

Best Practices for Flipping the College Classroom

Waldrop, Julee B. and Bowdon, Melody A., eds.
Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016

Book Review

Tags: Bloom's taxonomy | course design | flipped classroom | teaching strategies

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I have a confession to make: I have flipped my courses and agree with Waldrop and Bowdon that using lecture classes as a control in future experiments is probably unethical.
On one hand, lectures are ethically questionable. On the other, lectures are essential. So much depends on the details. Personal style, class size, topic *du jour*, student readiness to explore topics, and so forth. A lecture is necessary in order to deliver particular skills and concepts.
In the flipped learning model, educators are more important than ever and teaching can be even more demanding. This is where *Best Practices for Flipping the College Classroom* speaks to instructors in higher education. The editors have gathered strategies "across a broad spectrum of academic disciplines, physical environments, and student populations.... [in the] hope that this book will inspire further research in other disciplines" (12).

Chapters are case studies, with each course described in terms of format, enrollment, instructor's strategies, and research methods. Each chapter ends with practical suggestions. The disciplines include chemistry and calculus (chapters 2, 3), nursing and psychology (chapters 4, 6), history and economics (chapters 5, 8). A marketing course is covered in chapter 7 and a creativity class in chapter 9. The case studies are bookended by a helpful Introduction, "Joining the Flipped Classroom Conversation" (chapter 1), and two closing chapters: "Student Practices and Perceptions" (chapter 10) and "Conclusion: Reflecting on the Flipping Experience" (chapter 11).

Katherine Sauer's description of her work in her microeconomics classroom (chapter 8) is of particular interest. What she does in her discipline informs and echoes much of what I do as a professor of religious studies. Her fundamental question is simply this: "In order to help my students learn, what is the best use of my face-to-face time with them?" (112).

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Sauer provides a worksheet to help instructors identify course learning outcomes, intermediate objectives, key terms, and ideas. She also notes the importance of reading guides and careful development of "pre-class materials" (homework assignments in its many forms, from readings to videos to screencasts). Students come to class prepared for work. It is her contention that prepared students are incentivized; students use their completed reading guides (notes!) for success with short quizzes at the very beginning of class. While she does not explicitly reference Bloom's Taxonomy, she pushes lower levels of the taxonomy (such as quiz content) outside the classroom. She uses class time for activity that is identified by upper levels of the taxonomy: application, analysis, evaluation, and creation. The result is that more material gets covered. Students spend more time outside of class with the material, students arrive prepared, and the class as a whole is ready for work. The classroom becomes a lab (my word, not hers) for active learning through critical thinking, collaboration, and reflection. Students are "primed," instruction is spontaneous and relevant, and instructors think on their feet.

The conclusion (chapter 11) provides the authors' perspectives on key issues: (1) motivations for flipping, (2) favorite techniques and strategies, (3) motivating students to prepare for class, (4) benefits, challenges, and rewards, and (5) types of support needed. The editors wrap up with final words of advice (151-154). This could serve as both a helpful reference and "go to" guide for flipping a classroom. They write, "prepare to be impressed with what your students produce" (154). Flipping a classroom is not for the faint of heart, but it will enliven your teaching and put you in good company.

https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/book_reviews/best-practices-for-flipping-the-college-classroom/

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