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Birmingham Teaching Heroes: Luis Cabrera

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Luis's research explores issues of human rights, severe poverty and democratic citizenship in the modern world. His most recent book, The Practice of Global Citizenship (Cambridge University Press 2010), investigates the universal human duties that correspond to individual rights, including possible duties to help transform or create rights-protecting global institutions.

He has conducted extensive field work to support his ethical claims, including amongst unauthorised immigrants and activists in the United States, Mexico and Western Europe, and most recently amongst activists in India demanding global human rights recognition for dalit persons (former untouchables).

My name is Luis Cabrera, I'm a Reader in Political Theory at the University of Birmingham in the Department of Political Science and International Studies.

I like to think about research impact in two ways. I'm a political theorist so a lot of the questions I'm dealing with – global democracy, European integration, the ethics of immigration – have long term answers and you're looking at long term impact there. I'm also a part of a group, a global network of academics called Academics Standing Against Poverty and that's all about impact in the immediate term.

One thing I love about the kind of research that I'm able to do is that I'm always able to bring it into the classroom, so I'll go out and actually do interviews. I'm always looking for arguments in their lived contexts and those sorts of things, you can bring those directly into the classroom – videos, photos, quotations – I think it really helps liven things up and bring home the political theory arguments for the students.

The thing I really appreciate about being at Birmingham is that it's at the centre of so many things. We get high level politicians coming through here, Ambassadors from all around the world and we also have a lot of research here that's really on the cutting edge in just about any discipline you can name. So I think in terms of intellectual vibrancy it's a really wonderful place to be.

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