

Deliberative Pedagogy in Higher Education

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Timothy J. Shaffer, Nicholas V. Longo, Idit Manosevitch, & Maxine S. Thomas (Eds.), *Deliberative Pedagogy: Teaching and Learning for Democratic Engagement*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2017, 235 pages. ISBN: 978-1611862492

The contemporary political climate in the United States is often characterized by low civility, strident partisanship, and a general unwillingness among the citizenry to continually engage in nuanced discussions about complex issues. Voter turnout in many municipal and statewide elections has been historically low, and nationwide confidence in elected officials is waning. Institutions of higher education are uniquely positioned to alleviate these societal ailments and help foster civil public discourse on salient local and national issues. Faculty members can meaningfully engage students in curricular and co-curricular experiences that cultivate lifelong commitment to democratic and civic engagement. *Deliberative Pedagogy: Teaching and Learning for Democratic Engagement* offers a pedagogical approach designed to encourage students to explore their values, consider alternate perspectives, and challenge themselves to critically analyze societal issues. In this book, deliberative pedagogy is defined as an egalitarian democratic educational process, teaching philosophy, and way of thinking that encourages students to consider various viewpoints and move toward ongoing action as informed citizens.

In six parts, the authors provide a detailed explanation of deliberative pedagogy in a higher education context, practical case studies on how deliberative pedagogy can be used in different academic disciplines at various institutional types, reasons to minimize the authoritarian discourse that characterizes traditional classrooms, and examples of how deliberative pedagogy can equip students with the skill set and mindset they need to effectively address complex social and public policy issues. The book, with assistance from the Kettering Foundation, was written by scholars from around the world who introduced deliberative pedagogy into at least one of their respective courses. Part I provides a historical overview of deliberative pedagogy and outlines the pedagogy's

theoretical framework. The four case studies in Part II demonstrate the process a faculty member may go through to incorporate deliberative pedagogy into courses. Part II highlights examples from a first-year experience course, a political socialization course at an Israeli university, a communications course, a biology course, and a chemistry course. Part III, which also includes four case studies, explores deliberative pedagogy's use among feminist scholars, its utility in online intercultural communication, and its role in deliberative student forums at Hungary's largest institution of higher education. Part IV focuses on public policy institutes and their use of deliberative pedagogy to strengthen the civic engagement movement. It includes an analysis of Kansas State University's Institute for Civic Discourse and one of Spellman College's National Issues Forum training processes. The three case studies in Part V emphasize the significant role deliberative pedagogy can play in building campus/community partnerships. Part V features deliberative journalism community projects in four countries, a community-engaged engineering course at a South African university, and student-led deliberative community discussions at a community college. Part VI provides several approaches to assessing deliberative pedagogy. It highlights a longitudinal assessment of Wake Forest University's Democracy Fellows Program, which engages students in campus and community deliberation events. Part VI also includes an overview of the Deliberative Pedagogy Learning Outcomes Rubric and a critical discourse analysis of deliberative forums in a language teacher education program. Although faculty members are the book's primary target audience, it has some utility for student affairs educators who wish to create co-curricular environments that help students understand the nuances of societal issues and explore implicit biases.

The book surprisingly states deliberative pedagogy should not be conflated with the greater civic engagement movement because deliberative pedagogy is concerned with democracy's role in education, the centrality of civic education and experiential learning, and deliberative democracy theory and practice (p. xxi). The book notes that deliberative pedagogy is very similar to engaged scholarship. Distancing deliberative pedagogy from the larger civic engagement movement and other experiential teaching strategies unnecessarily fragments civic renewal efforts and weakens the movement's pedagogical knowledge base. While deliberative pedagogy's philosophical placement outside of the wider civic engagement movement is debatable, the book is an excellent contribution to the civic engagement, community engagement, and public deliberation fields, builds on higher education's historic commitment to democratic engagement, complements contemporary critical service-learning efforts, and provides readers with specific examples of how to incorporate deliberative pedagogy into a course (Jacoby, 2015; Mitchell, 2008; National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Furthermore, the book's emphasis on ways deliberative pedagogy extends the learning environment beyond traditional classroom settings, emphasizes community expertise, and encourages bottom-up teaching makes it ideal for community-engaged professionals (Dostilio, 2017).

The book effectively acknowledges deliberative pedagogy's potential challenges and limitations. Deliberative pedagogy, like service learning and other forms of experiential education, may be too time-consuming for non-tenured faculty members who need to spend the bulk of their time researching and writing. The book also recognizes that using deliberative pedagogy is a calculated, yet risky, attempt at helping students work toward achieving the public good through facilitated class discussions. Future researchers may consider exploring how to employ deliberative pedagogy on campuses where historic or contemporary rifts among students and the community make civil dialogue across differences very challenging. Additional research may also be needed to explore how to effectively address conflict avoidance during deliberative discussions.

References

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About the Reviewer

Assistant Director of the University of South Carolina's Leadership and Service Center Jabari Bodrick is a student affairs educator who is passionate about creating educational environments. He earned his BS in public relations at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, his MEd in college student affairs at the University of South Florida, and his PhD in college student affairs administration at the University of Georgia.