Peter Hilpold and Giuseppe Nesi (eds.)

Teaching International Law

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[Jak vyučovat mezinárodní právo]

International law is undoubtedly one of the most self-reflective legal disciplines, with an exceptionally rich tradition of scholarship devoted to its pedagogy. From a global perspective, probably no other legal subject has attracted such sustained attention and self-critical engagement with the methods and meaning of teaching. Given its ambivalent and marginal position within legal curricula worldwide, it is unsurprising that the discipline's structure and content have been shaped primarily by academic teachers. Unlike many domestically oriented legal fields, international law education has long been seen as a means to invite students to think beyond national borders and to understand the interconnected nature of legal, political, and social issues.

In the introduction to *Teaching International Law* (2024), co-edited with Giuseppe Nesi, Peter Hilpold observes that 'in no other legal discipline does the teacher enjoy such a prominent role as in International Law.' This inspiring and ambitious volume is the product of five years of close academic collaboration between the Universities of Innsbruck and Trento, developed within the framework of an Euregio project. It brings together leading legal scholars primarily from European universities, with a representation of expertise from Italy and Germany, all united by their deep engagement and commitment to the pedagogy of international law.

Rather than offering a unified and systemic vision, the volume presents a broad spectrum of perspectives that stand alongside one another. While some contributions are complementary, others stand in contrast, for example, in their views on the role of universal values or on the tension between human-centered approaches and the integration of technical or technocratic tools. This pluralism of concepts is one of the book's greatest strengths, reflecting the complexity of current debates and pedagogical challenges.

Underscoring the legacy and evolving tradition of pedagogical reflection in international law, a recurring point of reference throughout the volume is Manfred Lachs's influential study The Teacher in International Law. The editors and contributors acknowledge Lachs's enduring influence, not only in highlighting the teacher's central role but also in conceptualizing the educator as both a participant in a universal community of international lawyers and a product of local academic traditions. The exceptional legacy of Lachs's work is explored in depth in Bartłomiej Krzan's concluding chapter.

However, importantly, *Teaching International Law* does not frame the teacher solely as a guardian of tradition. The volume also positions educators at the forefront of responding to the rapid and fundamental transformations of the international legal order. The contributions collectively call for renewed reflection and innovation in legal pedagogy, inviting readers to rethink and further develop visions, experiences, and methodologies.

The book is divided into seven parts. Following the introductory chapter by Peter Hilpold (Part I), the core of the volume is structured into five major thematic sections: a global perspective on teaching international law (Part II), national and regional approaches, as well as new methodologies (Part III), the teaching of specific sub-disciplines (Part IV), pedagogical tools and resources for educators (Part V), and scholarship on the teaching of international law (Part VI). The book concludes with final reflections by the two editors (Part VII).

Part II on global perspectives opens with a chapter by Peter Hilpold, who outlines major pedagogical challenges in teaching international law. These include the Humboldtian dilemma of balancing research and teaching, as well as the influence of managerial models such as "Lean University Management" and the relevance of the VUCA approach (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity). In this context, "Lean University Management" refers to the growing emphasis on efficiency and quantifiable outcomes in higher education, often at the expense of intellectual depth and pedagogical freedom. Although Hilpold is critical of strict managerial approaches to university education, he acknowledges that certain elements, such as flat hierarchies, open communication, and participatory leadership, could be helpful in reconciling the need for effective university governance with the preservation of academic freedom. The VUCA model is used by Hilpold to capture global phenomena such as digitalization, climate change, and artificial intelligence, all of which influence international law and its teaching. Hilpold concludes that 'in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous teaching and research environment, traditional university hierarchies – unless they are strictly merit-based and permanently assessed – have lost most of their justification' (p. 45). These pressures demand a renewed commitment to thoughtful, value-oriented, and context-sensitive approaches to teaching international law.

Elaborating further on the global perspective, Charlotte Ku's chapter explores how international law is taught in the United States. She emphasizes that the discipline must adapt to the realities of a fragmented and crisis-prone international system, as illustrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular in relation to responsibility and accountability for far-reaching decisions taken not only by nation states but also by "myriad international actors" (p. 113). Her contribution addresses the practical question of how international law should be taught to 'varied and multiple audiences' (p. 88). In this respect, Ku advocates for a more inclusive vision of international legal education that goes beyond traditional law school settings to include practitioners, public officials, and the general public. Guided by the idea that international legal education must be reimagined to meet the demands of an increasingly interconnected and volatile world, she underscores that teaching must respond not only to academic standards, but also to civic needs, duly reflecting the growing influence of non-state and subnational legal actors.

Carlo Focarelli's chapter highlights that the teaching of international law needs to incorporate a global perspective that recognizes the complexity of contemporary societies. He critically views the dominance of a techno-scientific approach that reduces law to a machine-like performance. As Focarelli very nicely puts it, 'university professors are parameterized like robots, and treated as salaried sellers of (international law) pieces of information, as well as compulsory fund-raisers, nothing more or less than (easily replaceable) cogs in the university industrial machine' (p. 133). Instead, he advocates that 'international law should be presented, inter alia, as a complex and challenging tool aimed at better *understanding* the living together of all human beings on Earth' (p. 156). From this standpoint, the "human

person" should play a central role in international law and its teaching. Focarelli argues that the "human person" should be placed at the core of legal education, emphasizing empathy, personal experience, and the recognition of individuals as more than just rational actors.

Natalino Ronzitti's chapter, echoing this quasi-anthropological dimension of law teaching, emphasizes the importance of a broad and inclusive approach to international law education. He advocates for an understanding that goes beyond technical issues to include matters which are of common concern and resonate with public opinion. According to Ronzitti, the qualities of a good international law teacher include traditional values such as academic freedom, competence, and dedication, as well as adaptability to new teaching modalities like online lectures and webinars. Moreover, a good teacher should possess extensive doctrinal knowledge and demonstrate pedagogical skills that foster effective presentation and critical engagement with students.

The following chapter by Pierre-Marie Dupuy, 'Is There an Art of Teaching International Law?', shifts the focus from teaching to substance. He argues that instruction should emphasize that international law is not merely a collection of unrelated rules but a coherent and functional normative system. According to Dupuy, this requires educators to guide students in understanding the structure, coherence, and operation of international law as a genuine legal order.

Giuseppe Nesi's chapter, which concludes Part II, draws on his decades of diplomatic experience to underscore the need to integrate practical insights into international legal teaching. Nesi illustrates how legal norms function within complex political contexts. His chapter also emphasizes the importance of ethical commitment in the practice of international law, or in Nesi's words, the need to 'choose commitment over cynicism' (p. 207).

While the section on the global perspective offers a macro-level view of international law teaching and develops insights that are equally relevant to other legal disciplines, Part III, which focuses primarily on national and regional perspectives, addresses more specific, context-dependent challenges.

Jan Wouters' chapter emphasizes the European Union's active role in international law and the extensive "Europeanisation" of legal systems and international legal norms. He advocates for incorporating a perspective that recognizes the EU's distinct contributions within a diverse global legal order. In the subsequent chapter, Barbara Marchetti discusses how the teaching of international law benefits from the integration of concepts from political science, economics, and sociology, in order to better understand the relationships between states, international organizations, and global governance structures. Following this, Sergio Dellavalle highlights a shift from traditional hierarchical legal systems toward multi-layered frameworks such as global constitutionalism and transnational law. According to Dellavalle, 'the main novelty introduced by transnational law – and, thus, also the most innovative label that has been used to describe it – is *legal pluralism*' (p. 259). Consequently, social sciences and related disciplines should be integrated into legal education and practice to more effectively understand and address the challenges posed by globalization. Andreas R. Ziegler notes that, although many universities offer courses on international aspects of law, they often do not sufficiently ensure that all students acquire basic competences in public and private international law, comparative legal skills, and necessary language competencies.

The section concludes with three distinct contributions focusing on the role of international law teaching in Germany. Rüdiger Wolfrum highlights that the limited integration of international law into the curricula of German universities fails to address the need for a closer alignment between international and national law, as well as for more interdisciplinary and practice-oriented teaching methods, Such an approach ultimately leaves students largely unprepared for the demands of the job market. In contrast, Heribert Hirte shifts the focus to the necessity of expanding international law education for parliamentarians and judges. Finally, taking a broader perspective, Gerd Morgenthaler revisits themes explored already in Part II of the volume, particularly those concerning academic freedom and the negative impact of managerialism, external funding pressures, and political influence. According to Morgenthaler, 'the decisive question is therefore how to reform the universities in a way to make them the places for pure and independent thinking again' (p. 344).

Although shorter in length, the subsequent sections offer valuable contributions to the discussions already developed in Parts II and III of the volume. Framing international economic law as a discipline closely connected to human rights protection, climate change, and environmental concerns, Ernst-Ulrich Petersmann underscores the importance of integrating social and environmental objectives into trade and investment rules. In this context, he emphasizes that one of the key tasks of legal educators is to promote a comprehensive understanding of international economic law that responds to global challenges. In a similar vein, Nikos Lavranos explicitly supports an integrative approach within the field of international investment law. He highlights the subject's connections to property rights, the rule of law, and environmental considerations. According to Lavranos, international investment law is particularly well-suited to multiple teaching methods, with moot courts offering students valuable opportunities to apply their legal knowledge and engage with experienced practitioners.

In Part V, "Tools, Instruments, Resources", Markus Beham, Melanie Fink, and Ralph Janik explore innovative and multimedia approaches to teaching international law, including popular films and TV series, as well as visual tools and digital formats. They ask whether visual materials should 'simply refresh students' attention' or 'make an otherwise dry and abstract topic more colourful' (p. 395). In the following chapter, which he describes as a 'personal reflection on the process of writing an international law textbook,' James Summers discusses the importance of ensuring accessibility, balancing national and international perspectives, and understanding market demands. A good textbook, according to Summers, should be further characterized by authority, reliability, and clarity.

With a play on words in the title, Pierre d'Argent names his chapter "Teaching International Law Massively". He refers to the concept of a MOOC ("Massive Open Online Course"), a type of course designed to be globally accessible to a large number of participants, often free of charge. D'Argent emphasizes that a MOOC 'is making your discipline and your knowledge accessible to a much wider and more diverse audience than the students attending on-campus classes' (p. 430).

Lucas Lixinski, reflecting on major trends in international law scholarship, concludes that, in order to achieve lasting impact, scholars must move beyond superficial engagement with pedagogy and meaningfully incorporate educational theory into their work. In a manner both appropriate and dignified, Part VI of the volume concludes with a tribute to Manfred Lachs, who shaped international law through his roles as a judge, diplomat, and scholar. Bartłomiej

Krzan places particular emphasis on Lachs's contribution to enhancing the prestige of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), noting that his efforts were instrumental in restoring and reinforcing the Court's reputation as a genuinely international institution.

By assembling the diverse and thoughtful contributions of leading scholars and practitioners, Teaching International Law offers both inspiration and critical guidance for educators navigating the fundamental challenges of our time. It reaffirms the teacher's central role in shaping the discipline and encourages continuous pedagogical innovation. At its best, the volume builds on both critical reflection and personal commitment to international law as an intellectually stimulating field.

Teaching International Law stands out for its universalist ethos and its emphasis on reasoned argument and methodological diversity, rather than approaches based on the authors' identities or statistically balanced representation of gender, race, and other identity markers – a perspective that would itself be so typically Western.

As a valuable contribution to ongoing discussions, the volume raises several issues that deserve further reflection. Given the strong focus on the teacher of international law, the role of students, as active participants with varied expectations and cultural backgrounds, receives comparatively limited attention. In this light, it is notable that while Russia's aggression against Ukraine is frequently referenced, the volume avoids similarly explicit terminology regarding other controversial military actions, such as those in Iraq, Libya, or the former Yugoslavia. One may wonder how this selective framing may be perceived by students not only from Russia, but also from the Global South. How can the teaching of international law, in terminology and substance, avoid mirroring hypocrisy and double standards that potentially undermine the perceived neutrality and credibility of the discipline?

Furthermore, the idea of a 'universal community of international lawyers' deserves critical scrutiny. Communities imply not only inclusion but also boundaries that are usually manifested through mechanisms of exclusion and, at times, excommunication. These dynamics occur not only in institutional settings such as international organizations and international courts, but also in the classroom. The marginal role of international law within many national curricula risks turning the discipline into an echo chamber of like-minded "believers" rather than a space for critical engagement and pluralism of views.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that the reviewed volume, containing more than 500 pages of thought-provoking and inspiring contributions, is freely accessible online: https://brill.com/display/title/68284. We hope that as many international law teachers as possible will seize this opportunity and find in it both valuable guidance and inspiration.

Harald Christian Scheu*

* **Harald Christian Scheu**, Prof., Mag. phil., Dr. iur., Ph.D., educated at the University of Salzburg (Dr. iur., 1995, Mag. phil., 1996) and the University of Prague (Ph.D. in 1997, Associate Professor in 2006 and Professor in 2021). He has received numerous fellowships (Max-Planck-Institut für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht in Heidelberg, University of Bern, European University Institute in Florence, University of Zürich, University of Vienna). From 1997 to 2006 he lectured at the Department of International Law and since 2006 at the Department of European Law of the Law Faculty of Charles University in Prague. He teaches and conducts research in the fields of International and European Law and Human Rights Law.