

Books to Enhance Your Teaching Life

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On some days teaching is glorious and uplifting, on others it is a matter of teacher survival, and on still others it is tedious and repetitive. As is true of any teacher, teachers of psychology need to know a great deal—content, classroom techniques, their teaching goals, the importance of and how to connect with their students, and a perspective on academe—if they are to offer the best education they can. Thankfully there is a great deal written—with wide and varied focus and content—about the teaching of psychology and teaching in general to assist new (and experienced) teachers.

Good teachers read regularly to know where to look when a teaching problem arises, to enhance their teaching, or simply to refresh their pedagogical souls. In this chapter, I suggest some of the best of academic books with which to begin building a professional library. All are “must” reads but note that some do not describe classroom teaching techniques. There is much more to quality teaching than honing one’s classroom skills. My hope is that one or two books will interest you. I have an annotated reading list of many more books to which you are welcome. Simply let me know of your interest (Perlman@uwosh.edu).

A Few of the Best

The Academic Life: Small Worlds, Different Worlds (Clark, 1987). A classic book and the last time faculty spoke in their own voices about the world of the faculty member. This book captures the academic profession better than any other I know.

Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher (Brookfield, 1995). Anything Stephen Brookfield writes is worth reading. An informed and perceptive book on the need for teachers to be reflective practitioners of what it is they value and do. Brookfield (and Parker Palmer,

see below) will force you to think about what teaching is and what you value in your teaching more than anyone you will read.

Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers (2nd ed.) (Angelo & Cross, 1993). This handbook describes a multitude of ways teachers can obtain feedback from their students. It also guides assessment of their teaching and of student learning through observation, collection of data, and the design of experiments. The goal is to learn more about how students learn and how they respond to particular teaching approaches.

The Courage to Teach (Palmer, 1998). Parker Palmer takes teachers on an inner journey toward reconnecting with their vocation and their students—and recovering their passion for one of the most difficult and important of human endeavors, teaching. Palmer guides us through the work of teaching to help us create communities of learning, calling on educational institutions to support teachers in this work.

Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment (Walvoord & Anderson, 1998). The book examines the link between teaching and grading. It uses grades as part of the process that provides rich information about student learning. The book is more valuable, useful, and interesting than my description can convey.

Faculty in New Jobs: A Guide to Settling In, Becoming Established, and Building Institutional Support (Menges, 1999). Based on a study of faculty in their first three years of teaching at five different types of institutions, this book contains wonderful chapters on mentoring, faculty of color, recruitment, and stress. The book raises a series of questions invaluable to anyone involved with improving the quality of recruiting and retaining good young faculty, and in building a quality institution.

Handbook for Enhancing Undergraduate Education in Psychology (McGovern, 1993). This book is an excellent resource for faculty development. It contains contributions on topics such as curriculum assessment, promoting active learning, student advising, faculty development and networking, and transforming undergraduate education for the 21st century.

Lessons Learned: Practical Advice for the Teaching of Psychology (Volumes 1 and 2) (Perlman, McCann, & McFadden, 1999, 2004). These books present the *Teaching Tips* columns appearing in the *APS Observer* since 1994. They contain content on a wide variety of teaching issues and techniques: steps in a teacher's life, course planning, using technology, in-class skills, themes across psychology courses, writing, tests and grading, student and faculty integrity, and enhancing student performance and participation.

McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers (11th ed.) (McKeachie, 2002). The book presents issues and techniques most relevant to beginning teachers to methods and issues likely to be of more concern after teachers have gotten beyond the difficult, immediate problems of starting their teaching.

Moo (Smiley, 1995). An imaginary university such as Wisconsin State University (it does not exist but it should) with the chancellor's secretary running the institution and a pig as one of the novel's protagonists. Sounds like academe, doesn't it? If it does not, you have not worked in a college or university long enough.

Peer Review of Teaching: A Sourcebook (Chism, 1999). The best book on peer review written to date. An excellent treatment of the process with a variety of forms and ideas in the appendices to add structure and reliability to the process.

Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate (Boyer, 1990). The term scholarship typically refers to research, but Boyer suggests an expanded definition of *scholarship* to include the scholarship of teaching. He describes the dependence of collegiate instruction on scholarship in a manner that appreciates the strengths of American higher education and shows how to use these strengths to improve it. This book began the renewed emphasis on teaching in higher education.

Straight Man (Russo, 1998). A Pulitzer Prize winning author writes about higher education with an insightful depiction of middle age for men. The protagonist is an English department chair in a poor state university. Who will be the next department chair, will the

budget ever come, and will the ducks be murdered or survive? Stay tuned. Perhaps the best fiction ever written about academe!

The Teaching of Psychology: Essays in Honor of Wilbert J. McKeachie and Charles L. Brewer (Davis & Buskist, 2002). A wonderful book with a wide variety of chapters useful for and interesting to the novice and experienced teacher alike. The book emphasizes essential qualities and skills of effective teachers, teaching within the context of modern academic life, teaching with technology, teaching about psychology's domains, and has a wonderful conclusion with two chapters, one written by Dr. McKeachie and the other by Dr. Brewer.

The Teaching Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Improved Performance and Promotion/Tenure Decisions (3rd ed.) (Seldin, 2004). A hands-on look at the why, what, and how of preparing and successfully using the portfolio. It includes the differences between portfolios for personnel decisions and portfolios for teaching improvement, as well as descriptions of how 10 different institutions use portfolios.

Tools for Teaching (Davis, 1993). The aim of this book is to encourage faculty to become more aware of how they teach, how they might teach more effectively, and to provide them with the tools for doing so. As a reference book, it consists of 49 tools organized into 12 sections representing the key teaching responsibilities and activities of college instructors.

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