

Video Transcript

An Introduction to International Law – Gleider Hernández

Hi, I'm Gleider Hernández. I'm a Professor of Public International Law at the Katholieke Leuven in Belgium and the Open University of the Netherlands. For many years, I was an Associate Professor, or what we called Reader, of Public International Law at Durham University in the UK, which is where much of this textbook is written.

This textbook is truly a labour of love. It was one of these projects where I saw an important gap in education, where I saw a great number of books that I felt didn't quite fit with the way that I thought international law should be taught. And, as a friend of mine always says, if you see a problem you should really get down and stop complaining about it and fix it. So, that's what I hope I've achieved with this book and I hope that you will find it useful both as a lecturer or as a student in your journey with international law in the classroom.

My profile and my vision for international law are global. I hope that this book is sensitive to different jurisdictional sensibilities and aware that teaching international law to different constituencies of students is different. So, it is aimed primarily at an undergraduate cohort, but one that is wanting to take international law that step further. So the length of the book and the comprehensiveness of the book reflect this more ambitious than basic, and yet accessible approach. I also think that the book will be very useful for post graduate students who come to international law in English, perhaps for the first time, and need a systematic, accessible and clear introduction to the field that has abundant further reading and opportunities to truly become involved in the field as it is taught.

Now obviously the market for the book, the audience for the book, is primarily English speaking; after all, it's written in English. But rather than presume that English is the global language that everyone must learn, I try to be sensitive to the fact that international law, in order to be truly international, must also take into account other perspectives, whether from other parts of the world than the West or in other languages than English; at the very least, some of the languages in which it's been historically written such as French, German and Spanish.

Now, I've taken an approach that seeks to balance theory and practice. Though I have a number of years of practice experience within the United Nations and in private practice, my scholarship is theoretical. And so I thought that that was the ideal blend to bring to an educational book. Why? Well, theory is constituted by practice. We try to theorize what we see and observe in the world, but equally so, practice draws on theory. We make policy decisions that end up forming the bedrock of practice by looking at theories and visions of how to do things, how to structure phenomena, and how to make sense of them. I believe that theory and practice are

co-constitutive and that that was a powerful influence for me in designing the methodology behind this book.

In terms of the structure, I think and I hope that the book maps on to your course, or at the very least it maps on to the more contemporary debates in international law. It was designed to be modular, so it could be taught by excising chapters, if necessary, supplementing chapters if one wishes to, from the lecturer's standpoint at least, and from the student's standpoint, so that each chapter contains enough explanation that you don't need to be going across the book over and over and over again.

And finally, in terms of accessibility, one thing that I want to say is that international law is not a simple field and to gloss over or pretend that it is would not be doing a service to the students, especially not a reflective, ambitious student, as I hope you will be. It's a complex field, but that doesn't mean that without being very clear with language, being selective with footnotes and referencing, that there's an ability to convey some very complex ideas in an accessible way, one that allows the student to make the most of their learning experience and to benefit from the examples that liven up the law, that liven up the theory, and give it substance. I believe firmly that accessibility is the hallmark of what we should be doing in preparing these educational materials and I hope that I've achieved that with this book. So welcome to my *International Law* textbook and I hope that you'll find it a useful resource as much as I enjoyed preparing it. Thanks.