



Teaching Reform and Curriculum Ideology and Politics on the Course ‘Selected Readings on Capital (Das Kapital)’

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Abstract. This paper addresses challenges in delivering "Selected Readings on Das Kapital"—including lacking theoretical depth, low student engagement, and weak ideological-political integration—by proposing and implementing an innovative teaching model centered on "problem-orientation + interdisciplinary integration + value guidance." To objectively evaluate the model's efficacy, a controlled study was conducted comparing an experimental class (N=49) using the new model with a control class (N=53) taught via traditional methods, delivered before the course enforcement. Results and student feedback demonstrate a significant positive impact: the experimental class showed a 22% increase in average final exam scores, a 35% rise in classroom participation, and course evaluation scores improved from 89.49 to 94.80 out of 100.0. Post-course surveys indicate that 92% of students in the experimental group reported a stronger grasp of the material's contemporary relevance, compared to 60% in the control group. The reform successfully enhances theoretical literacy, political identity, and critical thinking, providing a replicable model for theory-intensive courses [1, 2].

Keywords: Curriculum Ideology, Course Redesign, Teaching Reform.

1 Introduction

"Selected Readings on Das Kapital" is a core, 32-hour course for third-year economics majors at Beijing Jiaotong University, designed to build upon prior courses such as *Political Economy* and form a critical module in students' humanities and professional training. Despite its importance, the course has historically faced significant pedagogical challenges. Its high theoretical density and perceived overlap with prior courses led to low student motivation, poor engagement, and unsatisfactory teaching evaluations. The traditional "chapter-by-chapter explanation" approach often resulted in memorization of concepts without fostering genuine interest or achieving critical thinking. Furthermore, the course struggled with its ideological-political mission, only being viewed as an "ideological requirement" rather than an essential part of the curriculum.

To address these challenges, this paper proposes and evaluates an innovative teaching reform focused on "problem-orientation + interdisciplinary integration + value guidance." The primary objectives of this reform are threefold: to enhance theoretical depth by differentiating the course content from earlier versions and highlighting its contemporary relevance and implications to the real world; to perfect the curriculum by better aligning it with students' knowledge and background; and to normalize curriculum ideology by integrating ideological and political elements to enhance students' political and cultural identity.

This paper details the design and implementation of this reform, including the reconstruction of teaching materials, the introduction of interactive discussion cases on modern economic issues, and the redesign of post-class assignments. The results demonstrate a significant positive impact, with significant improvements in final exam scores, classroom participation, and student satisfaction. The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 revisits course background and the existed challenges, with a summary of reform objectives. Section 3 presents the details of the reform and its implementation, with the presentation of reform outcomes. Section 4 concludes the paper.

2 Pre-innovation Context and Innovation Objectives

2.1 Course Background and Introduction

Selected Readings of Das Kapital is a core, 32-teaching hour course for third-year economics majors. It extends the "Political Economy" course, forming a critical module in students' humanities and professional training. As aforementioned, the course's high theoretical foundation and perceived knowledge gap with other peer courses led to low student motivation and poor teaching evaluations. In traditional teaching, instructors primarily used a "chapter-by-chapter explanation" approach, forcing students to memorize concepts without sparking genuine interest or achieving the goal of cultivating critical thinking [3, 4].

2.2 Course Dilemmas and "Real Problems"

Prior to innovation, the course faced two primary challenges:

Low Engagement and Perceived Redundancy: Students found the content repetitious and disconnected from modern economic issues, investing less effort compared to concurrent courses like "Intermediate Macroeconomics."

Ineffective Ideological-Political Integration: The course was narrowly viewed as an "ideological requirement" rather than a core professional subject, failing to achieve its dual goals of knowledge impartation and value guidance. Thus, the main aim of redesigning the course may include integrating ideological and political elements relevant to the course content and combining students' economics background when necessary (which is also of most urgency) to achieve the course's objectives, promoting students' engagements.

2.3 Course Dilemmas and "Real Problems"

The main aim of redesigning the course was to integrate ideological and political elements relevant to the course content and combine students' economics background to achieve the course's objectives, promoting students' engagements. The teaching innovation aims to achieve the following objectives:

Theoretical Depth and Connection: Differentiate from the content of earlier courses by focusing on in-depth points, allowing students to perceive progression rather than repetition.

Curriculum System Perfection: Promote the integration of this course within students' economics training plan to align with their professional backgrounds.

Normalization of Curriculum Ideology: Integrate ideological and political elements into all aspects of teaching, enhancing students' political identity [2, 5].

3 Innovative Teaching Design and Implementation

3.1 Reconstruction of Classroom Teaching Content

This is primarily achieved through the following aspects:

1) *Reconstructing course teaching materials:* Amend teaching content against materials from the Political Economy course to minimize simple repetition of knowledge points.

2) *Actively integrating ideological and political elements:* Incorporate these elements to conduct ideological education while delivering knowledge points.

3) *Incorporating students' professional background:* Use theory of Das Kapital to explain real-world economic and social issues, enhancing the course's perceived practicality, readability, timeliness, and contemporary value in the students' view.

3.2 Innovative Teaching Design and Its Outcome

(1) Teaching Materials (Partial)

Design teaching materials to stimulate student interest. Specifically, incorporate images, audio, and video to improve readability, making the course "visible, tangible, learnable, and memorable." We also use videos and materials at the beginning and end of sessions to create coherence and attract attention, aligning with trends in information-based education [5]. Table 1 summarizes some reconstructed materials.

(2) Course Discussion Sessions (Partial)

1) *Discussion Case 1: The Dual Nature of Commodities and Use of Labor*

Using the case "Why are delivery riders trapped in the algorithm?" as an entry point, we promote students' discussion on Marx's thought use value and exchange value to analyze the phenomenon on whether the labor is controlled by algorithms and is misused.

2) *Discussion Case 2: Surplus Value Theory and Exploitation in Modern Times*

For example, use "Didi driver is run by data" to reveal the hidden exploitation masked by "flexible work arrangements." Introduce a legal perspective to discuss the

challenges of applying the "Labor Contract Law" within recent economy.

3) Discussion Case 3: Social Reproduction and Ecological Crisis

Using "Capital transformation under carbon neutrality goals" as a case study, analyze the fundamental contradiction between capital expansion and ecological and environmental protection. Organize a debate on the theme "Is Green Capitalism Possible?"

3.3 Post-class Teaching Reconstruction and Extension

We have also redesigned the coursework (3000 words). The paper carries a 30% weight in the final grade to emphasize its importance. Specific paper topics include:

(1) Free-Topic Essay: Read *The Communist Manifesto* and comment on two selected paragraphs.

Table 1. Ideological and Political Education Design (Partial)

| Chapter | Theoretical Key Points | Ideological Mapping Points | Integration Method |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Commodities and Money (Ch. 1) | Labor Value Theory | Understand the principle of distribution according to work under socialism | Understanding China's wage system and standards |
| Production of Surplus Value (Part 3) | Critique of Exploitation Mechanism | Recognize the practical significance of common prosperity policies | Comparative analysis: Differences and reasons for labor welfare systems in China and abroad |
| Capital Accumulation (Part 7) | Capital Valuation and Social Development | Is capital inherently bad? | How to distinguish "good capital" from "bad capital"? If created value is shared by society, it can be defined as good capital, characteristic of the socialist form. |
| Reproduction and Circulation of Social Capital | Two-Department Exchange | Relationship between accumulation, expanded reproduction, and GDP growth | Theoretical basis in <i>Das Kapital</i> for supply-side reforms; why did China undertake these reforms? |
| Capitalist Crisis (Ch. 15) | <i>Lowest Level Heading.</i> Text follows | Enhance confidence in the socialist system with Chinese characteristics | Literature study: 2008 financial crisis and the effectiveness of China's macroeconomic regulation |

(2) Assigned-Topic Essay (Choose 2-3 from the following questions to write an essay):

1) Discuss the pathways and methods of primitive accumulation using examples from two or more European countries.

2) Explain the causes of economic crises and the existence of business cycles using viewpoints from *Das Kapital*, based on one or more historical economic crises.

3) *Discuss the relationship between changes in labor value and the rate of capital accumulation during capitalist development, and the trend of this relationship.*

4) *The difference in the relationship between commerce and industrial development under capitalism versus socialism.*

5) *Explain the history and reasons for the emergence of companies and stock markets using viewpoints from Das Kapital.*

6) *Analyze the differences in economic systems, modes of production, and levels of capitalist development caused by disparities in land systems between China and Europe.*

3.4 Teaching Outcomes

(1) Quantitative Evaluation and Course Reform Outcome

Learning Outcomes: The experimental class achieved an average final exam score of 82.5, a 22% increase over the control group's average of 67.6.

Student Engagement: In-class participation metrics (e.g., polling responses, discussion contributions) showed a 35% higher average participation rate in the experimental class.

Perceived Relevance: A post-module survey showed 92% of experimental group students agreed the interdisciplinary approach helped them "understand the theory's practical significance," compared to 60% in the control group.

(2) Qualitative Feedback (Partial)

1) *The instructor is well-prepared. Although the course is challenging, the instructor has made extensive efforts to help us understand it better.*

2) *The lectures are well-structured and humorous, and the slides are logically clear, making them great review materials.*

3) *The lectures are lively and engaging.*

4) *The instructor is kind, knowledgeable, and the course content is well-organized.*

5) *I find the instructor's lectures passionate and detailed, with a positive classroom atmosphere.*

6) *The instructor is extremely humorous. Haha, big thumbs up!*

7) *The lectures are well-structured and humorous, and the slides are logically clear, making them great review materials.*

8) *The instructor is excellent, diligent, and responsible.*

9) *The instructor prepares every lecture carefully.*

10) *The instructor is well-prepared for teaching, explains concepts earnestly, and grades fairly, resulting in an overall positive classroom experience.*

11) *The instructor delivers lectures effectively, clearly putting thoughtful preparation into each lecture.*

12) *The instructor is responsible, humorous, and impressive.*

13) *The instructor is well-prepared for teaching, explains concepts earnestly, and grades fairly, resulting in an overall positive classroom experience.*

14) *The instructor's explanations are easy to grasp, profound yet simple, and penetratingly insightful. The teaching attitude is serious, and the requirements for assignments and exams are clear. It has been highly beneficial.*

15) I find the instructor's class very engaging, with ample interaction that effectively keeps students focused. Overall, this course has deepened my understanding of last semester's Political Economy course and have definitely resolved many lingering questions from the prior course. It has been immensely rewarding!

16) The instructor manages the course well, maintains high standards, and the classes are highly productive.

17) In class, the instructor not only explains concepts thoroughly but also cultivates our analytical thinking, creating an active classroom atmosphere.

18) The instructor teaches earnestly in class, making the lectures far from dull.

4 Conclusion

This reform demonstrates unequivocal success in revitalizing a challenging theoretical course. The "problem-orientation + interdisciplinary integration + value guidance" model proved quantitatively superior to traditional methods. The core achievement is the transformation of student perception: the course is no longer seen as a historical text but as a vital analytical tool for understanding contemporary economic issues. This round of reform provides a validated, replicable framework for integrating curriculum ideology and politics in higher education [1, 3, 4]. Future work will focus on developing longitudinal tracking of student outcomes and creating open-access digital resources.

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