

SOME RESOURCES FOR REFLECTION ON TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Role of the Teacher

Parker Palmer, The Courage to Teach (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007, 10th Anniversary edition). *Palmer is the foremost exponent of introspection as a preparation for teaching, summed up in his assertion that “we teach who we are” (Courage, 1).*

Jay Parini, The Art of Teaching (New York & Oxford: OUP, 2005). *Parini, in a different vein, emphasizes that teachers consciously fabricate a “teaching persona” to achieve their pedagogical purposes. He summed up his position in a brief essay in The Chronicle of Higher Education, “Cultivating a Teaching Persona” (5 Sept. 1997, A92).*

Stephen D. Brookfield, Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995). *Brookfield’s book follows up on The Skillful Teacher and offers practical suggestions about treating one’s teaching as an object of reflection.*

Course Design

L. Dee Fink, Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003). *A hefty tome that can be daunting on first encounter, this can be dipped into for some good practical advice.*

Discussion

Donald Finkel, Teaching With Your Mouth Shut (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2000). *Short, savvy, and studded with effective examples. A good guide about how to structure discussion so that learning can occur. See also Stephen Brookfield and Stephen Preskill, Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).*

Carol Trosset, “Obstacles to Open Discussion and Critical Thinking: The Grinnell College Study,” Change 30 (September/October, 1998), 44-49. *Particularly good on student motivations for joining or not joining discussions, especially on sensitive topics.*

Writing

Elizabeth Rankin, The Work of Writing (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001). *Emphasizes writing as an act of joining an ongoing conversation; helpful suggestions about writing groups.*

Peter Elbow, Everyone Can Write (New York/Oxford: OUP, 2000). *One of the most prominent, and interestingly quirky, theoreticians of teaching writing. Interesting thoughts about “freewriting,” grading, and many other topics. See also his Embracing Contraries: Explorations in Teaching and Learning (New York/Oxford: OUP, 1986), which has interesting observations about evaluating teaching and his seminal essay on “Methodological Doubting and Believing.”*

General Accounts of Best Practices

Wilbert J. McKeachie & Marilla Svinicki, Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2011, 13th ed.). *Very widely used practical guide that has been continually updated.*

Ken Bain, What the Best College Teachers Do (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 2004). *Based on interviews and observations of teachers throughout the US. Emphasizes that effective teaching depends on the creation of a “natural critical learning environment” (p. 18)*

Barbara Walvoord, Teaching and Learning in College Introductory Religion Courses (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008). *Uses survey and qualitative data from both students and teachers and focuses on intro courses.*

Specific but Wide-Reaching Resources

The “AAR Teaching Series” marches on, with individual volumes devoted to teaching about Islam, Religion and Healing, Confucianism, etc.

Teaching Theology and Religion features essays on a wide range of topics, teaching “tips,” transcribed conversations, and reviews.

Spotlight on Teaching in the AAR’s online Religious Studies News features short essays on specific teaching topics.

www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu lots of resources, announcements of workshops and other programming, and access to syllabi.

http://www.aarweb.org/programs/Syllabus_Project/default.asp hundreds of syllabi classified by course topics.