

Recommended Reading for College and University Teaching

Please note: the titles and annotations listed here represent my short list of recommendations. These titles have had a profound impact on how I think about teaching, and I want to share them with you because they are worthwhile given demands on our time. If you find some suggestions "dated", please realize that as a historian, I reject the notion that only the most recent publications are the most worthwhile. Do not allow the tyranny of timeliness to discount some of the titles below. As time passes, this list will evolve. *LMSB – July 2010*

Angelo, Thomas, and Patricia K. Cross. *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993.

How do we know students are learning? Course and assignment grades are one means of measuring student learning. Yet, course and assignment grades provide limited though essential feedback. How can we know whether or not students are learning during the instructional process? Angelo and Cross provide numerous useful techniques to assess student learning that do not involve grading and offer immediate feedback on the effectiveness of instruction and student learning. The steps for each "CAT" and scenarios allow instructors to visualize how to utilize these assessment techniques.

Bain, Robert. "Into the Breach: Using Research and Theory to Shape History Instruction." In *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives*. Eds. Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Wineburg, 331- New York: New York University Press, 2000, 331-352.

Bain brings together the experience of teaching high school history with the advanced study of educational psychology and history. He shares how he introduced the nature of historical knowledge to his students during the academic year. In doing so, he was able to get his high school students to think about history as something more than a series of facts to be memorized. While Bain speaks about high school history teaching, his ideas will help those of use who teach at the university level.

Bean, John C. *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001.

If there is only one book that you have time to read, this might be the one! Bean provides concise analysis of why we should use formal and informal writing assignments to promote thinking, how to deal with issues of grammar, how to grade effectively, and countless examples from a variety of disciplines that you can adapt to your teaching. When this volume came out, blogging, wikis, etc were not yet around, so Bean's suggestions regarding email as a form of communication will seem outdated.

Fink, L. Dee. *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

"What is the distinctive educational impact you would like for your teaching and your courses to have on your students?" How we answer this essential question posed by Fink should determine what we teach and how. Fink argues persuasively against the "coverage-based" model of designing a university syllabus. For example, in a survey Western Civilization history course, we should not design our syllabi around the chapters, but around what deep learning we want to

occur. What do we want our students to remember from our course in one, two, or five years? Why do we want them to know? While some historians believe that certain facts about the past are essential to know, our students will quickly forget them if we do not give them a significant reason for knowing. Fink is worth studying and complements Zull, Bean, Walvoord, and Anderson.

Walvoord, Barbara E., and Virginia Johnson Anderson. *Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment in College*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.

In the context of this book, grading is not simply assigning a letter to student work, it can be used to communicate expectations, help us define our learning goals, construct assignments, and shape our syllabus. In this very readable, step-by-step instruction, Walvoord and Anderson illustrate how we can establish criteria for grading, how grading can create "teachable moments," how we can make grading more time efficient, and how we can use grading to improve our teaching.

Wineburg, Sam. *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.

Wineburg has studied how high school students learn history, a.k.a. historical cognition. While his sampling of students is rather limited, his findings will strike a familiar chord with your own experiences. In the process of examining how history is taught and learned, Wineburg also advocates best practices. While Wineburg's study focuses on high school aged students, his findings are quite relevant to higher education, especially the undergraduate population. Think about it, most freshmen are only three months out of high school.

Zull, James. *The Art of Changing the Brain: Enriching the Practice of Teaching by Exploring the Biology of Learning*. Stylus: Sterling, Virginia: 2002.

Zull defines and describes the learning cycle that we all experience when we learn. Avoiding academic jargon, Zull clearly demonstrates how knowledge of the learning cycle has implications for how we teach. He will get you to ponder what is essential to create a learning environment for your students.