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“Defending the Western Tradition of Liberty under Law”

Panel: Rediscovering Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE)

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Discussion bullet notes:

1) Observations from the U.S.

- PPE is one of the fastest growing undergraduate majors in the US.
- In the past two decades more than 55 PPE programs have emerged of varying sizes. It is a growth industry, there a few venerable PPE programs of more than 25yrs, but most are new.
- For some of institutions PPE is a stand-alone major; for others PPE is a certificate or minor that remains interdisciplinary.
- Where it exists, PPE is an undergraduate major magnet...very popular among students. It is an attractive program in part because it sounds great. For example, adding economics to a liberal arts mix just sounds more “practical” to doubters about the practicality of the humanities—like parents.

2) Appeal in the U.S. of the Idea and Distinctiveness of PPE

- It is important to note that PPE is a pedagogical rather than an intellectual exercise...although the two are not totally independent.
- A distinctive PPE element is that it tends to transcend departmental and disciplinary boundaries. This is an approach students in the U.S. appear to be looking for. They find PPE to be intellectually exciting.
- Doing PPE in juxtaposition is a good way of teaching these disciplines—YET at Oxford the contrary is true, there is not integration and disciplines don't negotiate their emphases or ways of thinking. Integration is achieved at Oxford through students not faculty, and through lots of writing.
- One of the great promises of PPE in the U.S. is the chance it provides for the kind of ordering and integration of knowledge that is a prerequisite for theoretical coherence in liberal learning but often missing from the social sciences.
- So PPE can bring to political science structure and analytical spine, while recognizing that for some students this integration is better than, say, studying philosophy apart from other disciplines; or for doing economics as a higher math

course without humanistic dimensions. And as such, as one professor put it to me, it can be attractive to economic students who just hate their lives! (Although care should be given to make sure the economic components are real).

3) **Making Connections and Retaking the Intellectual High Ground**

- The fundamental reason that the rediscovery of PPE in the U.S. is important is because economic and political theory, and their philosophical foundations, have become increasingly interdisciplinary at the same time that classroom pedagogy has become more stove-piped. In discussing the ISI PPE curriculum at a recent seminar faculty overwhelmingly supported it on the grounds that **a liberal education must connect the policy questions and ethical problems of the day with the legacy of arguments and intellectual development that transcend narrow disciplinary stove-pipes. The world is disinclined to recognize the artificial boundaries of academic disciplines. PPE programs cross the local institutional boundaries that separate departments, and the intellectual fences that prevent useful discussions and the cross-fertilization of ideas.**
- Many have noted that as result of the approach, the PPE model has proven to be a leadership development program. A causal glance of the seven single spaced pages listing global leaders who have studied PPE is a testament to that practical outcome of such programs.
- We at ISI were not surprised to find that PPE is also effective in teaching students the dimensions of freedom because educating for liberty is an interdisciplinary pursuit by definition.
- **We also have come to believe that one strategic benefit of PPE is that given the integrative nature of the program it has the potential to retake the intellectual high ground and restore the classical canon to the undergraduate curriculum.**

4) **Building a PPE intuitional and resource infrastructure**

- An infrastructure of PPE academic support and creativity has formed in the U.S. that is likely to result in even more PPE growth. Examples include:
 - This past March a new international organization called the Philosophy, Politics, and Economics Society gathered in New Orleans to encourage professors and graduate students to explore the interaction and cross-fertilization of these three intellectual disciplines that are, in their history, deeply intertwined and that now, and going forward, have much to offer one another. Their motto is “advancing

PPE at every opportunity.” More than 150 professors and graduates students attended the inaugural PPE Society meeting. Their second annual meeting is scheduled for March of 2018.

--Leading PPE advocate and Duke political economist Michael Munger with other professors at Duke and North Carolina published through OUP a suggestive new PPE anthology. Mike Munger likes to say that PPE is an approach to unanswered questions. And that it is one way within the academy to problematize unquestioned answers.

--There is now an online PPE Network which connects scholars and academic organizations. It is also a network of workshops, interactive academic textbooks (authors, instructors & students), syllabi with curated content, communities and personal websites.

--ISI convenes once a year a seminar for faculty to introduce them to the idea of PPE and engage them over several days in “doing” PPE through readings across the three core subject areas.

5) ISI’s New IPPE Curriculum Project

- When discussing the development of a new PPE curriculum one logistical question is: do you want a major? It is a field of studies? Is it a certificate program or interdisciplinary minor? What is the fundamental organizing principle and how much can students absorb?
- Several factors influenced ISI’s decision to launch this spring a major new project: its Intercollegiate Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (IPPE) program. The centerpiece of the IPPE is a new curriculum that ISI will use in its educational programs as well as make available for transferrable credit and ultimately certification to a wider audience.
- According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, the U.S. is “in the midst of a credentials craze.” More than ever, colleges are recognizing independent certification programs. At the moment they tend toward vocational skills, technology and coding, business and finance. However, evidence suggests there is growing demand for high-quality humanities certification programs that can impart a valuable body of knowledge and counter mounting civic ignorance, negative learning, and deteriorating critical skills. Across the board, the popularity of short term certification programs is on the rise.
- The new IPPE program is an interdisciplinary, cost-effective, and flexible approach for students to receive a broad liberal arts education that prepares them to become leaders. We believe IPPE certification can become a valuable credential

and assist students in securing career positions in which they can make a difference. As the Brookings Institution noted earlier this year, many employers are concerned about grade inflation, often saying that college degrees are no longer reliable assurances of knowledge or competence. The IPPE program is designed to assuage these concerns by testing and certifying students' mastery of important core ideas.

- The centerpiece of the IPPE Program will be six courses that will be taught by prominent professors and policy experts through a combination of online courses and traditional ISI on-campus conferences. **The subject areas are: Philosophy and the Good Life, Philosophy and the Utopian Temptation, The Roots of American Constitutionalism, American Constitutionalism and Its Critics, How Markets Work, and Economics and the Pursuit of Happiness.** We have received enthusiastic feedback on these courses from more than 150 experienced educators. One comment I received was especially on point: "Our young people are tired of having their time wasted on whatever flavor of 'Indignation Studies' happens to have caught the fancy of the professoriate this year. Students yearn for readings of substance, and questions of enduring importance." This is exactly what ISI has always aimed to deliver.
- And so throughout this curriculum students will study the "greats" with a modern focus: Plato and Aristotle, John Stuart Mill and C. S. Lewis, Edmund Burke and Solzhenitsyn, Magna Carta and the Federalist Papers, Tocqueville and Lincoln, Adam Smith and Friedrich Hayek among many, many others.
- As the first step toward the creation of the full IPPE program ISI designed a new online course on "How Markets Work." It is now in a pilot phase the goal of which is to produce a focus group course experience that will garner for ISI feedback needed to scale the full online program for delivery to hundreds of students.
- It will begin with a group of twenty-five students engaging in five weeks of online coursework. The online content will include 55 high-quality produced original videos and will be structured as an experiment that will not only allow us to solicit feedback from a variety of students at strategic campuses, but will also provide useful data for future decisions about the ways in which the program can scale up.
- ISI is already assembling a consortium of colleges and universities committed to help leverage the IPPE program on campuses nationwide. Three colleges have agreed to offer some or all of ISI's PPE courses for transferrable credit. New online majors are being created based on the ISI PPE curriculum. We are also working toward developing IPPE conferences from one to six weeks in duration.

- ISI will also create a resource to link its PPE alumni with potential employers and related opportunities. We are truly at the beginning of this innovative curriculum project, but the potential for exponential growth in program participation is already evident.
- Today's students increasingly are looking for alternative programs that cap educational experiences with uniquely focused curricula that offer entry to a national network. Employers, too, are looking for innovative ways to validate knowledge and skills, and are seeking out new pipelines of talent capable of meeting the challenges of today's dynamic workplace. ISI anticipates that in the humanities space, its new PPE certification program will be a high-quality answer to that search.
- The time appears to be right. For as the *Chronicle of Higher Education* recently editorialized, "Colleges need to realize they are no longer the only gatekeepers of higher education." While the founder of the MOOC aggregator Class Central recently predicted that moving forward, "Credentials are what will be more sustainable. That's what the big providers feel. A lot of new courses that are coming up are part of a credential. They are not just random courses; they are part of something bigger." In our case, that something bigger is the new IPPE curriculum project. We believe it will be an effective way for students to engage the great inheritance of liberal learning, as well as to better understand and defend the West's tradition of constitutionalism and liberty under law...which is so much in need of renewal in our time.