



Right and Wrong in the College Classroom: Ethical Issues in Postsecondary Teaching

Jordy Rocheleau and Bruce W. Speck

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Let me begin by making my own ethical disclosure – as a faculty developer how could I not love a book that advocates for formal training in pedagogy and stresses “the overemphasis of individual scholarship as opposed to contribution to education and institutional and provisional citizen [that] warrants a rethinking of the priorities by both professors and institutions”. How could I not love a book that uses extensive educational and ethical theory and ethical inquiry research? Finally how could I not love a book that tackles such important issues as fair grading dilemmas, the challenge of advocacy over indoctrination, and the thorny question of faculty/student relationships?

There is much to love in *Right and Wrong in the College Classroom: Ethical Issues in Postsecondary Teaching*. Jordy Rocheleau and Bruce Speck openly address areas that conscientious teachers struggle with and do it in a non-pejorative manner. They explore multiple ethical issues through an ethical inquiry lens while emphasizing professional and moral conditions that impact decision making. They do not shy away from stating their own beliefs, often in strong language, but these points in the chapters are preceded by a comprehensive discussion of all viewpoints. From the first page, I found myself beginning to question my own classroom assumptions and practices in light of the provocative (and admittedly occasionally frustrating) discussions that frame the issues in chapters on Advocacy, Indoctrination, and Neutrality in the Classroom, Conflict of Interest, Ethics of Grading, Professional Conduct, and the most important Faculty-Student Relationships. While the individual authors claim primary ownership of their chapters, they have so clearly integrated their thinking that the writing flows smoothly from chapter to chapter and builds an increasingly persuasive case for the importance of engaging in ethical inquiry.

In many ways this is a meta-book. While it discusses serious ethical issues in teaching, it also addresses the ethics of teacher development. One of its strengths is the ability to place contentious issues such as assessment, grading on a curve, professional behavior, and college citizenship into the more complex developmental and ethical frameworks that do not usually accompany these discussions. Each chapter thoughtfully uses an ethical inquiry approach to raise all sides of an issue, including the very practical bottom line of the time needed to follow some of their suggestions. While not preaching, they prod; while not advocating they intrigue. But don't get me wrong, it's not all talk, there is plenty of practical advice and suggestion on how to navigate conflicting ethical waters. The bibliography is also a great resource as it combines some of the classic works on teaching and learning with articles and resources on ethics and ethical teaching that faculty members may not be aware exist.

While I may be nitpicking, I found the chapters' conclusion section contradictory to the tone of the book. While the book stresses ethical inquiry as opposed to ethical theory and leads the reader through the ethical complexities of teaching and learning, the conclusions are just that, conclusions. They seem to be more prescriptive than a summarization of ethical arguments. While the ideas in the chapters are well written to allow those without an ethics background to understand the complexities of the dispute, the conclusion sections are short and in outline form. I found myself skipping sections and engaging in thinking about my own "conclusions" for each chapter.

If I could add anything, I would ask the authors to provide some specific advice for new faculty. Their sage suggestions, and the ethical professional principles they faithfully adhere to in their writing, are clearly a product of seasoned teachers. I have found that awareness of the implications of making ethical decisions in the real political world of higher education is often a surprise for newer colleagues transitioning from graduate student to faculty and can have unforeseen consequences. That doesn't negate the need to make the "right" decision, it just means that newer teachers have to be made aware of the political and professional implications of their ethical choices.

There is much to debate about in *Right and Wrong in College Classroom* and much to disagree and argue with. But that is the joy of this book! This is a perfect resource for faculty book groups who want to bring shared ethical struggles into the open and come together to identify and clarify teaching assumptions and beliefs in order to develop as ethical and principled teachers.

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