Politics & International Relations

Teaching with In Practice Video
Content Type

In Practice videos are typically 20 min videos of practitioners discussing their work on topical and interesting issues. They provide students with an understanding of what is involved in cutting-edge work, and why that work is so important. In Practice videos provide an interesting way for students to learn about how theory translates into practice and the types of careers that they may be interested in following. They can be used in the classroom at the end of a course in order to demonstrate the types of work that would benefit from the course that students have undertaken. They can also be used inside or outside of the classroom as a method of assessment or to encourage independent research because they provide an in-depth perspective on a particular field of work that students may then be asked to research and analyze.

Suggested Courses or Topics

This video is relevant to courses on international relations, political science, government and society, human rights, and international organizations. It covers specific topics such as democratization in post-conflict societies, the role of civil society and international institutions in democratic elections, how democratization can and should be supported, and the ways in which Barbara Smith undertakes her work. The breadth of information provided and the multidisciplinary aspects to the work that Barbara Smith describes makes this video relevant, exciting, and stimulating for students across a range of different areas.

Classroom Clips

Listed below are a few examples of clips that focus on key concepts:

- The importance of working with, training, and strengthening local actors and institutions in order for democratization to occur. Clip 3:07 – 5:36.
- How electoral observation missions can assist in transitional societies, particularly in relation to selecting and supporting context-specific electoral systems for a particular society. Clip 7:24 – 8:55.

In this video, Barbara Smith explains her work at Election Observation and Democratic Support, which is an organization that assists with democratic elections around the world. They work with election observers, training them and producing guides and handbooks as well as looking at how to meet new technological challenges. They also work on cooperation with other institutions, for example, with international institutions, including the United Nations, the African Union, and the League of Arab States. Barbara Smith’s work involves assisting with strengthening political institutions and political parties in order to ensure that voters have choices, as well as working with civil society, police, and the judiciary. She explains how and why all of those aspects of the work are crucial for the democratization process.
Research Assignment

See below for some example assignments that you might use for students

Barbara Smith says that human rights is a theme that underpins all of her work (Clip 5:15 – 5:36) and later explains how different human rights standards can be used as an indication of whether democratization has occurred (Clip 15:56 – 16:19). Research into five of those human rights standards in one post-conflict society or one of those human rights standards across five post-conflict societies and provide an assessment of the link between the type of government and the existence (or lack thereof) of those human rights.

Classroom Discussion

Here are some example questions that might be used for in-class discussion.

Barbara Smith talks about the many different factors involved in democratization and the different ways in which that process may be supported and measured. Why is it important to train police and the judiciary in transitional societies? What roles do civil society and grassroots organizations play in those countries? What standards should be used to assess the democratization process? How does the election organization and democratic support assist in democratization on the ground? What does it do to help with elections in such societies? Do you think its work is legitimate, and why? Should this work be undertaken by international actors?