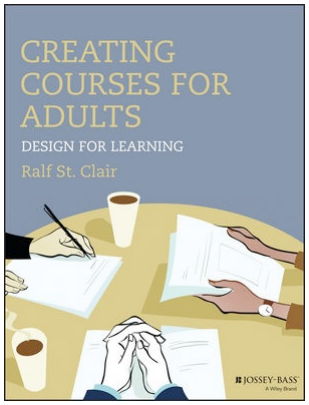


Creating Courses for Adults: Design for Learning

St. Clari, Ralf
Wiley, 2015

Book Review

Tags: course design | learning theories | online course design

Reviewed by: Merrill Hawkins, *Carson - Newman College*
Date Reviewed: July 15, 2016

Ralf St. Clair's instructive book on designing courses will provide helpful guidance to new professors and a meaningful review to those seasoned in the classroom, along with some potentially new material for those veterans. Divided into ten well-defined chapters, *Creating Courses for Adults* walks readers through the learning theory associated with the adult student population, as well as the practical logistics of designing different kinds of courses for different adult populations. The array of courses discussed range from online for credit instruction to non-credit onsite education for trade school students. Taking seriously the role and the needs of the professor and not just the students, St. Clair begins with a welcomed and affirming chapter, "All About You," which includes a very helpful section entitled, "Why Who You Are and What You've Done Matters." While this book accepts that teaching is about the students, the author accepts the often unappreciated fact that teaching is also about the needs of the professors, who feel a sense of vocation to this work.

St. Clair operates out of the helpful notion that "nobody is an intuitive or completely natural teacher" (page xii), a claim that will challenge seasoned instructors to continue to plan and will encourage new professors with their often unarticulated sense of intimidation. Several chapters are especially rich in what they provide the planning process. Chapter three, "Context Drives Design," makes distinctions among formal learning, non-formal learning, and informal learning. Adult learners may bring previous experience in formal learning to the classroom, since formal learning is education that leads to a diploma or certificate. They will certainly bring experience in non-formal learning, such as that experienced in an open-ended group, and informal learning, which refers to learning achieved through everyday activities. In fact, the latter two learning experiences can so shape the approach to education of adult learners that it becomes difficult for them to embrace a world of formal learning, even if it is adult-education

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friendly. For this reason, teachers must give some thought in course design to preparing students for the particular educational context that the course provides.

St. Clair also offers helpful approaches to online learning. In addition to a useful bibliography of online course design material, St. Clair proposes that design issues in online education do not fundamentally differ from onsite education. Citing current literature that explains online course design, St. Clair concludes that the best literature provides questions for online course design that do not substantially differ from face-to-face education. While acknowledging that his conclusion will not be universally accepted, St. Clair nonetheless provides an affirmation that online education can be informed by the same theoretical approaches that guide other forms of education.

Readers wanting an accessible approach to course design, grounded in both theory and application, will find St. Clair's *Creating Courses for Adults* to be valuable. The book belongs in the collection of any teaching and learning center of higher education for its content and its current bibliography.

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