

## Learning from Each Other: Refining the Practice of Teaching in Higher Education

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As faculty seek more effective learning and teaching practices, several disciplines have taken a “turn to reflective pedagogy” in recent years. *Learning from Each Other: Refining the Practice of Teaching in Higher Education* makes a substantive contribution to pedagogical practice in the discipline of sociology; this book is the result of workshops sponsored by the international honor society for the discipline. Contributors reflect a wide range of institutional types, teaching contexts, and research areas.

Following a brief introduction by the editors, the book is divided neatly into four parts: curricular innovations, classroom techniques, out-of-class situations, and assessment. Each chapter treats theory and strategy; this combination assures that topics are discussed with sufficient depth and adequate breadth of coverage across the discipline. References are included at the end of each chapter and the book closes with a useful index. Four of the twenty-one chapters in this book will be given attention here.

“Courting Controversy and Allowing for Awkward: Strategies for Teaching Difficult Topics,” by Mari Plikuhn, offers sound guidance applicable to any number of classroom discussions and contexts. The chapter addresses controversial content as well as classroom space; it includes helpful strategies for class structure and management. In “Becoming a Culturally Inclusive Educator,” Dena R. Samuels provides a guided sequence of practical steps for faculty engagement in this “transformative process” (203). The reader is encouraged to consider carefully the question of preparedness before working through the eight steps in this process. “The Value of Games and Simulations in the Social Sciences,” by Amanda M. Rosen, assesses the use of this active-learning strategy in a clear way. Rosen weighs barriers and incentives before addressing best practices. Finally, “Putting the Student at the Center: Contemplative Practices as Classroom Pedagogy,” by Tracey Wenger Sadd, supplies a succinct discussion of goals, outcomes, practices, and assessment of contemplative pedagogy. The chapter concludes with considerations and questions for determining the application of this pedagogy.

Instructors in Religious Studies and Theology are fortunate that these disciplines are strong in SOTL (scholarship of teaching and learning). These disciplines have a robust infrastructure for engaging in workshops, colloquies, and grant work to strengthen critical reflection on pedagogy. It is telling that instructors in these disciplines continue to produce and contribute highly impactful work on pedagogical research and practice that informs the national discourse. For this reason, there is much to be gained from this book. Discrete chapters may arouse interest in current trends, common questions, and shared efforts. Furthermore, attention to alternative perspectives on recurrent challenges and concerns distinct to a discipline can raise awareness. Finally, the recognition that higher education is growing ever more interdisciplinary makes this an opportune time to reflect on learning and teaching as a collaborative enterprise.