffrey Dabelko and Richard Matthew (chapter 7) wish to broaden current curricular concerns in international relations and world politics. In his chapter, Conca challenges both students and teachers to re-assess the post-sovereign theory that often guides the study of global environmental politics and to demythologize common course-organizing concepts such as "the state," "the tragedy of the commons," or the "North-South divide." Equally concerned to enrich the classroom curriculum, Dabelko and Matthew argue the case for why, and how, we might incorporate an environmental security perspective into the study of global environmental politics.

The challenge of demystifying popular pedagogical concepts continues in Paul Taylor's critical discussion of the use of models and modeling in science (chapter 6). Focusing on Garrett Hardin's classic notion of the "tragedy of the commons," Taylor initially demonstrates how its logic may be simulated in the classroom, and then shows how it can be used as a "critical heuristic" by placing it in tension with two alternative views. Using his own teaching as an example, he proposes that teachers and their students reinvigorate the standard Hardin model by adding much of the reality it trims off: resources that are "changing and mutable, infused with richly complex social relationships, and characterized by permeable boundaries and social inequality" (p. 94). He also suggests that students need to deconstruct theories such as the tragedy thesis and view them as less a literary account of reality than a rhetorical device used to frame a certain view of the world.

An engaging essay from the editor, chapter 8, reintroduces the theme of how to bridge the chasm between environmental convictions and everyday political prac-

tice. Examining several of the principal texts in the field, "[e]mployed by hundreds of college courses with thousands of students annually" (p. 136), Maniates uncovers the pedagogical paradox that it is the "rhythm of the overloaded, hyperefficient course in global environmental ills [that] almost naturally contradicts the lessons about social change that permeate the field" (p. 138). His response is to replace traditional classroom rhetoric about social change and the power of participation with more active methods of teaching and learning. As an example, he describes his successful use of "antisimulations" which "pitch students into largely unfamiliar waters by involving them in collective work on an issue that matters to them, for which the process and outcome of struggle is initially unclear" (p. 138).

Part 3, "Education Expanded: Paths Are Made by Walking," continues the practical discussion of how instructors might overcome the common inertia of the college classroom. B. Welling Hall (chapter 9) opens this section of the book with an example of an innovative teaching practice called "theory play." Unlike more traditional role play and case study discussions which, in her opinion, often default to students "exchanging unsupported opinions with peers who are also novices in the field" (p. 152), teaching with theory play has "students in effect perform a 'lecture' with content shaped by the professor and form shaped by students" (p. 153). In the intriguing example she provides, the "theory" is John Rawls's theory of justice as viewed through the lens of Brian Barry in *The Liberal Theory of Justice*, and the "play" occurs as students transpose the text from the academic genre to drama.

In a most fitting concluding chapter, Nancy Quirk illustrates how students can be taught to *think* globally while *acting* locally. Her vehicle is "service learning," which combines service to the community with classroom learning about the theories of global environmental politics. Discussing the whys, ways, and how-tos of service learning, she shows how "service learning can transform the classroom from a potential exercise in despair to a laboratory for bringing intellectual insight to bear on social problems that matter" (p. 214).

Although classes of international studies and global environmental politics are the initial context for this collection of essays, Maniates' impassioned preface, introductions, and carefully chosen selections soon move the reader beyond the dynamics of the classroom and problems of pedagogy to larger questions of civil engagement. These essays are not technical pedagogical skirmishes be-

tween academicians, but they are intended for the educated nonspecialist. As Nancy Quirk suggests in her essay, the debate over the undergraduate curriculum deserves our attention, even if we are not students or teachers, “because we are all part of and molded by institutions of higher education” (p. 216). Maniates has asked each of his contributors to think beyond inbred academic scholarship and address the decline in civic capabilities and citizen responsibility. Although each essay looks at the issue through a different lens, the differences are often subtle, and they create a common belief that whether

student, professor, or citizen, the study of global environmental politics is as much a moral enterprise as a scholarly one. Edward Abbey advises us to become a “reluctant enthusiast, a part-time crusader, a half-hearted fanatic. Save the other half of yourselves for pleasure and adventure” (p. 54). Given our current state of global environmental decay, Maniates and the contributors in this collection believe that teaching and learning about the environment will no longer allow us to “save the other half.”

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