

Short Autobiography of my Career

I am Professor for International Political Theory at Goethe Universität Frankfurt. My primary academic appointment is in Political Science, but I also have a secondary appointment in Philosophy.

I have followed a circuitous professional path, not one that is commendable to a career minded graduate student. It's a path marked by a fair bit of good luck, and one that I have on the whole enjoyed immensely. My PhD is in Philosophy from the Claremont Graduate School. In graduate school I aspired to be a continental philosopher. I took as many courses as I could in ancient, phenomenology, Kant, Hegel, and Marx. I even went so far as to write a dissertation on Hegel's philosophy of subjective spirit (what would now be called philosophy of mind). After that experience my interests shifted sharply to contemporary Anglo-American moral and political philosophy, especially analytic Marxism and liberal egalitarianism. My first permanent job was in the California Community College system at Riverside Community College. I was still working on my dissertation on Hegel, but I took the job because my funding had run out. My teaching load was 5 classes a semester (10 a year) with 50 students in a class. Because graduate school had taught me nothing about teaching, it was there that I learned to teach. I taught course in intro, critical thinking, and applied ethics. It was grueling work, especially in combination with writing my dissertation, but it was also tremendously rewarding teaching. The California Community College system has racially and ethnically diverse student body and takes a high percent of working class and poor students. The fees and entrance requirements are lower than at all other institutions of higher education in California. After three years at RCC I had finished my dissertation and I left for a job at Cal Poly Pomona. Cal Poly offered only a marginally better teaching load of 3 classes per quarter (9 per year), but it provided an opportunity that I had not yet had, to teach upper division undergraduate classes. I somehow managed to convince Cal Poly that I was the best person for them, given their need to cover courses in ancient philosophy and philosophy of mind.

During the time of my first two jobs I was also nearly a full time political activist, working in anti-apartheid, anti-intervention, and union struggles. When a position opened at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, I jumped sight unseen. South Africa had recently held its first democratic election. It was going through a process of democratizing society and it had a lively civil society movement and a militant trade union movement. I convinced the colleagues at Wits that I was the person to teach continental philosophy and ethics. Teaching at Wits was remarkably challenging and meaningful. The university had a massive influx of Black students from poorly equipped township schools. They were joined in the classroom with white students many of whom were from elite public and private schools. Figuring out how to manage the huge differences in educational backgrounds and to serve the needs of the Black students was an enormous, but exciting, challenge. In South Africa I deepened my interest in global justice and wrote my first book on the topic, *Cosmopolitan Justice*. That book was published a full 12 years after I defended my dissertation. The time spent working in teaching heavy positions and being active in political movements had slowed my writing output considerably.

After nearly 7 years of living in South Africa, my wife and I reluctantly decided to move back to the USA where it was safer to raise our son who had been born in South Africa. I took a position as the founding Director of the Institute for Ethics and Public Affairs at San Diego State University. That position allowed me organize workshops, conferences, and lecture series on themes of contemporary moral and political philosophical importance. I had come from the margins of academic Philosophy; and it was through organizing those events at SDSU that I first met many of the leading moral and political philosophers. My second book *Global Inequality Matters* was published while I worked at SDSU. I finished it while on sabbatical at the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton). The year at the IAS is one of the fondest memories of my career. A quiet and beautiful place, with intelligent people all working hard on their research projects, very few distractions, and an

incredibly helpful staff, it was a dream. After 11 years at SDSU, I was enticed to leave to join the incredibly exciting research environment of Normative Orders at Goethe University. Since arriving at Goethe University I've published a book on climate change called *The Moral Challenge of Dangerous Climate Change*. That book was begun while I was at the IAS.

Frankfurt is a great place to be working in political theory and philosophy these days. I am surrounded by hardworking and smart young people who will be defining the discipline in the near future. I feel very fortunate to among such a wonderful group of colleagues and students.

We have a great thing going on here.