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SYMPOSIUM

Teaching (Political) Economic Geography: Some Personal Reflections

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ABSTRACT *Teaching economic geography is not a matter of replicating textbook models. It requires engagement with the ever-changing global economy, which often puts the lie to existing theory. It demands that the teacher break down the economy into its major parts, in a way that students can grasp. This does not mean abandoning theory; on the contrary, it means getting beyond static exchange models to grasp the dynamics of commodity systems, divisions of labour, technology and capital flows. To this, add how geography matters to the way economies work. And always maintain a critical stance toward the world and toward received wisdom.*

KEY WORDS: Economic geography, political economy, pedagogy, place, labour, commodity chains

Introduction

I have been teaching undergraduates economic geography at the University of California, Berkeley, for 25 years. In that time, the field has changed dramatically, and the world even more. The content of the course has evolved continuously, which means there is no resting on last year's lecture notes. The only constant has been my goals: to impart useful knowledge about the spatial workings of the capitalist economy; to get under the (typically liberal) skin of college students; and to suggest that this world and its geography could be different—and better.

Because I have never employed a textbook, there has been no blueprint for the course. I have preferred to create my own schema, for several reasons. But the principal reason is that I have never been satisfied with the field as it stands conventionally defined, and have wanted to push it in different directions. This has to do with trying to engage the real world rather than abstract theory; breaking with orthodox economics in favor of a more Marxist and dynamic approach; pushing the geographic envelope to range across scales from the urban to the global; and keeping the political element in political economy, and addressing current issues of moment in the public eye. This article is an opportunity, then, to make

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sense of what I have been doing all this time and to impart to other teachers of economic geography some wisdom I have gained over the years.

What is to Be Done?

The most difficult decision in teaching economic geography is the first one confronted in preparing any syllabus: what to cover? The field is so vast as to test the most ambitious among us. There is no one best way to encompass its breadth or to cut the Gordian knot of intertwining topics. We all, no doubt, have different strategies that work more or less well. I tend to err on the side of attempting too much, mostly from a refusal to bore myself or the students. But there is a danger of glossing over real difficulties and glazing the eyes of young people who have few signposts to go by.

Theory and Cases

Typically, American undergraduates know so little about the world economy and geography that one risks losing them entirely. Students need to be able to connect grand generalizations and abstractions to things that they can grasp from experience—which is why they all look more engaged when discussing retailing and consumption than finance and supply chains. A good teacher has to find a way to capture their interest through current events, public debates and hot-button issues.

Empirical examples are vital to good teaching. There are two approaches to this. The usual is to stress generic geographic patterns of the economy that repeat despite the ever-changing course of capitalism, like the rise of new industrial centers or the migration of labour; seeing those patterns is a necessary step on the road to explanation. But it is not enough to stop with middle-level abstractions. It helps immensely if the teacher has real familiarity with one or more industries, or one or more localities, in all their richness. This is not an easy thing, but personal experience or research programs often provide this kind of depth—which is why professors at research universities are not always worse teachers despite the injunction to publish or perish.

How much weight, then, to give theory versus empirics in approaching economic geography? Theory is essential in organizing any course; it is how we make sense of the world in its all-too-great richness. No course, or lecture, can be put together without guiding ideas. Behind all good teaching lies good explanation. A teacher gives shape to a world previously unseen and unappreciated by students. We are all philosophers in spite of ourselves, all social theorists—however plain spoken, empirical and accessible we want to be in our classes. It is a responsibility not to be taken lightly.

But I have come to believe that a good teacher never starts with the intention of teaching theories for their own sake. Instead, she/he begins with worldly patterns and public puzzles. Theory is brought into play as a way of solving those puzzles, not as a priori knowledge to be applied willy-nilly.

One advantage of age is that I have seen many waves of theoretical enthusiasms come and go. While all have made contributions, no one faced with the impact of China or the war in Iraq thinks that such formerly hot ideas as flexible specialization, corporate geography or post-Fordism are adequate to capture today's world economy. Theoretical myopia can lead us to focus too much attention on one part of the elephant, say, industrial districts, while theory obsolescence can leave us looking foolish in the face of the unforeseen. The need to cope with the new is the one thing that is absolutely predictable.

The Moving Target

Neither the compass of economic geography nor the theoretical apparatus needed to cope with it has been helped by what capitalism has been up to globally. It used to be that economic geographers concentrated on the United States, Germany and Britain to teach locational principles, smug in the knowledge that these were the leading economies on earth, the essence of modernity. But then Japan strode across the world, laying low the old industrial heartlands with its new system of mass production in the 1980s. Equally challenging was the rising force of the new Europe, especially fast-rising southern Europe and the industrial districts of the Third Italy. Soon the New Industrial Geography was born.

By the early 1990s Japan was in crisis—but one had to contend with the Gang of Four in East Asia, the industrial boom in Southeast Asia, and the *maquiladoras* of northern Mexico operating under the North American Free Trade Agreement. In the new millennium, China is all the news. All this has forced me to 'de-centre' the economic geography I learned in graduate school, which is all to the good (Yeung & Liu, this issue).

Now globalization is on everyone's lips and in the streets. Globalization turned out not to be so simple as either international trade theory, or rings from center to periphery. One had many national capitalisms to contrast, and whole new histories, cultures, internal geographies and polities to contend with. Moreover, the old divide between the First and Third Worlds broke down, the gulf between Development Studies and Economic Geography collapsing with it (forcing economic geographers to face up to their neglect of much of the world, as Murphy (this issue) points out). Add to this the end of the Soviet Union and the transformation of China (long ghettoized areas of scholarship), and the task became simply overwhelming.

So the job of keeping up geographically keeps us panting after the global economy. While one needs always to strive to avoid geo-centrism in theory and cases, it is damnably hard since what we know best is where we live (European geographers are as guilty as Americans in this regard, maybe more so).

At the same time, all the elements of economic research—technologies, business organization, consumer habits, finance and the rest—have been revolutionized over the last quarter century. So, wherever one sits, the scene is ever-shifting, a fast-paced movie of the never-ending industrial revolution that has made the modern world. These changes have made a hash of most of the certainties of the economic geography I learned in graduate school, handed down by the mid-twentieth-century giants of the field such as Walter Christaller, Walter Isard and Brian Berry. Indeed, it has played havoc with many of the ideas my peers have put forward, even as we congratulated ourselves on being so forward looking. I therefore do not find it hard to disrupt the discourse, as Barnes (this issue) suggests; the real world does it all the time, if we are paying attention.

Moreover, the compass of economics has had to be enlarged beyond simple models of market exchange and competitive firms to include multinational corporations, regional institutions of governance, state development strategies, international bodies and neo-liberal policies, and the ever-looming backdrop of US imperialism. One has to be more than a geographer doing economics to do justice to economic geography. It is necessary to have a working relation with sociology, business theory and political science, with a bit of anthropology thrown in. Of course, the degree of openness to all fields and concerns is not limitless, or economic geography ceases to mean anything. I am, like Coe & Yeung (this issue), not at all pleased with the drift into cultural studies in place of political economy in geography. Yet even without the extremes of cultural theory, a suitably broadened economic geography is not the discipline of the past. It is something quite grand in its scope and ambitions, and it should be sold to students as the most important course they may ever take.

Breaking Down Economics

The first problem in getting a grip on economic geography is to get around the elephant of neo-classical economics standing in the doorway. How to clear the way for a sensible approach to economics? This is not so much a political prejudice as a scientific one: neo-classicism is a species of Orthodox faith that impairs the study of the world more than it helps, thanks to teleological faith in market equilibrium, dogmatic axioms about human behavior, shallow empiricism in the deployment of data, and misleading use of mathematics as a substitute for theory.

Our first responsibility as teachers of economic geography is to provide our students with a manageable picture of the modern economy, one they can get their heads around. That does not start with markets and trade, allocation and optimization; nor does it begin with giant corporations, national development and technology policy. The heart of the matter is providing a clear idea of the system of production and circulation of goods (commodities) that undergirds everything else.

I start with the five steps in the life of the commodity, or segments of the commodity chain: resources, manufacture, distribution, retail and consumption. It may be simple in outline, but it opens up the various dimensions of economy and geography in a straightforward way. From there, one can build up the model in more complex ways.

Resources. By this is meant the provision of natural inputs to the industrial system, including minerals, energy and water. There are three geographic dimensions to resource supply: sites of extraction, processing sites and supply lines (normally called 'infrastructure'). Because classical location theory made natural endowments over-determinant, modern economic geographers have shied away from the study of resource supplies but, as repeated wars over oil show, they do so at some peril. This is a natural subject for geographers concerned with nature and the environment.

Manufacture. Manufacturing is the pivot of production, dominated by the modern factory system. Automobile assembly plants and steel mills were long the focus of economic geography, but that day has passed. We need to cover such new products as cell phones and video games, as well as older ones with new twists, such as meatpacking and pharmaceuticals. Moreover, as factory size has diminished, divisions of labor expanded and supply chains lengthened, the emphasis has shifted to clusters of establishments (industrial districts) and to global production systems, in arrangements of nodes and networks.

Distribution. Distribution (also called circulation) includes the mercantile functions of wholesaling, warehousing and brokerage, upstream and downstream from manufacturing. The treatment of distribution in classic location theory was reduced to ports, transport modes and distance costs, rather than a field of business in its own right. The dullness of that approach put off the New Industrial Geographers, who paid it no more attention. The subject was relegated to transportation geography, preserving an antique and debilitating schism. Fortunately, the field is enjoying a renaissance, given the logistics revolution in commodity flows in a global system.

Retail. Retail is the act of selling commodities, either through brick-and-mortar stores or at a distance by catalogues or websites. Retail geography also became isolated from the mainstream, reduced to mapping of market areas in the fashion of Central Place theory—long after industrial geographers had abandoned Christaller–Lösch models. Retailing is a ready hook for students in the Age of Wal-Mart, and it has come in for much more serious scrutiny recently—though mostly from cultural geographers. Retail geography is more than consumer access: it entails the capitalist sales imperative, publicity and presentation, and the supply lines running backward from sellers to producers.

Consumption. Consumption is not the same as shopping, nor is it chiefly a symbolic activity. Its material facts are strewn over the landscape, both as residential areas and as gathering points of pleasure like theme parks, convention centers and malls. In terms of sheer size, these occupy more space in the American cities my students know than production, distribution and retail functions combined.

This kind of commodity chain and segment breakdown is good up to a point but more is required to flesh out the capitalist economy for our students. To begin with, every production system is book-ended by two critical functions pertaining to the whole, as well as the parts. On one side lie auxiliary inputs into extraction, manufacture, distribution and sales, such as design, engineering and research. On the other flank, commodity production systems are embedded in business organizations and subject to modern management.

Auxiliary inputs. These include the work that must be done before anything else happens, such as product design, building construction, system engineering and marketing studies. The high-end, skilled labour in these areas usually requires a creative (and expensive) milieu of research, education and interaction. But these inputs are the principal conduits of technical innovation and market shifts, and are deeply interactive with investment, learning and adaptation within the core of the production system. At the same time, there are masses of labor, and myriad firms, at work in humble support of the glamorous activities, doing such things as repair, cleaning and landscaping. While there has been a good deal of study on R&D, design has only recently come under the scholarly eye; but we often have to go over to labour studies to find anyone looking hard at janitorial services.

Organization and management. Management refers, first of all, to control and command of the enterprise (firm, corporation) and its labour force. Organization pertains to systems of business integration, the social division of labour and the orchestration of social labour (who does what, where and how). Herein lie some of the most important aspects of economy and geography. They used to be comprised under the heading of 'corporate geography' but things are much more complicated today, with the rise (revival?) of such immense supply chains as The Gap's vast network of 700+ subcontractors feeding thousands of retail outlets or Dell's path-breaking system of web-based orders for computers, from final customer all the way to component makers in Asia.

Most of what is known as 'business services', a large and growing segment of the economy, consists in the provision of these book-end functions. Big cities' centres, in particular, are replete with accountants, lawyers, consulting engineers, designers and advertisers, among others. Most such work is outsourced today, but it still must plug carefully into the basic chains of production. The size of this sector has been enhanced by the immense scale of modern corporations and production systems, as well as by the increased sophistication of management.

Finally, all production and circulation of commodities is animated by human labour, the living foundation of the economy, and set in play by capital, the guiding light of enterprise and the world market.

Labour. Human action, effort and creativity are still essential to all economic activity, despite fantasies of fully robotic production and management systems. So is the surplus value that derives from the exploitation of labour. In any discussion of industry location economic geographers must pay attention to the way labor markets operate spatially and to such things as the skill mix, prevailing wages and the supply of workers. And they cannot gloss over the facts of exploitation and class struggle, especially given union-busting in the North and government repression in the global South.

With the global reach of capital, the search for cheaper labour has become a point of contention in all economic debates. While new labour forces—particularly female—have ever been at the cutting edge of capitalist expansion, the relative cost of labor depends on productivity, abundance and militancy, as well as on wage rates. And new supplies of labor are mustered continuously in the rich nations through immigration, enhancing brainpower, hyperexploitation and national competitiveness. Where exploitation, competition among workforces, and immigration are concerned, race, nationality and gender are never far from the surface, and the debates get ugly very quickly.

Capital. At the same time as capital feeds off labour, it drives economic production and circulation by its eagerness to invest, thirst for profit and urgency to move goods to market. Capital flows in and out of every pore of the economy, triggering growth or decline. It moves in waves of anticipation of gain, and sometimes inundations of speculative fervor, into new lines of business, new technologies, new industrial spaces, newly developing countries and new epochs of industrialization. This mad rushing about all too often makes fools of those who predict geographies of the future based on trends of the past and present.

A Place for Geography

In my enthusiasm to lay out the anatomy of modern economies, I have all too often been badgered by students asking, ‘Where’s the geography?’. At first I took umbrage, thinking that a scatter of spatial referents should suffice. But it became clear over time that (American) students do not easily see things geographically, even in plain sight; moreover, I was wrong not to foreground the geography of economy more forcefully, as aptly recommended by Ettlinger (this issue). I now do this in three ways.

Everything Has a Geography

Rather than begin with general theories of location, I discuss the geographic dimensions of each economic function separately. In this way, the strengths and limits of theory are more immediately apparent, as are the specific empirical puzzles presented by, say, logistics or business services. With resources, for example, one can introduce Alfred Weber’s calculus of location most easily, since here the logic of endowments and transport costs are self-evident; yet the geography of electric grids is totally different, and lends itself readily to a discussion of nodes and networks—before confronting even more complex systems of global manufacturing.

With retailing, the old Christaller–Lösch logic of customer access is still germane, as is spatial monopoly, which hardly matters in factory production any more. In the latter, the most important process is the production of place (geographical industrialization) that occurs in tandem with the growing output of goods, and which proceeds even more dramatically where factories of every kind begin to cluster in cities and industrial districts. Retailers like Wal-Mart also create places in a way that students readily understand, and they come to see that retailing is not just the passive servant of consumer needs.

Working our way through the hardscape of commodity production and circulation provides a solid foundation for grasping the more abstract forces of capital and labour, technology and organization, which are diffused through the whole of economic geography. Without a prior notion of straightforward concepts like points of production, transport nodes, industrial clusters and supply networks, it is nearly impossible to impart a sense of the geographical changes unleashed by investment and disinvestment; labor migration and wage differentials; innovation and sectoral shifts; or corporate mergers and vertical disintegration.

Every Place Has an Economy

Economic geography is not just location and linkage in an open, global economy; it is about territory, bounding, development and difference. The simplest way to grasp this is through the nation-state and national economies. These are so taken for granted that most economists, let alone students, do not see their study as 'geography'. In classic liberal terms, countries equal economies, which then trade with each other to their advantage, and there is only one High Road to Modernization. Better to turn to development studies where the closure, control and success of national economies are always in question and 'roads to capitalism' have always been seen as manifold and bumpy. Only in the last generation of global competition have 'competitive advantage' and 'varieties of capitalism' come under study for the advanced economies. That, in turn, demands serious consideration of widely differing practices and policies, along with deep histories of classes, states and institutions.

Much more difficult is persuading students that there are other scales of economic closure and differentiation. I begin with the largest and most dramatic case, the European Union, against which may be placed NAFTA, the old Soviet sphere, East Asia and so on. The EU is an advanced model of economic integration, a system of governance, and a bounded space at the continental scale. Yet it rests on a long common history and shared conditions among Europeans. Such commonalities can be found in the East Asian model of development as well, despite the lack of a formal trade and monetary union. Those depend not on shared 'cultures' so much as on Japanese colonialism, Chinese commercial diaspora, postwar land reforms and American Cold War militarism.

Subnational regions are the most difficult of all to get across, because of national homogenization, lack of defined boundaries and meager literature in contemporary economic geography. Regional studies are largely seen, in the US context, as a historical oddity (relegated to cultural-historical geographers) rather than a living reality (though a few people have begun to notice that the American South continues to have a dramatic impact on elections, religion and much else besides).

Of course, one does not want to leave the impression that space-economies are no more than an array of Russian dolls. I try to get round this by talking about how places are simultaneously connected to and part of other places at other scales. Naturally, I use California a lot, since it is both the leading economic region within the United States and that country's biggest trade and technology partner with East Asia; indeed, transpacific business networks vastly exceed transatlantic ones today. Nonetheless, the task of 'talking scale' is not easy. Although 'scaling' is a hot topic in critical geography these days, the debates have resulted in few useful guidelines for discerning empirical patterns, creating workable models of space and place, or theorizing causality at multiple, interlinked geographic levels.

Geography Matters

A third approach is to show that economic dynamics are profoundly shaped by space and place. Although the elemental structures and logic of capitalism can be abstracted from geography, the full reality cannot be grasped without a return through intervening levels of structuring that are necessarily geographic. The nation-state is an obvious one, and it is more than a container for a national economy. It is a force creating economic spaces, maintaining economic difference, directing growth and vigorously competing in the world market. Moreover, states are vicious powers that conquer, clash, annihilate places and redraw the map of capitalism in the process.

Geographic effects can be discovered in less obvious arenas, however. Industries and enterprises develop in particular places, help grow those places, and become wedded to their institutions, governments and labor forces. As times change, such identity with place may prove an impediment to adaptation or a lucky charm for continued innovation and competitiveness. Just think of Detroit's repeated stumbles in the face of Japanese carmakers' flexibility. By contrast, Hollywood's connections to Silicon Valley have given birth to a new generation of animated films, video games and MP3 players that have energized both places (though not painlessly).

Back to Political Economy

Along with economic analysis and geographical economies, there is a third leg to the stool that economic geographers must stand on to teach: political economy. Political economy means different things to different people, but for me it boils down to three things.

Dynamics

Under capitalism, everything is on the move. Hence, static models of market equilibrium, technical substitution and optimization are invariably wrong; all economics and economic geography must be dynamic. The classical political economists from Ferguson, through Smith to Marx understood this. They saw a world turned upside down and a new mode of production just finding its sea-legs. Geographers outside the rich countries have an advantage in this regard of seeing the revolutionary impact of globalization, capitalism and industrialization more clearly.

The capitalist imperative is to grow and change. Economic geographies are forever expanding and metamorphosing. This goes beyond technical change, new markets, and new labor forces; it means a pulsing, churning world of industry and place, where nothing is stable for long. This is Joseph Schumpeter's 'creative destruction' and Karl Marx's 'all that is solid melts into air'—phrases often repeated outside economic geography, but not taken seriously enough within.

Even in Europe and the United States recent events have turned the industrial soil anew, burying old geographies and raising new ones, and we should never be surprised at the speed at which such change can occur, as shocking as it can be. This makes the hard business of keeping up with the world economy still more difficult.

Social Relations

Behind economics and geography lie social processes, social structures and social causes. These may be brought in through several doors. Some prefer the cultural turn to make the point, but the danger is when the concept of 'culture' lies too lightly on the land, reduced to a matrix of ideas, customs and traditions, in the anthropologic mode. This is certainly true, and we can learn a good deal by paying attention to comparative cultures, especially in taking seriously difference between national capitalisms. But reference to culture cannot stand in for explanation where it refers, in fact, to deeply sedimented economic practices and artifacts, like forms of business organization or production methods. A 'culture' of, say, Japanese mass production has solidified over time, to be sure, but it was a capitalist invention of the postwar era at the Toyota corporation by a particular engineer and his colleagues.

To get at this sort of difference in social practices, many economic geographers have turned to the New Institutionalism. There has been a recovery of a sociological inquiry into the institutions that glue together and give shape to economic systems of production, distribution, exchange, innovation and the rest. Business firms are institutions but so are particular markets like the stock exchanges or IBM's supplier network. Universities and research labs are institutions that play a big part in science and technology, along with modes of dispensing government research grants. Labour-market intermediaries, business associations and engineering societies are institutions of a fluid, but still influential, sort. And along with the concept of institutions has come that of 'governance', or the systems of rules, behaviors and interaction between economic actors that are as often unspoken as formally established.

Nonetheless, middle-level theories of institutions still do not cut deep enough. With regard to social causes, I follow Marx into the engine room of the ship of capitalism. This is terribly unfashionable today but so much the worse for geography and social theory. Down in those sweaty depths, capital still exploits workers (often brutally), still whips the economy into new frenzies, and still spins consumers on the gerbil-wheel of insatiable desire. It still sucks peasants into its maw, drives its Hummers into the far corners of the world, and bellows the Rights of Property above the din of struggles for human liberation.

Marx alone is not enough, of course. I draw on Veblen, Schumpeter, Polanyi and many others. The world is too complex to be fully explained by one, two or five basic concepts. If there is one thing poststructuralism has done right, it is to complicate explanation. But to say that the world is complex is to state the obvious, not rebut tempered efforts to get past the hurly-burly of the everyday to the essentials, the things that matter most in why people do what they do and create the economic geographies they do.

Criticism

Finally, economic geography must be a critical enterprise, as it was in the age of the classical political economists. In a basic sense, my primary task as a teacher working in an imperialist country in a reactionary age is not to provide a full and fancy account of everything but to undermine the conventional wisdom as much as possible. Notions such as rational choice, equilibrium, market optimization, free trade, equal opportunity and human capital are to be put in question, along with more specific conservative phantoms like illegal aliens, unfair Asian competition, American national virtue, union interference and war on terror.

I want to normalize a different vocabulary among my students, one they might carry in their heads long afterward: ideology and interest, capital and class, race and empire, exploitation and struggle, accumulation and speculative bubbles, and more. And I always remember that the young are not innocent, and they harbour many critical and radical tendencies; my job, for those who do, is to offer credibility to their intuitions and give hope that the world they inherit is not all there is or could be.

A Postscript on Pedagogy

A word on pedagogical methods is in order for a reflection such as this on how to teach economic geography, or anything else. I am speaking here of a large, upper-level undergraduate lecture course. Small graduate seminars/colloquia, small senior seminars and field classes—all of which I teach for other courses—are quite another thing, and can be more effective (Jones, this issue). Alas, the university calculus of student/professor ratios requires a certain number of large lecture courses.

With a course with 100 students, I find it impossible to operate with any significant degree of back-and-forth with the students during lectures, beyond a few questions. It requires a slower pace and different goals to achieve the kind of egalitarian classroom sought by Barnes (this issue). Fortunately, I have the luxury of graduate assistants who run small, intensive sections in parallel with the lectures (coordinated on a weekly basis). There, open discussion is encouraged, further questions about lecture topics can be posed, and reading materials are gone over carefully. Berkeley students are, moreover, able to tolerate a rapid pace of lectures, a high level of ideas, and a lot of reading (six books a semester). This makes my job easier.

Not all is rosy, of course. There are still practical problems of presenting lectures in digestible portions; of finding the median level of comprehension in a class, however high or low the average; of integrating lectures and readings without being repetitious. Presentation is no small matter. I have used PowerPoint for several years now, and I like the way it forces me to sort out and outline my main points. I keep the writing on the screen minimal, however, in order to keep students from bowing their heads and repeating everything up there instead of listening to me and getting the flow of the argument. PowerPoint has the advantage of allowing the limber use of graphics and maps—though the lack of good maps of industrial location patterns that I can pluck from the writing of economic geographers never ceases to amaze me. The worst part of PowerPoint is the time it takes to prepare—a one-hour outlining session in the old days is now drawn out to 5 or 6 hours.

Teaching economic geography is not just about imparting useful knowledge to a willing audience, of course. It is about capturing the imagination of that audience and drawing them into the worldview you are painting up there in front. Lecturing is a combination of content and clarity, to be sure; but it is also a mix of performance and seduction for a group of young people who might prefer to be elsewhere. That is why one needs to speak to the worldly concerns of as many of the students as possible, left and right, men and women, light skinned and dark, and of national origins far and wide.

In the California context, I am acutely aware of addressing a student body that no longer looks like me or enjoys the same privilege I did at their age (even though they are among the privileged in other respects). When I talk about Japan or China's economies, there are listeners who were born in those countries. When I refer to Mexican *maquilas* or wage-rates, I am talking to immigrants with first-hand experience. When I speak of the tourist complex of San Francisco, I address students whose mothers may have worked in the city's hotels. When I discuss the electronics industry of Silicon Valley, there will be some whose parents worked both sides of the fence, as engineer-entrepreneurs and as wafer-cleaners. It is a challenge and it keeps me on my toes, but it allows me to make connections that would not otherwise be possible across the gulfs of age, race and experience.

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