

Reverse Engineering the Canon

: Post-colonialism in philosophy and an analysis on the canon of East Asian (Korean, Chinese, Japanese) Universities

2021 HONOR'S PROGRAM

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Case Study: Collecting syllabi of modern philosophy courses in East Asian universities to analyze the remaining aspects of the 'traditional' canon

13 different universities



北京大学
PEKING UNIVERSITY



서울대학교
SEOUL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY



東京大学
THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO

= total of 41 syllabi

1) the percentage of Western, male philosophers that were taught in the *introductory courses* of philosophy.

2) domination of the '*big seven*' in courses of Western philosophy

Sub-Research Questions

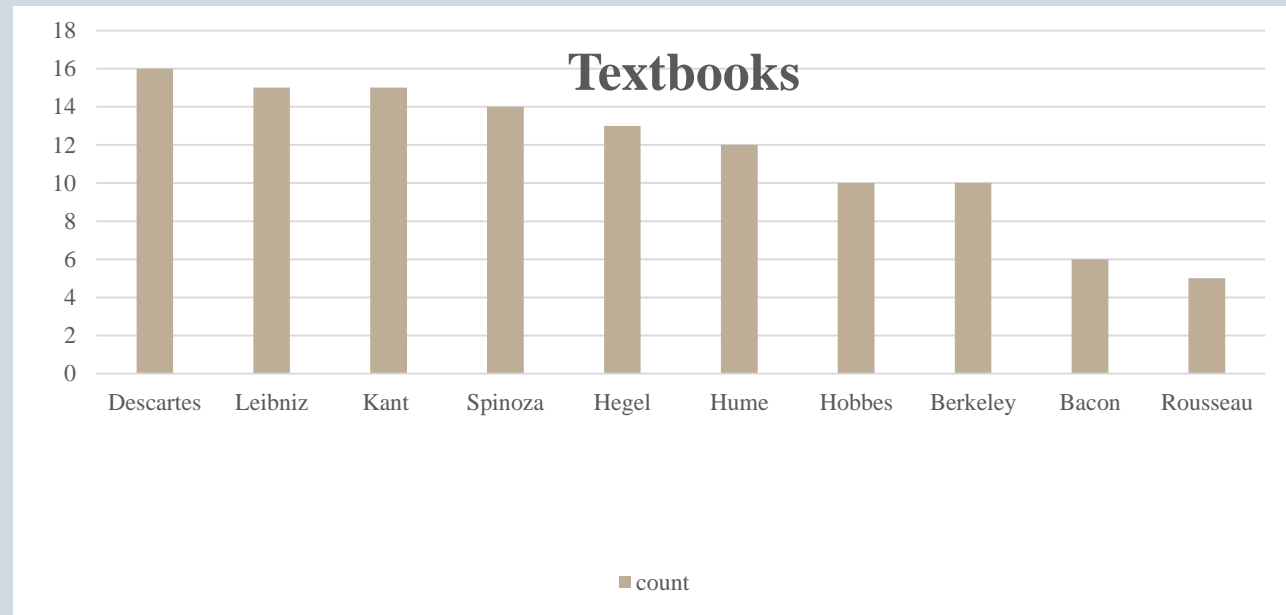
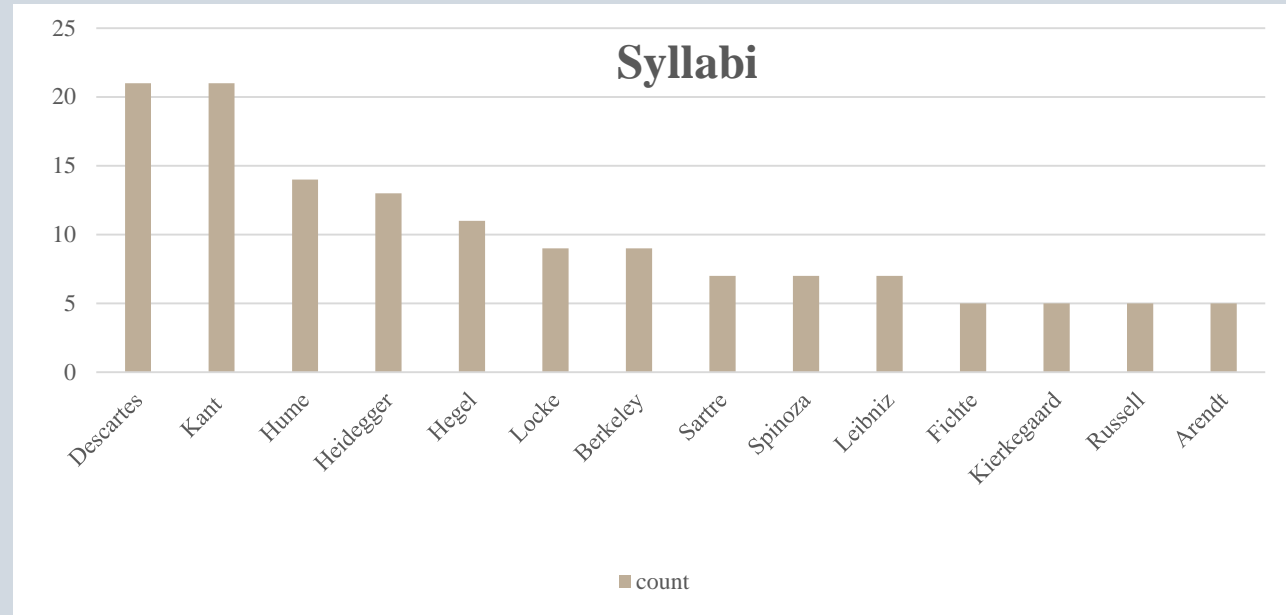
*The 'Big Seven'
(Beany)*

Descartes
Kant
Hume
Locke
Leibniz
Berkeley
Spinoza

1. Who are the philosophers who are mentioned more than 5 times?
2. Are there any unique patterns or variants?
3. What is the ratio between Western and Eastern philosophers?
4. Are there any examples of important/useful post-colonial suggestions to the traditional canon of philosophy?



Results



Results

- ✓ **0** modern eastern philosophers in introductory courses
- ✓ **'big seven'** (or big sixteen) philosophers applicable (Hegel high-ranked)
- ✓ Only **two** female 'modern' philosophers
 - Arendt (five times in syllabi) & Beauvoir (once in textbook)

Discussions and Suggestions

The **restrictive definition** of
'philosophy' itself?

"a priori construction in historical
writing"

Power imbalance between East and
West / neocolonialism / one-way flow

Stereotype on Eastern philosophy (as
simply religious or therapeutic)

Can East Meet West as Intellectual Equals? Insights from
Some Western Thinkers' Encounter with Eastern Thought

Ming Dong Gu

Philosophy East and West, Volume 71, Number 2, 2021, pp. 326-347 (Article)

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“include wider range of intellectual traditions to increase quality of philosophical thought ”
- Bryan Van Norden

**Confucianism
Buddhism**



different strands/schools
depending on context
: neo-Confucianism
(Yangmingism, Confucius
philology, Song-Ming neo-
Confucianism, or Silhak)

: East Asian Buddhism in
feminist context
(dr. Jin Y. Park)

