



Teaching Concerns

Newsletter of the Teaching Resource Center for Faculty and Teaching Assistants

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Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College & University Teachers. (Ninth edition)

By Wilbert J. McKeachie, with chapters by Nancy Chism, Robert Menges, Marilla Svinicki, and Clare Ellen Weinstein. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1994.

Reviewed by Bill McAllister.

What do you do when the discussion becomes anemic? Do you ever have trouble keeping your students' attention throughout a long lecture? How does one prepare a new course or revise an old one? Looking for some new ideas concerning testing and evaluation? Is it possible to teach students how to think more critically? Is the University classroom the proper venue to inculcate values? Most importantly, wouldn't it be nice to have at your fingertips a single volume that dealt with such a wide variety of questions?

If you have room for only one pedagogical book on your shelf, it ought to be Wilbert McKeachie's *Teaching Tips*. Weighing in at an accessible 444 pages, this volume serves as a handy "ready reference tool" for the full range of teaching issues we confront. In 34 brief chapters of readable prose, McKeachie and his contributors cover a variety of topics including course preparation, all manner of teaching techniques, evaluation of student work, assessing and improving one's own teaching, ethics, and practical organizational tips. The final section, entitled "Teaching for Lifetime Outcomes" deals with "big picture" issues such as motivating students for lifelong learning, teaching students

how to learn, and the role of values in the classroom.

Teaching Tips also discusses, in a comprehensible manner, the latest research concerning good teaching. Analyses of how students learn are conveyed without jargon. Each section also considers the effectiveness of the teaching strategies discussed therein. The authors supply a short bibliography for each chapter, with a more extensive list of works at the end. McKeachie even discusses institutional resistance to innovative teaching techniques and how to circumvent them. The text allows the reader to calculate the "risk-to-reward ratio" of any change in teaching technique, be it slight alteration or complete overhaul.

Like all useful reference tools, *Teaching Tips* provides an overview rather than an exhaustive treatment of its subject. Perusing its pages might even propel you to think about previously unconsidered aspects of your teaching. Those desiring to delve deeper will find in this volume useful points of departure and plenty of food for thought.

In my capacity as one of the TRC's Graduate Student Consultants, McKeachie's book has become my constant companion as I conduct workshops, consult with instructors about their teaching, and think about my own pedagogical style. Sooner or later, I suppose, the Teaching Resource Center will want their copy back. Perhaps a reader of this article will visit the TRC and demand a recall. It's probably just as well, since, on several occasions, I have been sorely tempted to mark it up. I need my own copy of *Teaching Tips*. So do you.