

2006

Learning to Appreciate What Teachers Do: A Review of the Texts

Kay B. Meyers
Oral Roberts University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl_ched



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Meyers, Kay B. (2006). Learning to Appreciate What Teachers Do: A Review of the Texts. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education*, 1(1), 17-19. Retrieved from http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl_ched/vol1/iss1/6

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Showcase. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education by an authorized editor of Digital Showcase. For more information, please contact thorner@oru.edu.

**Learning to Appreciate What Teachers Do:
A Review of the Texts**

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education:
Contributions of Research Universities
Eds. William E. Becker and Moya L. Andrews.
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
338 pages. ISBN 0-253-34424-7. \$34.95.

Into the Classroom: Developing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
by Thomas Hatch. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006.
120 pages. ISBN 0-7879-8108-7. \$29.00.

Faith and Learning on the Edge:
A Bold New Look at Religion in Higher Education
by David Claerbaut. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
319 pages. ISBN 0-310-25317-9. \$22.99.

by Kay B. Meyers, Ph.D.

Like thousands of other people, when I earned a Ph.D. in my subject, the literature and research into that subject was what I considered “scholarship.” I started teaching in order to pass my love of literature on to a new generation, to have a captive audience with whom to discuss my love of literature, and to earn some money so I could continue talking, reading, and writing about literature. Twenty years later, I now realize that an enormous amount of scholarship that has very little to do with literature has gone into all that teaching. Except for an occasional conference presentation on some pedagogical issue, I never gave much thought as to *how* I taught for those 20 plus years, nor did I ever consider what I was doing to be part of a different body of scholarship—scholarship devoted to analyzing not only how professors teach but also what students are learning and how that learning is enhanced by the professor’s teaching.

Entering the world of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) as associate editor of the [*Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education \(SoTL-CHED\)*](#) has changed all that. Now I know that a large and growing body of scholarship exists in this field. I had always seen myself as rather isolated, struggling on my own to test new ideas about teaching, but the proliferation of SoTL materials makes it clear that I have many peers out there, and we all have much to learn from each other. Although, the three books reviewed here are only a fraction of the materials available on this exciting topic, I have chosen to review them because they are a good starting point for becoming familiar with SoTL.

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Contributions of Research Universities

This text is a compilation of essays edited by William E. Becker and Moya L. Andrews (2004). The selections are a collection of the best presentations given at a series of three SoTL conferences held at Indiana University. The selections cover a variety of disciplines, and the writers implement a number of approaches to writing about SoTL, ranging from strictly quantitative methodology to more subjective case studies and plain common sense. Lee Shulman (president of [The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching](#)) begins with a discussion of ways in which universities might offer support for SoTL. He offers “several visions of how things might look in higher education if campuses created organizational entities to support, preserve and enhance the scholarly work of teaching and learning” (p. 9).

Some of the scholars discuss their work in a variety of fields including history, computer science, math, biology, and undergraduate education, presenting excellent examples of quantitative research. Others present analyses of current issues in education such as controlling grade inflation, encouraging undergraduate research, and developing more accurate assessment tools for higher education. In general, this book presents excellent basic discussion and helpful models for anyone interested in getting involved in SoTL research.

Into the Classroom: Developing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

This text by Thomas Hatch (2006) is one of the newest SoTL studies. Its publication was supported by the [Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching](#), which holds the copyright, and Lee S. Shulman, a major force in the development of SoTL initiatives, contributed the book’s Foreword. Hatch is co-director of the [National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching](#) at Teachers College, Columbia University. The main focus of “Into the Classroom” is bringing SoTL into the K-12 classroom. Much of the discussion is theoretical, however, and, thus, applicable to all levels of teaching. As Shulman says in his foreword:

The scholarship of teaching and learning invites faculty at all these levels [K-12, undergraduate, or graduate and professional] to view teaching as serious, intellectual work, ask good questions about their students’ learning, seek evidence in their classrooms that can be used to improve practice, and make this work public so that others can critique it, build on it, and contribute to the wider teaching commons. (p. ix)

If college professors often feel isolated in their teaching, one can only imagine how K-12 teachers must feel, especially in many public schools where facilities are bad, pay is low, and respect for teachers is virtually non-existent. The concept of collegiality imbedded in SoTL seems particularly important for keeping good teachers in the profession and improving a failing public education system.

One especially helpful aspect of *Into the Classroom* is its logical arrangement from background explanation to general classroom applications to suggestions for dissemination of ideas on a universal scale. Chapters 1 and 2 present clear explanations of SoTL concepts and suggest ways in which teachers can learn to recognize their individual “challenges” and “opportunities for learning” from what they do in the classroom. Chapter 3 gives an excellent example of a quantitative study done by an elementary school teacher analyzing the success of various methods of English language development. Chapters 4 and 5 outline plans for taking

SoTL ideas to a larger arena—conference presentations, networking, and use of Internet technology.

Faith and Learning on the Edge: A Bold New Look at Religion in Higher Education

David Claerbaut's book *Faith and Learning on the Edge* (2004) could be extremely relevant to readers of *SoTL-CHEd*. Because the new journal's name includes the word "Christian" does not mean that the readers or authors published here must teach at Christian schools. In fact, one area of special interest to *SoTL-CHEd* is providing an outlet for Christians working in secular schools so that they can explain how their Christianity affects their work in a relativistic, postmodern setting. A second area of interest is combating the notion that Christian educators are limited in their scholarship, barred from true learning by a belief system that keeps them close-minded and fearful of others' ideas. These conflicts are at the heart of Claerbaut's book.

Beginning in Part One with an overview of secular humanist ideas and their infiltration of higher education, Claerbaut offers both personal experience and practical suggestions related to both issues, including discussions of major influences both Christian and secular. Some of his chapter titles offer provocative questions: "Christian Education or Baptized Paganism?" (pp.13-24); "How Does Christian Scholarship Fit into the Academic Mainstream?" (pp. 77-91); "Where Does Reason End and Faith Begin?" (pp. 115-124); and "What Are the Components of Faith and Learning?" (pp. 125-135).

In Part Two, Claerbaut presents practical applications of faith and learning in three academic areas: physical sciences, arts and humanities, and behavioral sciences. By carefully documenting his own scholarship throughout the book, Claerbaut illustrates his contention that Christian scholars are, indeed, scholars. He includes references to an impressive number of sources, both Christian-based and secular, and uses extensive Biblical citations. His work exemplifies the possibilities for combining faith and learning.

Dr. Meyers is an Associate Professor of English and Associate Director of the Honors Program at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa and is the faculty sponsor for Sigma Tau Delta, the national English honor society. She is also an associate editor of SoTL-CHEd. Her areas of special interest include literary theory, American literature (particularly from the late 19th century to World II), and Christian women writers. Having published articles and reviews on topics ranging from Jane Austen to literature of the Vietnam War, she is currently working on two book projects. The first concerns 19th century American women writers, such as Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, whose works were concerned with social problems—slavery, removals of Native American tribes, and conditions for factory workers. The second is a collection of works by Christian women writers, from Julian of Norwich to Annie Dillard. Dr. Meyers has a B.A. and an M.A. in English from the University of Oklahoma and a Ph.D. in English from the University of Tulsa. She can be reached at kmeyers@oru.edu.