

Reviews / Comptes rendus

Exploring More Signature Pedagogies: Approaches to Teaching Disciplinary Habits of Mind

edited by Nancy L. Chick, Aeron Haynie, and Regan A. R. Gurung
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Signature pedagogies are described by Shulman (2005) as the “pervasive” (p. 54) and “characteristic forms of teaching and learning” (p. 52) of a discipline. The Socratic method in philosophy, the studio method in art and design, and undergraduate laboratory research in chemistry are a few of the examples cited by the contributing chapter authors in *Exploring More Signature Pedagogies*. As a follow-up to their 2008 book on the same subject, Nancy Chick, Aeron Haynie, and Regan Gurung have delved even further into signature pedagogies with contributions from the humanities and fine arts, the social and natural sciences, and interdisciplinary programs. Non-traditional fields such as Ignatian pedagogy and disability studies are also included. Contributions from England, Ireland, and Australia also expand the scope of their original work. Acknowledging that signature pedagogies are most often associated with professional schools, the final part of the book examines those “types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions” (Shulman, 2005, p. 52) in occupational therapy, teacher education, social work, and nursing.

As an instructional designer in higher education, the concept of signature pedagogies has provided me with insight into the ways that instructors approach their teaching. In my experience, most professors prefer to teach in the way that they have been taught. But as Shulman (2005) cautions, signature pedagogies can lead to “rigidity” (p. 56)—to continuing to do things as they have always been done, whether they are useful or not. I specialize in designing courses for online learning and the vast majority of the professors I work with were not taught online. As I am always looking for innovative and effective ways to transfer what works in the classroom to the online environment—and this is no easy task, especially with instructors who have had little to no exposure in either learning online or teaching online—understanding how an instructor was trained in his or her discipline, what methods he or she has used in the classroom, and the underlying values of the discipline helps me to make the transition to online learning a more rewarding endeavour, filled with possibilities for the instructor and for the students. This is why I chose to review this book.

But *Exploring More Signature Pedagogies* is more than just an account of the teaching methods commonly used in a field. Each chapter author, grounded in the scholarship of teaching and learning of his or her discipline, critically appraises the signature pedagogy and its relevance. Embedded within each chapter, I discovered the author's reflection on disciplinary values, on his or her own teaching practices, and on the history of teaching in the discipline. Signature pedagogies are important: "They implicitly define what counts as knowledge in the field" (Shulman, 2005, p. 54). Most importantly, they are responsible for training future practitioners "to think, to act, and to perform with integrity" (Shulman, 2005, p. 52). In every field, knowledge is continually being created and refined. Practitioners and educators alike are required to make sense of this new knowledge, to respond appropriately to it, and to store it away or to integrate it carefully into their own practice to advance their field and the best interests of society. The contributing authors of *Exploring More Signature Pedagogies* grapple with many questions in their appraisal. They ask, for example, whether a signature pedagogy actually exists in their discipline and if so, what is it and what are its aims? For example, in "Relational Learning and Active Engagement in Occupational Therapy Professional Education," Patricia Schaber, Lauren Marsh, and Kimerly Wilcox state that in occupational therapy [OT] relational learning and active engagement are two of the signature pedagogies that provide "the philosophical underpinnings of the therapeutic approach ... for training OT students, who learn by doing" (p. 190).

If no clear signature pedagogy emerges, the authors also consider whether there should be one. For example, in "Signature Pedagogies in Political Science," Jeffrey L. Bernstein struggles with the notion of a signature pedagogy in political science for a number of reasons: the assumptions of uniformity it implies, the diversity of the content of the field leading to a diversity in teaching methods, and the fact that graduates are not being trained for a specific profession so there are no professional practice standards with which to guide the practice of teaching (pp. 89–90).

Some authors consider how students respond to the signature pedagogy and whether they are effective. For example, Steven Gravelle and Matthew A. Fisher conclude in "Signature Pedagogies in Chemistry" that emerging pedagogies based on scientific inquiry methods such as the Science Writing Heuristics and Process-Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning have the potential to help students start thinking like chemists earlier in their program of study; but they also admit that more research is needed (p. 119).

This work, in addition to the editors' preceding book on signature pedagogies, is a valuable source of information. It uncovers what disciplinary experts value in their field, and how and why they teach the way they do. An instructor who reads this book will be exposed to the signature pedagogies of other disciplines and, in turn, may be prompted to step back and try something new. The book also illustrates the broad range of work in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), the commonalities between and among disciplines, and the degrees of SoTL maturity within the disciplines. It has sparked my interest to learn more about signature pedagogies, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and their interrelationship.

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REFERENCES

Shulman, L. S. (2005). Signature pedagogies in the professions. *Daedalus*, 134(3), 52–59.