




# Teaching controversial issues

## Case Study: Immigration

Steve Hurd  
Copenhagen, August 2004



## A plea for the teaching of Political Economy...

There are many important social issues that can be addressed using the tools of economics and the social sciences:

- Global warming and environment
- Energy and transport
- Education and health
- Welfare and redistribution

Economics teachers can help to ensure that such topics are treated in non-trivial ways.

Let's use International Migration as an example...

# We need to make sense of conflicting messages

Denmark's immigration law  
We're full up too

## Economic migrants threaten EU's future, warns commiss

COPENHAGEN  
The Danes say other Europeans may copy their immigration rules. Really?

THE FLOW of economic migrants is a time bomb ticking the European Union, its new Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner warned yesterday.

By Nuala Mearns  
Home Affairs Correspondent

her states to work more closely to stem the numbers of refugees heading to the EU. "People seek refuge in the EU for economic reasons in a growing problem. It's a time

bomb," he said. He said the EU states had to agree entry and to developing nations to end the flow of refugees, and backed a German proposal to set up migrant "holding centres" in countries such as Tunisia or Libya, distancing fears that they

could infringe human rights. "We have to ask moral questions. To establish the concept that would take in immigrants... to offer them humanitarian aid and information about job opportunities in Europe," he said. "But they would also develop

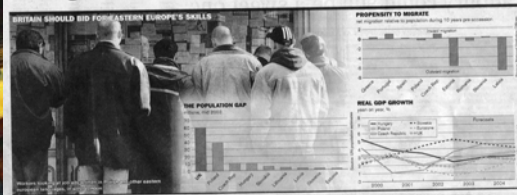
identity and send back those who don't meet criteria or who would not be able to integrate in any way."

Mr. Berlusconi said the idea of a police force to patrol the EU's borders should be examined. "We have to look at it."

who has to face from a decision that wants to kill them in a forced asylum. But there are also cultural factors that some people don't have a longer to return to. Look at the situation in Africa. What can be done about them? We have to look at it."

Europe

## Immigrants may bring growth with them to UK



The European Union and immigration  
Huddled masses, please stay away

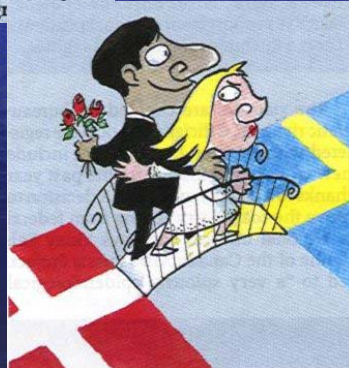
# Scandinavian love and marriage

Danish immigration laws

## Love bridge to Sweden

COPENHAGEN AND MALMO

One consequence of Europe's toughest immig



# Teaching controversial issues: a simple model

**1. Find out student pre-conceptions:** family, cultural and peer group influences.

**2. Formalise the issues in neutral language:** in economic, social and political terms.

**3. Introduce abstract concepts and tools of analysis:** evaluate theory and evidence.

**4. Re-connect to the wider reality:** of everyday life.

## Immigration: student pre-conceptions

- Immigrants are coming as a flood
- Immigrants are different from "us"
- Immigrants are the cause of unemployment, crime...
- Immigrants strain social welfare and are a drain on the economy
- Why do they come here?
- Immigrants are potential terrorists

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## Immigration: formalising the questions in neutral language

- How many immigrants are there?
- Why do people migrate?
- Why do they come here?
- How does immigration affect the national budget?
- How does it affect wages and unemployment
- What is the effect on economic growth?
- Can we have too many people?
- How will immigration affect the provision of state welfare?
- Distinguish the economic, social and political effects?
- Are there implications for international policies?
- Does it matter who the immigrants are (Do cultural and religious differences matter?)

## Immigration: identifying relevant abstract concepts and theories

- Wages and the labour market
- International trade analysis – goods and factor flows
- Migration theory – Todaro
- Theory of economic growth – Solow
- Social and political theories...

# Immigration: re-connecting to wider reality

We need to discuss with our students:

- Which of their initial questions have been answered?
- Have their attitudes towards immigration changed?
- What issues are still of concern? Distinguish “real” from “imagined” fears.
- What more do they want to learn?
- Are there ways of connecting to the community at large
  - conducting interviews in the community/ with politicians, links with immigrant organisations...

## Implications for teachers

- We now live in multi-cultural societies and need to adapt our teaching to the needs of all groups within it.
- Developing empathy and respect for diversity.
- Economics needs to be taught from a global perspective.



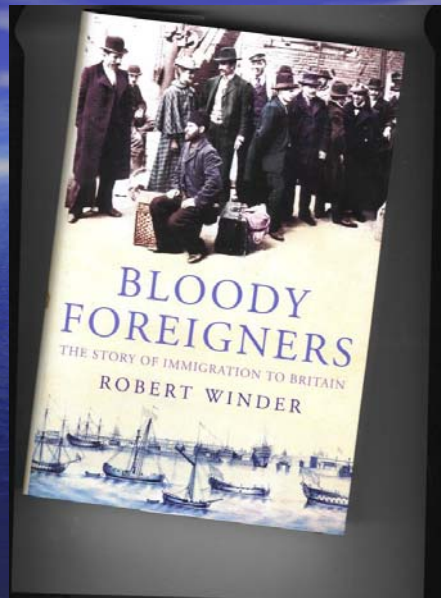
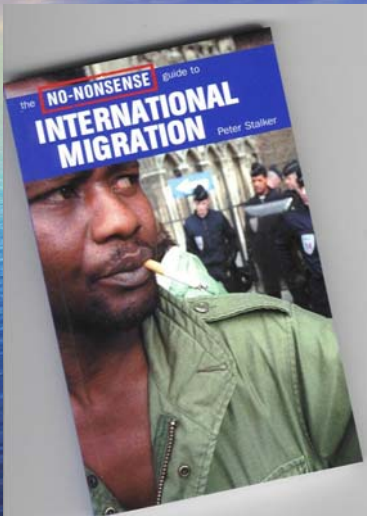


# Contributions of UK immigrants

- 17<sup>th</sup> Century** – Huguenots from France – brought textiles, hat, paper and clock making skills
- 18<sup>th</sup> Century** – Dutch Protestants, Hanoverians from Germany, Jews from N. and E. Europe – optics, artists, architects, brokers, merchants.
- 19<sup>th</sup> Century** – German migrants established chemical industry (ICI), electrical engineering (GEC), soft drinks (the Swiss Schwappe), power stations, banking (incl. Hambro from Denmark), + many German academics and the Irish/Italian Marconi.
- 20<sup>th</sup> Century** – Jewish scientists, academics and entrepreneurs (Marks & Spencer, Burton, Moss Bros, Lyons, Granada). New Commonwealth immigration – West Indies, India, Pakistan – workers on buses, health service, factories plus culture, music and culinary changes. Uganda Asians – entrepreneurs and professionals.
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century** – asylum for Somalis, Iranians, Afghans, Iraqis, S. Africans (600,000). Economic migrants from Eastern Europe.

**Second language speaking children perform well in UK schools.  
Indian children are the highest performing group in schools.**

## Sources



When teaching controversial issues  
what values and attitudes should  
teachers be promoting?

- Respect for evidence
- Rationality and efficiency
- Empathy and fairness/equity
- Sense of community and nationhood
- Global perspective
- Ecological perspective (Gaia?)

Values apply here too...



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