Public Diplomacy - Theories and Practices

IPS 214; Spring 2019

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Course Description

We hear a lot about public diplomacy these days. In South Korea, it is probably one of the most trending international relations terms together with soft power and smart power. With the vision of “fascinating the world with Korea’s charm”, the government has launched its 5-Year Public Diplomacy Plan (2017-2021). The action plans for the year 2018 included over 700 projects worth 410 billion won.

So, what is public diplomacy? Is it just one of those buzzwords that come and go? Or do we have a good reason to seriously investigate what it is all about?

The purpose of diplomacy is to advance national foreign policy goals by influencing the dispositions and behaviors of other countries. To this end, public diplomacy engages private individuals in foreign countries. The underlying expectation is that public opinion matters; changing the way their people think would subsequently change the behaviors of foreign governments.

Viewed this way, there seems nothing new about public diplomacy; governments have long reached out to foreign publics with the purpose of influencing their thoughts. Even in ancient Greece diplomacy was open and public that envoys required polished public speaking skills to contend in the agora. Public diplomacy is actually as old, if not older than traditional diplomacy.

Some suggest we need to distinguish “new” public diplomacy from the old top-down public diplomacy whereby government leaders or their envoys distribute information to foreign publics. New public policy has a more horizontal structure. Individuals and non-state organizations (e.g., universities, NGOs), sponsored by the government or independently, reach out to foreign publics with the purpose of influencing. Others highlight how new technologies revitalize and transform public diplomacy. According to Burson Cohn & Wolfe (BCW), one of the largest global communications agencies, at least 97 percent of all 193 UN member states are active on Twitter or practicing what they call twiplomacy.

This course is uniquely designed to introduce students to both scholarly and practitioners’ views on the trending issue of public diplomacy. The course consists of three parts.

Part I includes a series of seminars where students read and discuss the scholarly literature on public diplomacy. Public diplomacy, as Oxford Bibliographies puts it, is a multidisciplinary field of study “with little in the way of a theoretical body and uniform definition”. Rather than seeking a grand theory or a one-size-fits-all definition of public policy, students are encouraged to explore its varied motivations, applications, and outcomes utilizing a range of social science theories and research methods.
The seminars in Part I prepare students for the guest lecture sessions in which they are expected to be a critical and engaging audience. In Part II, specialists in South Korea’s public diplomacy are invited to share their perspectives with students. In Part III, public diplomacy officers in selected embassies in Seoul share their countries’ public diplomacy strategies and practices with students.

Course Schedule

Part I. Seminars

- Week 1. Introduction
- Week 2. What is Public Diplomacy?
- Week 3. Does and When Does Public Diplomacy Work?

Part II. South Korea’s Public Diplomacy

- Weeks 5-7. Guest Lectures
- Week 8. No Class (Midterm’s Week; Midterm Essay Due)

Part III. Lessons from Other Countries

- Weeks 9-12. Guest Lectures

Part IV. Presentations

- Weeks 13-15. Group Presentations
- Week 16. No Class (Final’s Week; Group Paper Due)

Assessment

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<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Weight (% of Grade)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Memos on Course Readings (Part I)</td>
<td>5*2=20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Essay (Part II)</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Group Presentation + Group Paper (Part III)</td>
<td>20+20=40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation throughout the course</td>
<td>10</td>
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