



An Illinois Sampler: Teaching and Research on the Prairie

Winkelmes, Mary-Ann; and Burton, Antoinette, eds. with Mays, Kyle
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Book Review

Tags: critically reflective teaching | student learning | teaching methods

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While this book is dedicated to students, chapters showcase the dedication of professors to providing effective learning formats in diverse fields. *An Illinois Sampler: Teaching and Research on the Prairie* highlights teaching methods at the University of Illinois that can be applied elsewhere. It would be an excellent book for a new professor, including one looking for field opportunities for their students. The nineteen chapters are very short, but in essence provide quickly consumable case studies of everything from inmate education and research abroad to flipped classrooms and the standard lecture format. It would work well for a small group discussion of education students who could read it together while in session. Topics for small group discussion could include holistic education, teaching from the sciences and humanities, and student-centered learning.

Higher education administrators might also appreciate an overview of some of the programs at the University of Illinois. However, these chapters are just glimpses of the authors' insights; some readers might need to pursue further research. Examples like Rosu's highlights of the iFoundry program created by the engineering faculty and Denofrio-Corrales and Lu's innovative Chemistry and Biology of Everyday Life (CBEL) course structure organize around students' interests. Precisely how they do it could be the theme for another book. Instead of a recipe, we are given a taste of the passion and flavor of University of Illinois teaching practices.

This book is dedicated to students. The authors capture a learning environment that alumni and current students can be proud of, but the *Illinois Sampler* shows that across the spectrum,

the professors dedicate their work to their students. In pages of reflection by faculty in the humanities and sciences serving traditional and nontraditional students, teaching with traditional and nontraditional methods, *An Illinois Sampler* teaches what it means to teach: It is a statistics professor trying to make numbers lead to a better quality of life. It is a lecturer uncovering the living complexity of once simple fairy tales. It is an education behind bars professor who liberates minds. It is the professor learning from collaboration with their students, and reigniting a teaching passion for and by them.

This book acts as a sampler in its composition, moving from highlights in music to math to literature to science to dance. Unconventionally juxtaposed, one discipline does not outweigh the other. Everyone will be able to find something appealing in it because of the broad inclusion, and, readers will gain knowledge from perspectives across disciplines. It should also be noted that contributors “vary not only by expertise but also in age, gender, nationality, career stage, and even their position in the academic hierarchy” (ix). The real success of this book is the variety. *An Illinois Sampler* is both a recommended read and endeavor.

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