
Letters to the Editors

Gender in International Law Syllabi

Dear Editors,

‘[T]here are things each of us can do, even if small, and opportunities that we have to act when we encounter the barriers confronting women in academia’, declare Gráinne de Búrca, Michaela Hailbronner and Marcela Prieto Rudolph in 2020 in *EJIL* (volume 31:2).

One opportunity to act is: (1) to examine to what extent law syllabi exclude female-authored materials (works with at least one female author to include female-only and female/male teams) as mandatory readings, (2) to explore reasons why and (3) to propose solutions.

My findings, after analysing academic year 2021/2022 online publicly available syllabi of one randomly selected and typical European institution providing education in international law, indicate that law syllabi must be examined. In reviewing the 460 authored-identified mandatory readings on the institution’s 11 online publicly available syllabi, I found that over 80 per cent of the syllabi limit female-only authored readings to single digits (and no syllabus limiting male-only authored papers to single digits). And, indeed, one syllabus completely excludes female-authored materials. Dear Reader, do my findings reflect the norm in your institution?

Why might such practices of excluding female-authored materials from syllabi occur?

- Is it because no or few women write (and are published) in the international legal arena?
- Is it because the quality of male-authored materials is higher than female-authored materials?
- Is it because mandatory readings in syllabi are limited to materials authored during the years that law schools excluded (or substantially excluded) women as students?
- Is it because mandatory readings in syllabi are limited to materials authored during the years that law schools exclude or excluded (or substantially exclude or excluded) women as law professors?

If the answers to all four of these questions are ‘no’, then what other explanations might there be?

What about the elephant-in-the-room question? Might the explanation for the ‘gender gap’ in syllabi be as simple as whether the professor is female or male?

When researching syllabi in a different arena (civil–military relations), I found male professors exist who include more female-authored materials in their syllabi than do female professors [‘The State of Civil-Military Relations Education: Falling Short?’, 6 *Hemisferio*, 2020].

Yet for the institution whose international law syllabi I analysed, the answer appears to be ‘yes’. All syllabi are

from male professors, except for one. The female professor's syllabus contains readings from 46 identified authors (20 male, 13 female and 13 female/male teams); that is, the female professor's syllabus contains less than 50 per cent male-only authored mandatory readings. In contrast, the male-only authored mandatory readings on the male professors' syllabi range from 60 per cent to 100 per cent, with 40 per cent of the male

professors' syllabi composed of over 90 per cent male-only authored mandatory readings.

What is the solution? I anticipate that the resulting 'ah-ha' when readers review their own syllabi will create the solution. I look forward to learning whether and how solutions are then implemented.

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