

Asif Siddiqui  
Peking University HSBC Business School  
APSA Teaching and Learning Conference  
Sheraton Society Hill, Philadelphia, PA  
February 8, 2014

# Writing the Political Philosophy Paper: Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge

# Topics to be Covered

- 1) My Motivation
- 2) Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge
- 3) Application to Position Papers in Political Philosophy
- 4) Final Thoughts

# Motivation

- Former English Teacher
- Good Grades
- Crushed by Political Philosophy

# Threshold Concept

- New way of thinking
- Portal to inaccessible knowledge
- After successfully passing through, can continue forward with other areas of subject

# Threshold Concept in Economics

- Opportunity Cost
- Moving beyond supply, demand and price
- Recognition of choosing alternatives among scarcity

# Core Concepts vs. Threshold Concepts

- Core Concepts: Building Blocks
- Threshold Concepts: Fundamentally alter thinking

# Characteristics of Threshold Concepts

- 1) Transformative
- 2) Irreversible
- 3) Integrative
- 4) Bounded
- 5) Troublesome

# Troublesome Knowledge

- Emotional difficulties of discarding past knowledge
- Without understanding Threshold Concept, can be stuck



# Pedagogy

- Sequence contents appropriately
- Recognize student recursiveness
- Evaluation

# IR Meets Political Philosophy

- A general broad attack on a writing
- Focus on realistic possibilities
- Positivist over Normative

# Political Philosophy Position Paper

- Focus on one idea
- Think Normatively
- Look at argument, not implementation

# Final Words

- Students might avoid Threshold Concepts
- Teacher might have to do hand-holding

# Q's

- Do you have any questions?

# Contact Info

- [siddiqui123@gmail.com](mailto:siddiqui123@gmail.com)