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Teaching (Dissident) Theory in Crisis EU

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Abstract

The ongoing multifaceted crisis in the EU is both a curse and a blessing for the teaching of theory in the context of EU studies. Such teaching has long posed a range of pedagogical challenges because of the complexity of the empirical object under investigation and the broad range of theoretical perspectives that have been deployed to pose questions in relation to that object. On the one hand, the current crisis and its multiple effects only serve to compound these difficulties by raising yet more questions for the study of EU politics. These are critical and normative questions about power, ideology, identity and ethics which exist not only at the margins of EU studies but are increasingly and frequently posed also in public discussion and the media throughout and beyond Europe. On the other hand, the crisis provides an opportunity to engage students of EU politics in these critical and normative questions in relation to the EU and its antecedents. In particular it offers an opportunity (if one were needed) to explore with students formerly marginal and dissident theoretical and political voices in the study of EU politics. This paper will flesh out both these challenges and opportunities and enunciate the ways in which we might begin to re-think the

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teaching of EU politics in ways that include 'dissident' voices while remaining cognisant of pedagogical and other constraints.

Introduction

Teaching the EU is a challenge. It is a complex 'beast' which defies easy simplification. Its institutional architecture is unique, variegated between policy areas and has, along with associated terminology, changed considerably over time. Its membership has expanded along with these changes in architecture. Complexity is compounded by the interaction of national and sub-national actors with the EU institutions at various stages of the policy process, the breadth of policy areas in which the EU has competence and the variable speed or 'multiple geometries' of integration. These are familiar issues to the long-time students of the EU that read this journal.

Perhaps also familiar to many readers is the challenge of conveying the EU as an object of study to our own students; trying to cut through this significant complexity in order to render the EU understandable, digestible and, hopefully, interesting. Of course, much is dependent on the nature of the teaching programme and the previous knowledge of students. Whether, for instance, the EU is taught at post-graduate or graduate level; whether it is taught as a single module/course forming just one small part of a broader degree programme or the programme itself is on the EU; and whether the EU is taught in the EU or in non-EU contexts where knowledge is likely to be more limited. This is a challenging context in which difficult choices need to be made in terms of breadth and content. Inevitably there will be some trade off between complexity and pedagogical appropriateness. Inevitably difficulties of differentiation will arise: what will be an appropriate balance for one student will be too difficult for another and too easy for a

third. Likewise, the technicalities of, say, qualified majority voting will be fascinating for one student but boring to another; one will want more theory, another more policy.

Such difficulties are compounded by the contemporary context. Today most students within the EU will enter the classroom with some sense of 'the beast', gleaned from the media coverage of the past few years. In other words, they will have read at least something about the post-2008 'crisis'. They may have read in passing headlines such as 'Is this Really the End?' (Economist, 26 November 2011). The more intellectually curious may have read a book or two with the words 'eurozone' and 'crisis' in the title. The more politically engaged may have participated in an anti-austerity, anti-Troika or anti-EU demo. In many national contexts they will have heard mention of some politician or political party that wishes to leave the EU. They may have been seduced by and even cast a vote for such a politician in the 2014 EP elections (although statistically speaking their parents and grandparents are more likely to have done so). Many will face the prospect of unemployment or precarious employment in non-graduate professions after graduation. Both inside and outside the EU (where it is still widely studied (de Sousa and Malamud, 2012)), and notwithstanding Nobel prizes, the crisis as witnessed by students through the media may be experienced as a broader crisis of multilateralism or cosmopolitan possibility in international affairs. The point is that the crisis – a multifaceted economic, political, social and institutional crisis – has placed the EU at the forefront of public discussion across the EU member states and beyond.

A key contention of this article is that, in this context, so-called 'dissident' or critical approaches (the unifying theme of this special issue (Manners and Whitman, 2016)) ought not to be neglected in the classroom. Indeed it would make little sense to focus solely on those theories that have sought to explain integration without considering

normative questions of its nature, purpose and limits. In particular, it would make little sense to narrate integration in terms of an implicitly progressive teleology as a mainstream EU studies and integration theory has often done (Gilbert, 2008). Moreover, to treat the contemporary EU as a settled political system in the current circumstances would jar with political reality: a context of differentiated integration and institutional innovation across policy domains; a context of rising euroscepticism and the demise of a 'permissive consensus'; in short, a context of political, social, economic and institutional discord. It would, moreover, make little sense to take as a given orthodox economic positions – variously, an overlapping 'neoliberal', 'ordoliberal' or 'neoclassical' reasoning – when the crisis has prompted a widespread public debate in Europe which encompasses a much broader range of heterodox voices, some of which have emerged as a genuine political force. Whether the orthodox like it or not, economy is once more *political economy* and this should be reflected in the classrooms of those teaching the EU.

The multifaceted crisis presents then both an opportunity and a challenge to those teachers of EU studies interested in engaging with the critical or 'dissident' voices that have emerged in the public domain and long been present on the margins of EU studies. It has in certain respects opened the space for such voices and generated a broader interest in what they have to say (of which this special issue is perhaps testament). At the same time it poses yet another challenge to those seeking to teach the EU. While a number of very good teaching resources already cover and summarise many of these 'dissident' voices (among many others, Bache et al., 2014 (Chapter 4), Manners, 2007, Rosamond, 2013, Saurugger, 2014), in practical terms, any attempt to cover them in depth puts further pressure on an already packed syllabus.

Nevertheless, this is a nettle that teachers of the EU need to grasp. Accordingly, this article sets out to offer a tentative and practically oriented suggestion of how this might be done, based in particular on recent efforts to construct a flexible approach (cognisant of the aforementioned issues) to teaching such theory in the context of co-authoring a textbook on EU politics. The argument proceeds as follows. First it considers how we might go about presenting to students a broad plurality of theoretical approaches to studying the EU inclusive of 'dissident' approaches, without requiring a detailed engagement with each such approach. Based on the latest edition of the textbook, *Politics in the European Union*, on which I recently worked (Bache, et al., 2014) – and building on Diez and Wiener's presentation in their *European Integration Theory* (Wiener and Diez, 2007) – it is argued that we can usefully present the differences between various theories in terms of the particular questions that have been posed in relation to the EU and its antecedents. This is a pedagogically appropriate and not (necessarily) time consuming way in which we can cover a substantial breadth of theoretical perspectives, which can be adapted for a range of student audiences and courses of study. Second, the article considers how the concepts of 'critical' and 'mainstream' might be presented in a manner suitable for a range of students. It is suggested that for more advanced students we might usefully present mainstream and critical or dissident approaches on a 'rationalist/reflectivist' or 'positivist/post-positivist' continuum rather than as crude polar opposites. Such presentation will be familiar to students of International Relations theory and will be accessible to those with a grasp of basic concepts in the philosophy of social science although some will certainly find this challenging. It is also suggested that we need not present the mainstream and critical as mutually exclusive, but rather as performing different and potentially complementary functions in the study and practice of (EU) politics. Third,

the article makes clear that a focus on theory and theoretical plurality need not be to the detriment of a module/course that can engage and stimulate active and independent learners. On the contrary, it is argued that active methods of learning based on concrete empirical situations will be more likely to throw up a range of questions (including normative and critical questions) which accord with a plurality of theoretical approaches.

Mapping plurality in EU politics

A central contention of this special issue is that there is a broader, more plural theoretical terrain in the study of EU politics (broadly conceived) than a 'mainstream' or 'orthodoxy' in EU political studies has allowed for (Manners and Whitman, 2016). This article agrees with Rosamond's (2007) point that the mainstream has itself shifted over time as a consequence both of historical real-world events in EU politics, but also a disciplinary politics within the broader social sciences that has impacted on approaches to EU politics. Thus, for instance, the emergence of International Relations theories of integration were in one sense a response to the fact of early integration in Europe, but their form owed much to the backgrounds and academic socialisation of its key proponents such as Haas and Hoffmann. The later turn to consider the EU as a political system similarly can be related to the increasing 'thickness' of integration itself, but at once owed much to the growing importance of political scientists and comparative politics scholars in EU studies. As Rosamond (2007:247) notes, such scholars had a tendency to eschew grand theoretical propositions and a desire to make the EU 'familiar' – consider it as sufficiently similar to other polities – for comparative purposes. In more recent times the contemporary 'crisis' has produced a pervasive sense of uncertainty in the overlapping public and scholarly realms. This has prompted

the posing of a different set of questions in relation to the EU in the public domain and facilitated shifts already under way in the social sciences to open up certain sub-disciplines to more critical, post-positivist or un-orthodox approaches to considering the social world. There is evidence of such opening in EU studies of which this special issue is perhaps indicative.

But how might we present this increasingly pluralist theoretical terrain to students of EU politics in a manner that is pedagogically appropriate without at once doing too great a violence to the complexity of that terrain or any particular approaches that occupy it? The organisation of teaching material replicates in many respects a dilemma for the field of EU studies itself: to what extent to define in precise terms a legitimate toolkit or approach to study or, conversely, to what extent to leave open this definition in the name of intellectual inclusivity and pluralism (Rosamond, 2007:236).

This article argues that it is important to tend towards the latter in our teaching. In other words, attempt to highlight to our students the plurality of approaches that have been deployed. Just as a disciplinary politics might, with *disciplining* effect, close down avenues of permissible enquiry for the researcher with potentially deleterious results (including for the EU itself), so too we ought not to narrow the field for our students. To do so would be too readily to undermine their capacity as burgeoning independent researchers and thinkers.

This is to concur with Rosamond (2007:250), who has noted that,

in the disciplinary politics of EU studies, the challenge for pluralists would seem to be to counter these [disciplining/ary] tendencies without imposing a form of

intellectual isolationism, where each island in the EU studies archipelago is a subdisciplinary autarky with little motivation to communicate with the others.

The point, then, is not to try to impose upon students 'critical' approaches that eschew the mainstream. Rather it is to present a full range of approaches that is inclusive of the critical or heterodox and encourage a curiosity about the links, tensions and relationships between these.

This is no easy task of course. A first difficulty is that some students are what we might call theory-averse, regarding it as something irrelevant and difficult. Indeed, it is perhaps tempting in teaching the EU to shy away from theoretical questions altogether. There is, after all, enough to be done in considering in sufficient detail the historical developments leading to the contemporary EU or the institutional architecture and decision-making process or any number of different policy areas. An initial task for the teacher committed to theory is therefore to convey its importance and to keep conveying its importance throughout a module or programme of study. This can involve pointing to the ways in which different theoretical commitments will lead to the posing of different questions, quite different readings of the same history, or a tendency to place importance on different factors. It might also involve identifying the background importance of theory in guiding key actors in the history of integration.

A second difficulty is how to convey the plurality of approaches without necessarily having to engage in detail with the full range of theory – an impossible task for most EU courses – and in a way that can be easily digested. Wiener and Diez's (2007) presentation of 'phases' of integration theory offers a particularly fruitful attempt to tackle the issue. A particular strength of their approach is to present these in terms of the questions that preoccupied theorists in different phases. A question-driven

approach which recognises a multitude of legitimate and interesting questions is in general valuable in terms of overcoming a disciplinary rigidity and promoting plurality. As Katzenstein (Kohli et al., 1995:11) has said in the context of a symposium on the role of theory in comparative politics:

Contemporary research on comparative and international issues increasingly calls for blurring the distinctions between political economy, security, and culture. And there is a growing need to erase the barriers between comparative politics, international relations, and political theory.... Most importantly, I have learned that you have to *ask important and interesting questions*.... [W]hen all is said and done, scholars do their best research because of the political problems and the intellectual puzzles that engage them, not because of the sage advice of prophets of the profession.

A similar question-driven approach might also guide our teaching. Indeed, students also arguably do their best work when given the margin to explore questions of particular interest to them. With their novel textbook on global politics Zehfuss and Edkins have developed a thoroughgoing example of such an approach. As they say, “instead of starting from the sorts of explanations of global politics that ‘great minds’ have given... or starting from some problem in global politics... in this book we start with questions” (Edkins and Zehfuss, 2013:2). Such questions form the titles to each of the contributing chapters, which begin with an exploration of the question. Thereafter they explore the responses that have been given to those questions (from different theoretical perspectives).

Similarly, Korosteleva (2010) has effectively drawn on the so-called ‘threshold concept approach’ to develop an EU politics module based on four core questions (why

integrate? what institutions? why reform? and in whose interests?). This, she convincingly argues, provides (alongside active learning methods) a solid foundation for independent student learning, encouraging the exploration of overlapping themes. Indeed, all such approaches facilitate a so-called ‘critical pedagogy’ (Freire, 1998) which seeks, among other things, to depose the all-knowing teacher, contest disciplinary boundaries and facilitate the problematisation of issues (Donnelly and Hogan, 2013:368).

In the latest edition of *Politics in the European Union* (Bache, et al., 2014) we do not go quite as far as Edkins and Zehfuss. But we do build on Wiener and Diez’s phases, presenting the theoretical terrain in terms of a series of questions that have been posed by thinkers in relation to the EU and its antecedents (see Table 1).

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Building on Diez and Wiener’s three phases, in the introduction to the theory section of the textbook we present five phases in the study of EU politics (subsequently presented in four chapters). As the table shows, these are framed in terms of the questions that have animated attempts to consider Europe/integration as an object of study.

This is clearly a rather stylized presentation of EU politics scholarship and theorizing. It aims to strike a balance between the complex realities of EU political studies and the need to give students a preliminary sense of both the evolution and the plurality of questions posed within the field. The pedagogical advantage of presenting theory in this way is that it offers the possibility (for teachers and students) of either a relatively straightforward or more complex rendering of the disciplinary history of EU political studies while in all cases pointing to the plurality of approaches and questions. In

practical terms it might be adapted according to level and deployed as a 'scene-setting' slide or handout in an introductory lecture/seminar which offers a general overview of the range of questions that scholars have posed about the EU. It is a resource to which the teacher and student can return throughout a module of study in order to consider how a particular question/theory might be applied to a particular empirical topic of study.

For the less engaged/advanced students it is hoped that the list of questions may be useful in at least pointing to the broad range of ways in which it is possible to think about the EU even if they ultimately engage with theory to only a very limited extent. Presenting these perspectives in terms of the questions they ask also leaves open the possibility of ignoring deeper questions about their epistemology and ontology. Indeed they might be further simplified in the classroom context in line, for instance, with Korsteleva's (2010) abovementioned approach. At the same time, the full table opens the possibility to the more advanced and theoretically engaged student to explore a variety of these questions and theories and apply them to a range of particular policy areas. For those studying the EU as part of a broader political science degree it also opens up the possibility of drawing links between these approaches and theories encountered on other modules of study related to sub-disciplines such as International Relations theory or Comparative Politics.

Such students might also be pushed to consider the historicity of these theories; the real world and disciplinary drivers behind these research agendas (Rosamond, 2007, 2000). Textbook renderings of theory, including this one, should certainly not be read as gospel

(Ashworth, 2014) and students should always be encouraged to 'go beyond' the textbook. It would therefore be no bad thing if the table were to become an object of critique for advanced students, as they point to the overlaps in approaches, the flaws in its stylised rendering of the history of EU studies. Such students might, for instance, point out that while particular approaches and sets of questions became prominent in studies of EU politics at particular moments in time that is not to say that they were not being posed prior to that moment or that they entirely displaced previous sets of questions. They might point to the ways in which neo-functionalism in many respects broke with the mainstream of IR to concern itself with domestic factors in international politics, or the way in which Lindberg and Scheingold (1970), drawing on David Easton, considered the EU as a political system long before Hix's invocation to do so (Bulmer, 2009:112). Similarly, they might highlight the work of neo-Marxist scholars such as Holland (1980) or French Regulation Theorists (see Bieling, Jaeger, Ryner, this issue), whose critical work on the EU and European economy predated the critical political economy scholarship of contemporary neo-Gramscians. The point is that from a perspective which values disciplinary pluralism and encourages a direct exploration of primary scholarly sources, the table should be no more than a stylized starting point; a way of initially but not definitively ordering ideas, questions and concepts.

Relatedly, more advanced students might in particular be encouraged to consider the ways in which different perspectives and phases can be drawn into debate and discussion, considering their underlying ontological and epistemological questions. This is, in particular, an invitation to explore the relationship between the critical and mainstream approaches and between the different critical approaches explored. The textbook points to precisely such relationships in the chapter that is devoted to Critical

Perspectives (Bache, et al., 2014:63-82 (Chapter 4)). The following section considers its presentation and its potential utility for teaching the EU.

Presenting the 'critical' and 'mainstream'

All of the theories mapped in Table 1 are of course critical of something, often a competing theoretical perspective. And as noted above, the line between so-called 'critical' and 'mainstream' scholarship is a shifting one and subject to debate (Rosamond, 2007:250). However, there is arguably a more fundamental divide between the first four phases and the fifth phase considered in Table 1 than there is between the theories in the first four phases. This constitutes a possible way of understanding the divide between the mainstream and non-mainstream in contemporary (EU) political studies. However, the terms that we can use to describe differences between these sets of theoretical approaches can be presented and described in different ways depending on the preferences of teacher and the particular student audiences.

We might, for instance, simply highlight that the questions posed (see Table 1) are of a different order. If the first phases are explicitly positive about or at least rather uncritical of the EU as an object of study – focusing primarily on questions of why we need it, how it came about, what it is and what are its effects – the fifth phase is critical in the sense that it poses a set of questions (with the possible exception of certain 'liberal' strands of social constructivism (van Apeldoorn et al., 2003:29-32)) interested in exploring and exposing the power relations and interests at play within the particular institutional form of the EU and its antecedents. In concrete terms, drawing attention to

such questions opens the possibility for students to consider oppositional voices – whether scholars or political actors – which have accompanied the process of integration from its outset (and are vocally articulated at the current ‘crisis’ conjuncture).

Opposition to the EU status quo is not, when we frame things as such, to be associated exclusively with an emotive or irrational nationalism (and, for students, perhaps especially the contemporary eurosceptic parties that often embody such a perspective in the real world), but can encompass a much broader set of standpoints. This framing allows teachers to present the EU/integration not as a politically neutral phenomenon, but as always contested and contestable. As far as the divide between these critical approaches and the rest is concerned, for some student audiences things might be left at that. They are, with the foregoing, offered a sense of the broad set of questions that scholars have highlighted in relation to the EU/integration and of its politically contested nature. This allows students to make links between a contemporary public sphere where the nature of the EU is questioned and critiqued by a range of political opinion from across the political spectrum.

For more advanced students, particularly those with some grounding in the philosophy of social science or similar debates in IR theory, the divide between the critical approaches and the rest can be articulated in terms of their underlying ontology and epistemology. The contemporary critical perspectives – the fifth phase in Table 1 – are presented in the textbook (Bache, et al., 2014:65) as united in their critique of ‘rationalist’ or ‘positivist’ approaches to the study of the social and political world. Positivist approaches are presented as adopting a fixed understanding of social reality

(fixed ontology), one that assumes that social reality is neutrally observable by an objective scholar and this is how knowledge is obtained (epistemology). This renders possible a 'scientific' methodology that usually consists of some combination of deduction and induction, where deduction means producing hypotheses based on theoretical assumptions about the nature of the social world and testing these via objective observation, and induction means producing theories based on such observation. Many of the approaches falling within phases 1-4 on Table 1 will fall within this positivist mainstream.

In contrast, the critical – or 'post-positivist' – approaches are presented as emphasising the constructed, changeable or mutable nature of social and political reality (flexible ontology). Many such approaches do not consider that social reality can be objectively observed and believe that various agents, including policy actors and scholars themselves, are involved in its construction. Critical scholarship often seeks to highlight which actors, ideas, or theories are either dominant or excluded in the politics of the EU at particular historical junctures or in particular policy areas. Implicitly or explicitly, critical work of this kind suggests that 'another Europe is possible' (Manners, 2007).

That said the textbook is careful to reflect that the positivist-post-positivist extremes are in many ways only useful caricatures. Indeed, the extent to which 'mainstream' theories are tied to a fixed ontology is itself debatable, as noted in the textbook. For instance, it is noted that, "neo-functional texts refer to interest groups' 'loyalties' moving to the EU (or its antecedents) as a new centre, in a manner that we might associate with processes of 'learning' within social constructivism" (Bache, et al., 2014:64). Moreover, other theoretical perspectives such as historical and sociological

institutionalism, also arguably sit somewhere between a positivist mainstream and the post-positivist critical approaches. Social constructivism sometimes explicitly seeks to offer a middle way between these positions particularly in terms of its epistemology (Risse and Wiener, 1999:776).

Positivist and post-positivist positions are consequently presented in the textbook as ideal types on the extremes of a continuum, with individual scholarly contributions lying somewhere along this continuum, as shown in Table 2. It is noted that “it is a matter for significant debate as to where these are most appropriately placed” and that, “individual scholars identifying with any given approach may consider their own work to be positioned differently and have a far more nuanced understanding of their ontology and epistemology than the table suggests.” (Bache, et al., 2014:64). Thus, while a selection of theories that are dealt with in the textbook are listed on this continuum, students are encouraged to view this as but one attempt to map the theories in this way.

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Considering theories on this continuum allows us not only to point to important potential overlaps and differences between mainstream and critical approaches, but also to the overlaps and differences between the different critical approaches. For instance, we point to the similarities between Social Constructivism and a neo-Gramscian variant of Critical Political Economy in terms of their shared relatively flexible ontology, while noting the differences in terms of the latter’s focus on the importance of capitalism and class in structuring agents’ actions. Similarly we note the

ways in which a Critical Social Theory which has sought to analyse the EU as a 'cosmopolitan' reality is divided between those that celebrate the plural social realities in the contemporary EU (Beck and Grande, 2007) and those that would seek to upload aspects of something like a European national welfare state to the EU level (Habermas, 2001). In drawing different theories into dialogue we risk making assertions with which many would not agree – as noted, in rendering the material accessible we can simplify and stylize different perspectives. But this is the price that we pay – hopefully only in the short term – in seeking to avoid the potential for 'intellectual isolationism' and introducing students to a broad range of perspectives.

We emphasise that “to adopt a critical approach is not necessarily to reject a mainstream approach, or vice versa” (Bache, et al., 2014:80). Although the ontological and epistemological differences highlighted provide the basis for significant critiques across and between these approaches, a pluralist perspective can recognize these very differences in terms of the different purposes of the theories across this spectrum. In one sense this is a matter of recognizing the different questions they pose as highlighted in Table 1 and above. Robert Cox's (1981) differentiation between 'problem solving' and 'critical' theory also serves as a useful pedagogical device in this respect. While the former views the broad structures of the social and political world as a given, in order to focus on specific problems or issues within that pre-defined world, a 'critical theory' points to the mutability and alterability of that broader social and political world in an attempt to contemplate more fundamental changes. If we accept the importance of both of these functions then it can be made clear that scholars and students of the EU do not necessarily need to place themselves definitively within or in opposition to either camp.

Links can be drawn between these different kinds of theories and the practical politics at play in the EU and elsewhere. This is to make clear to our students Keynes' famous point that (2007 (1936)), "[p]ractical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually slaves of some defunct economist [or thinker]." Indeed, just as scholars can be mapped onto a terrain ranging from problem-solving to critical, so a contemporary crisis politics is animated by both bureaucrat and politician problem solvers seeking piecemeal reforms of a system which do not undermine certain orthodoxies (economic or political) and more critical groups of political commentators, activists and protestors arguing for the undoing or radical reform of those orthodoxies or structures (inter alia, the EU, a particular 'neo-liberal' EU, the single currency or capitalism itself). In this way, we can make clear to our students that theory is not 'academic' in the pejorative sense of the term, but central to the contemporary politics in which they (hopefully!) have an interest and stake.

A desire to eschew 'intellectual isolationism' and a commitment to pluralism is not to necessarily blunt the critical edge to the critical approaches adopted, including with respect to the mainstream approaches themselves. Some students may accept the aims of a 'problem solving theory' and will legitimately wish to work within its pre-determined structural confines or 'orthodoxy' when analysing the EU, asking questions related to phases 1-4 in Table 1. But we might at least ask our students to reflect on such mainstream theories in terms of Cox's oft-quoted dictum that "theory is always for somebody or some purpose". Those sympathetic to this insight may then pose the phase 5 questions in relation to phase 1-4 theory itself. In other words students may begin to regard such theory as part of the very knowledge-power nexus that has been

constitutive of the EU, asking (as do many of the articles in the special issue): Which ideas and ideologies predominate in such theory? Are they based on shared assumptions and what are these? Whose interest do such theories and perspectives serve and with what political and social consequences? What are the socio-historical legacies – both real world and in the realm of knowledge – underpinning such theories? Are such theories inherently gendered? While a problem solving theory that takes certain structures as a given may do so innocently – in many instances it will be in large part the consequence of a particular intellectual socialization – some students (again, like many of those contributing to this special issue) may feel the need to explore the nature and effects of those very structures.

Advanced students may, for instance, be encouraged to consider such questions in relation to mainstream theories. Indeed, a range of critical scholars have highlighted that such theories rely on distinctly economic liberal and pluralist assumptions, which are largely implicit and unquestioned. While professedly *explaining* integration it is contended that this mainstream theory implicitly views integration as a rational and normatively positive unfolding or progressive teleology (Gilbert, 2008:645, Jahn, 2009, Parker, 2013:14-16, Ryner, 2012:655, van Apeldoorn, et al., 2003:19). To highlight these underlying assumptions and commitments is not necessarily to critique them. Some students might regard them as necessary or convenient assumptions. They allow for the development of a clearly discernible and parsimonious disciplinary framework (Moravcsik, 1997:515-6) which is particularly amenable to positivist tools of investigation. Others might regard these assumptions not simply as convenient, but also normatively desirable. For some, an ideal EU might be a ‘rational bureaucratic’ depoliticised entity geared towards the achievement of pareto optimal outcomes which

are to be achieved via the promotion of market rationality (in line with, for instance, Majone, 1996). Following from functionalist thinking such outcomes are seen as securing cooperative and irenic possibilities prominent in a broader liberal internationalism and (neo)-liberal institutionalism in international relations (Keohane, 1988).

Still other students might detect in these underlying assumptions – for better or worse – a broader historical agenda supportive of a particular Atlanticist or US orientation and, in more recent times, a neo-liberal rendering of such an agenda (Cafruny, 2007, Ryner, 2012, Van der Pijl, 1984). They might also be concerned that scholars of the EU from within political studies have so willingly deferred to economists – particularly what is variously characterised as a neo-classical, neo-liberal or ordo-liberal orthodox economics – on questions of the organisation of a European market and money, while political studies has confined itself to questions of how integration has progressed and who has driven the process. Certainly the crisis – in many respects a crisis of and for such orthodox economics – may prompt attempts to bridge this ‘disciplinary split’ and embrace something of the ethos of a classical political economy via a contemporary critical political economy (Ryner, 2012).

The crisis also raises difficult questions with respect to the equation of integration with increased supranationality in mainstream theorising, which has often led in teaching terms to a pre-occupation with the Union Method and Ordinary Legislative Procedure. As Bickerton et al. (2015) have noted, since Maastricht and particularly in the context of the crisis, we may be witnessing the emergence of a ‘new intergovernmentalism’, whereby integration occurs in informal and ad hoc ways driven by intergovernmental

decision making. Such integration, while following different processes, does not necessarily marginalise supranational institutions; in the context of the crisis significant new powers have been delegated to, inter alia, the European Central Bank and Commission (Bulmer, 2015). Such moves have – following on from the failure to ratify the Constitutional Treaty – contributed to a revival of a popular and, to some extent scholarly, interest in questions of democracy and legitimacy; an interest that has certainly intensified in the crisis context.

The intention in the textbook is to encourage students to begin to reflect on the ethical or normative debates on the nature of the EU that may lie unacknowledged in much of the mainstream theorising (often presented as largely *explanatory* or *descriptive*) that has formed the core of EU studies curricula. The crisis – in many ways the manifestation of an existential crisis for the EU – gives renewed legitimacy to such endeavours. Conversely, a comprehensive understanding of the crisis – something that diligent students will surely be keen to acquire from contemporary courses on the EU – at once arguably requires such endeavours.

Relating Theory and Practice

For many students the terrain mapped in the previous section will inevitably be difficult, and they may struggle to conceptualise the potential relationships, dialogues and debates between these different theories. In short, there is a lot to cover here and it is not easy. That said, on a standard political science degree in certain national contexts, links might be developed between EU modules and International Relations theory modules – a disciplinary area where critical or post-positivist voices have been

prominent since at least the 1990s – or (International) Political Economy modules – where the attempt to nurture the aforementioned classical ethos on the relationship between economics and politics has long been present. If students have a solid grounding in these other areas, as well as in the basics of the philosophy of social science, then this terrain should not be beyond them with a commitment to independent reading. Admittedly such students may be in a minority and modularization in some national contexts – whereby student module/course choices will not always lend an overall coherence to a programme of study – may work against the explicit creation of such links across modules of study.²

However, as noted above, all is not lost for those students for whom this is at first glance simply too challenging (or, indeed, boring!). It will suffice in such cases to return to our list of questions in Table 1 (crucially including the critical questions) and reflect on these in relation to different empirical aspects of a module or course of study. Indeed, if learning is an iterative process then animating theoretical questions with reference to empirical cases – or using empirical cases to animate theoretical debates – represents a pedagogically appropriate way of introducing students to different theories.

In the latest edition of the aforementioned textbook, an attempt is made in many of the policy specific chapters to draw such links between theory and practice. Students are still encouraged to deploy mainstream theories in order to tackle such questions as ‘How can integration in a particular policy area be explained and which actors are driving these processes?’ and ‘How do the EU’s different institutions and multi-level actors interact in a particular policy domain?’. But they are also encouraged to ask

² Thanks to an anonymous reviewer of an earlier version of this article for highlighting this point.

normative and critical questions such as 'Whose interests does the particular course of integration serve in a particular policy area and whose are challenged or undermined?'. You could say that we take some steps towards 'mainstreaming' dissident voices in the textbook beyond the chapter on 'critical approaches' (much as Rowley and Shepherd (2012) argue for the mainstreaming of gender in teaching IR).

Thus, in chapters on the core economic policies of the EU dedicated to the single market, EMU and trade policy, while considerable attention is given to scholars that seek to explain integrative processes in these domains, space is also dedicated to considering the broader normative and ideological contestation in relation to these policy domains. Links are made with the critical political economy literatures discussed in the 'critical approaches' theory chapter and important potential links between these policy areas are also indicated. Attention is given to critical and normative questions in other areas too. Thus, not only do we explore the evolution of policy areas such as Justice and Home Affairs (now the Area of Freedom of Security and Justice (AFSJ)), the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Enlargement, we also point to the critical literatures that have engaged with these policy domains. For instance, we highlight that post-structural scholars have explored the ways in which the EU's policies on AFSJ paradoxically rely on security and bordering practices with various effects; questions about the fundamental nature of EU power in the world are considered in relation to the EU's CFSP; and it is highlighted that questions about the geographical, political and social limits of the EU arise in relation to enlargement. Relevant links are made between these sections and the Critical Perspectives chapter in the Theory section of the textbook. The underlying purpose of these additions is to draw attention to the ways in which the alternative

questions raised by critical approaches in relation to the EU in general have been applied in particular empirical cases.

It is beyond the scope of this article to articulate the concrete ways in which this approach could be effectively utilized in the classroom context. The level of student and the local context in which the course is taught will require the flexible use of the approach advocated herein. However, as many others have noted, the use of active learning methods such as debates and simulations (particularly amenable to small group teaching) are particularly effective (Baroncelli et al., 2014, Dingli et al., 2013, Giacomello, 2012, Jozwiak, 2013, Korosteleva, 2010, Lightfoot and Maurer, 2014, Usherwood, 2014).³ Indeed, they could be designed in ways that mobilize engagement with some of the core questions in Table 1 and in particular the critical questions. Such methods arguably allow for both reflective learning and effective retention of more profound concepts and ideas (Korosteleva, 2010:43). Requiring students to adopt different perspectives and assume particular roles, such methods allow them to more fully appreciate the particular interests and preoccupations of different actors (institutions, different member states and so forth) in a variety of situations and in relation to a range of policy domains. Such methods will by necessity prompt engagement with the normative and critical questions of the sort that might be neglected with the deployment of pedagogic styles that simply impart facts and information. The role of the teacher in this context will be to tease out such questions and encourage further reflection on them (in discussion and via further reading), all the

³ For a useful list of articles on teaching the EU, see, <https://sites.google.com/site/psatlg/Home/resources/journal-articles/europol>

while being sure to consciously and reflexively navigate one's own potential biases in the classroom (Gormley-Heenan, 2012).

Conclusion

This paper has reflected on how we might go about presenting to our students a plurality of approaches to the study of the EU, inclusive of critical approaches. Based on the recent experience of updating an EU politics textbook, it was argued that the full plurality of voices in EU studies might be best presented to students initially in terms of the variety of questions that they have posed in relation to the EU as an object of study. Thereafter, particular theoretical perspectives might be further explored in relation to the study of the concrete history, institutions and policies of the EU. The paper has suggested that students might be exposed in particular to a range of critical and normative questions posed by scholars beyond the mainstream of EU studies; questions which have become particularly pertinent in the crisis context. More advanced students might also be encouraged to grapple with the ways in which we define mainstream and critical approaches by considering theories on a continuum from positivist to post-positivist approaches. As is made clear throughout, such an approach will necessarily be deployed flexibly depending on the nature of the module/course of study, the local context in which the EU is taught and the level of student.

This is not to argue that we ought explicitly to value the critical approaches over the so-called mainstream in our teaching. As discussed, Cox's distinction between 'problem solving' and 'critical' is suggestive of the ways in which students might be invited to regard these approaches as fit for different purposes. However, mainstream questions

of 'how' the EU evolved and 'what' the EU is, while significant, urgently need complementing with critical questions such as 'which' EU is valuable and 'why' a particular EU has come to be (Parker, 2009). Just as the crisis might prompt the posing of these latter questions, so too might those critical questions allow for a more comprehensive insight into the causes and consequences of contemporary 'crisis EU'. Ultimately, the posing of such questions in the teaching and learning context will, it is to be hoped, foster more socially and politically aware and engaged students.

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Phases in Theorising and Key Questions			
Phase	When	Main questions	Main Theories
Promoting peace through integration	1920s onwards	How can peace be achieved in Europe (and beyond)? How can nationalism be overcome?	Federalism Functionalism
Explaining integration	1950s onwards	How can integration processes be explained? What are the drivers of European integration?	Neo-functionalism (late 1950s) Intergovernmentalism (1960s) Liberal intergovernmentalism (1990s)
Analysing the EU as political system	1990s onwards	How does the EU and its governance work? How do its institutions work? What kind of political system is it? How can political processes be described?	New institutionalism Policy networks Multi-level governance
Analysing consequences of EU	1990s onwards	What is the impact of the EU on member states? What are the consequences of the EU for democracy and	Europeanisation Normative/ democratic theories

		legitimacy?	
Critiquing EU and/or 'mainstream,' approaches to its study	Late 1990s onwards	Which ideas /ideologies predominate in the EU? How and why? Where does power lie within the EU? In whose interest does the EU act and with what political and social consequences?	Social constructivism Critical political economy Critical social theory Gender approaches Post-structural approaches

Table 1. Reproduced from Bache et al. (2014: 3). (Adapted from Diez and Wiener

	ONTOLOGY	EPISTEMOLOGY	Continuum
	Nature of (social) reality	What knowledge is/ how knowledge acquired	(from positivist to post-positivist)
Positivism	FIXED Rational actors Exogenous preferences	Objective Observation	Liberal Intergovernmentalism Rational Choice Institutionalism

(2004: 7)).

Between Positivism and Post- Positivism	(MOSTLY) CONSTRUCTED Exogenous and endogenous preferences	Mixed methods encompassing a concern with discourse/ ideas Objective Observation	Neo-functionalism Historical Institutionalism Sociological Institutionalism
Post- positivism	CONSTRUCTED Shifting preferences Socialisation/ Learning	Discourse, Language analysis Subjective/ Normative Observation	Social Constructivism Critical Political Economy Critical Social Theory Critical Feminism Post-Structuralism

Table 2. Reproduced from Bache et al. (2014: 65). Those in bold are dealt with in Critical Perspectives, Chapter 4.