

Teaching Law by Design: Engaging Students from the Syllabus to the Final Exam

By Michael Hunter Schwartz, Sophie Sparrow, and Gerald Hess. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press (2009), 277 pages, ISBN: 9781594604973.

If you are new to the role of instructor and are looking for a short read offering some invaluable advice on how to be an effective teacher and how to create a successful course, look no further than this book. Although this book would be particularly useful for anyone new to teaching in the legal field, it also offers a wealth of information and resources for those with more experience. The authors are all law professors, each with years of teaching experience who are also actively involved in scholarship regarding teaching and learning in legal education.

As the subtitle of this book implies, the authors provide advice on a range of topics beginning with things that should be considered in designing a course, and things you should consider as you teach a course (how to motivate students, how to design effective assessments, how to structure a lecture, etc.)

This book covers important broad topic areas such as learning theories. For example, the authors begin by introducing the reader to the cognitive, constructivist, adult, and self-regulated learning theories. Each of these topics is covered in sufficient detail to quickly bring the reader up to speed in a way that is instantly useful without bogging them down with excessive detail.

In contrast to these broad areas of theory, the book also provides chapters with detailed discussions and practical advice on what makes teachers effective. For instance, it includes helpful information about how to create course goals and learning objectives, how to provide effective feedback to your students, and how to be an engaging teacher.

One of the biggest strengths of this book is its emphasis on the student perspective. The authors go into detail about what students want and expect from their instructors. Something as simple as, for example, using students' names, can have a significant positive impact on students' experiences in a course as the authors suggest.

This book also contains several appendices which include useful examples of many of the items addressed in the text such as: examples of course goals, syllabi, charts, sample assignments, rubrics, and much more.

Reviewed by Rob Beharriell, Research and Reference Librarian, Nova Southeastern University, in 2016.