

Ep. 018: Claire's Bookshelf II

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We start off 2017 with a return to Claire's bookshelf. This time, Claire and Jim explore three "handbooks" that can help you plan for teaching and easily respond to new questions or challenges that may arise during the semester. These research-based perspectives can help you assess various aspects of your teaching, including how much students actually care about course content, and illustrate ways to keep them engaged in their learning. Claire and Jim also explore the merits... and the occasional frustrations... of "ice breaker" exercises as a way of building community.

Transcript

JIM: Hi there. I'm Jim.

CLAIRE: And I'm Claire.

JIM: Let's Talk Teaching Welcome to Let's Talk Teaching a podcast from the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology here at Illinois State University. I'm Jim Gee. Joining me for the new year, Dr. Claire Lamonica. Our director. Hi, Claire, Happy New Year, we're recording this a week or two after New Year's it is probably going to be I'm not sure when it's going to actually air yet. Because we have our big Teaching and Learning symposium later this week.

CLAIRE: Happy New Year.

JIM: Thursday, as we're recording this. So, two days from now. And we're hoping to sit down with some of our colleagues from across campus, I'm going to kind of pounce on them in the hallway and bring them into a special little room we're going to set up and we maybe...

CLAIRE: ...explained to them, what's going on.

JIM: Yeah, I'll pounds maybe a little strong, but I will try to I will try to lure them in there. And we'll talk a little bit about teaching and learning. But today we're here taking another trip to Claire's bookshelf.

CLAIRE: Yeah.

JIM: My new favorite feature. And we can call the feature now because we're doing it twice

CLAIRE: A second time. So, now it's a feature. It's a tradition

JIM: Yeah, it's a tradition. So, we're taking another trip to Claire's bookshelf. And today we have three books. What do they have in common?

CLAIRE: Well, I'm just looking at them sitting here on the desk, and I realized that they are all the same size, shape, and shape.

JIM: And there's, and there's a very, there's probably a reason for this. And as we get thru this.

CLAIRE: Probably is. They have sort of a workbook look to them. Yeah, yeah. They're, they're sort of eight and a half by 11 are a little bigger than that. And they're paperback and each one is about an inch thick. You know, but, but that's not, you know, that's just it just makes it easier, makes it easier to find them on the shelf.

JIM: Yeah, they also have a certain amount of utility to them. From a, I need to do something next time I teach.

CLAIRE: And that's and that's, that's the thing, the reason that I picked them to talk about is that they all, they are all books of techniques. So, this is a book that you can pick up on Friday, take home with you over the weekend and have something to do in your class on Monday. So, and a good reason for doing it. So, that's that's sort of what they have in common. It's, it's not like, you know, Bain, who's very philosophical, you know, or, you know, Bain, I guess I would say Bain, who's descriptive and Palmer who's philosophical and Fink, who's, you know, all about design. These are high, I can do this Monday morning.

JIM: Okay, so let's run down the, the titles and authors that we're talking about. But just so everyone knows. So, you don't have to write all this stuff down right now. We will have this on our show page. And of course, some of these we've talked about on this podcast before because they're ones we use all day come up, they come up, we use them all the time here at CTLT. Take it away. What do we do?

CLAIRE: Okay, so the oldest one is, it's sort of an oldie but goodie, it's classroom assessment techniques. *A Handbook for College Teachers*, is by Thomas A. Angelo and Kay Patricia Cross, who endowed our cross chair in the scholarship of teaching. So, that's the first one. The second one is called student engagement techniques, a handbook for college faculty. It's by Elizabeth F. Barclay, who is a protege of Patricia Cross's. And I think that it has it I think it has a foreword by Patricia Cross.

JIM: Yeah. And of course, Dr. Barkley was here for our symposium.

CLAIRE: That's right. That's right. Dr. Barkley was our, was our keynote speaker a couple of years ago, very well received lots of lots of lots of really positive comments and her parents so that was, that was nice. The third book is also by Dr. Barkley, Elizabeth Barkley and Claire H. Major who I think is a protege of hers. Okay, there's sort of a family tree evolving here.

JIM: Yeah.

CLAIRE: It's called *Learning Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*. So, it also has to do with assessment, but the take is a little bit different. So, these are these are, are good books to kind of look at when you're trying to figure something out.

JIM: So, and what exactly you're trying to figure out will determine if it's more of an assessment, and what kind of assessment or more of an activity to actually...

CLAIRE: Right, kind of a learning, you know, so, am I do I need to, you know, do I want students to learn something? Do I want to find out what they're learning? You know, what exactly do I want to find out? And it helps to know to have those things in common. Each of the books has a sort of a theoretical overview at the beginning. So, an introduction to the topic, assessment, or engagement. Research based, so you know, pretty nice scholarly pieces but very accessible, very readable. Suitable for, for the, the lay person, the person who's not an assessment or engagement expert. And then each of them has sections devoted to specific activities that you can use in particular ways. Okay, so, for example, classroom assessment techniques, okay, this is, this is a classic, an oldie but goodie, the key to using this well, is knowing what it is that you want to assess. So, the idea here is that these are techniques that you can use in your classroom to figure out how something is going. Okay. All right. So, that something might be how you're teaching us going?

JIM: Right.

CLAIRE: You know, how is your, how is your teaching being, being received? It might be? How a student learning going?

JIM: Right.

CLAIRE: Are they mastering the knowledge and skills that you want them to? Some of it has to do with thinking, assessing student thinking, which is kind of like, whoa, how do I do that? Yeah, I'm assessing problem solving, assessing performance. But also, you know, okay, assessing attitudes, values, self-awareness, assessing reactions to teaching, which I said, so...

JIM: Yeah.

CLAIRE: Kind of some big categories. And the nice thing is you can kind of look at the table of contents, and see the big category. So, you say, oh, man, I really need to find out whether students got that lesson on cell division, right? And how am I going to do that? And you can that would be in the knowledge, you know, in sort of the student knowledge and skill section, and you can find a technique to use to assess if students understood that lesson.

JIM: Is there a particular technique out of this book that you that you have used? Can you give us an example of that?

CLAIRE: Lots of them, but you know, and these are, these are like, these are the standards, these are the things that people throw around, and just assume that everybody knows what they are.

JIM: Okay.

CLAIRE: So, if you're somebody who's standing there, when somebody says, Oh, I use One Minute Paper that for that, and you're thinking, yeah, I don't know what a One Minute Paper is. Yeah, that's, it's in this book.

JIM: So, what is a One Minute?

CLAIRE: Oh, a One Minute Paper is you, you stop at the end of class, you stop, you stop a minute, literally, or two minutes before the end of class. And you have students, you pose a question to students and have them write in response. Or it could also be sometimes it's called the muddiest point. So, sometimes you if this, your specific question is, what was the one thing that we you know, what was the thing that we talked about today, that was most difficult for you to understand? Or you really need me to talk about some more? Sometimes you say, you know, what, what do you think the most important thing we learned in class today was right? Well, you get some really interesting responses to that. Because you can sort of tell who was who was tuned in? And who was, you know, who is not? Those are techniques that just get talked about? All the time?

JIM: Sure. And this book has about 200 pages worth of...

CLAIRE: Oh, my gosh, it's got, yeah, it has 50 techniques. There you go. I just looked in the table of contents, there you go. 50, 50, different techniques for assessing different, different things.

JIM: And then what you do with that information, that's kind of a step that's beyond this particular book, what you how you actually make the adjustment, then, in your teaching, based on the based on what you've assessed,

CLAIRE: you know, the last section is called building on what we've learned, oh, so you go, you know, what are the next steps in classroom assessment? So, you know, what, now what, what am I going to do with this information? So, that kind of at the end sort of pulls things together?

JIM: It is a guide for...

CLAIRE: Yeah, yeah.

JIM: All right. So, what about our next book?

CLAIRE: Okay, the next book is called student engagement techniques. This also has, well, dozens of specific sort of things you can do, once again, you want to know what it is that you're trying to accomplish. All right. So, it has strategies for fostering motivation. It has strategies for promoting active learning. It has strategies for building community, you know, if that strategies for ensuring that students are appropriately challenged. So, you know, you want to think about what is it that I'm trying to accomplish? And then you can come to this and probably find, find a strategy that will help you accomplish that particular thing.

JIM: So, the key word that you've used there that you didn't use with the other book, his strategy, and I think that that's interesting, because we're not trying to answer a particular question, as far as how is this going or is this working or is this not working? But instead you're actually trying this is more about the delivery of the learning as it

were of the teaching. And then the students, you know, being engaged in that process. I mean, engagement,

CLAIRE: And it does have, you know, it does have sort of I can do this Monday sort of things. And it Yeah, you know, yeah, yeah. So, there's, I just saw this in the, I just thought this was I was glancing over at the table contents, and I thought, oh, boy, the next time I'm in the classroom, I totally need to read this. Here's one on reduce anonymity, learn students names and help students learn each other's names So that's under the building community section. I'm terrible at learning students names, I, you know, I use all kinds of draconian, you have to sit in the same seat, like they're not going to anyway, but, you know, for at least three weeks until I learned your names, and then you know, the last day of the three weeks, I'm still like, oh, my gosh, who are you know, I can't remember those two people that sit in the back.

JIM: Right. What I find interesting about that example, is that it is something that really does help the learning community, it not only helps the students interact with each other, but it helps you as the instructor be more effective, because you're, you're able to relate to them on a first name basis, and you remember their names. And then they don't feel like they're just a commodity sitting there in a chair.

CLAIRE: Well, and this is ultimately, this is a book about engagement. It's a book about student engagement. And so, the, the first part is a conceptual framework for understanding student engagement. So, you know, it really helps you understand what does it mean? What's the relationship between engagement and motivation? What's the relationship between engagement and active learning? So, if you're feel like you're, if you feel like you're teaching a class where people just aren't engaging with you, or with each other, or with the content, you know, this, this gives you sort of some theoretical reasons why that might be happening. But it also gives you some concrete strategies to use to help overcome that problem. Yeah,

JIM: I remember reading this, when I first around the time I first came to CTLT, you probably...

CLAIRE: ...gave you one.

JIM: You gave me a sizable portion of one shelf.

CLAIRE: A stack of books

JIM: To go through and I skim through most of them.

CLAIRE: That makes me happy.

JIM: And, and I've gone back to this, I should say, This one in particular, when I do consultations with faculty members after a midterm chat, this is one that I recommend to them, hey, there are some things this this thing that we discovered as part of the assessment, which was a midterm chat, the assessment of teaching, here are some things that you may want to consider looking at. And we just, and we do just what we're doing now we look at the table of contents. And I remember actually, the

introductory section of this, which is about 40 pages or something like that really helped me understand what we meant by student engagement more because I always went into it with student engagement as yeah, they turned in the homework. And that's not it. And but you hear engagement, engagement, engagement all the time. We talk about that in teaching circles. And but what does it really mean? So, I think that this, this breaks it down, because it's also tied then to some concrete examples about how what concrete strategies write about how do you actually achieve that?

CLAIRE: Right.

JIM: So, that's, that's why this book always gets me kind of excited. And it is a very, it is a I like having options as a teacher.

CLAIRE: Yeah.

JIM: So, it is kind of an ala carte.

CLAIRE: Yeah.

JIM: I'm going to order off the ala carte menu today. Which is not to say we should probably pause for a moment here, which is not to say that you should not be planning ahead in your teaching now and have a have a longer-term view. We've talked extensively about the syllabus and about some stuff about lesson plans and whatnot. But it is, this gives you the agility to you can still have those long-term learning goals. But here you have the agility to actually make adjustments and try something a little bit new. Or approach it from a different angle. Right.

CLAIRE: Right. And I and I think, you know, you could, you could actually use this very effectively as you are planning your course, if you think okay, so in this class, it's going to be really important that we have a strong sense of learning community, you know, it's really important that the students feel connected to each other feel connected to me. So, I'm going to devote some time to developing that and oh, look, here's a whole list of strategies. I don't have to do the same thing over and over again. So, everybody's rolling their eyes and going, oh, gosh, she's, you know, building community again.

JIM: Yeah.

CLAIRE: You know, there's a lot of different options here that you can weave into your course.

JIM: Yes.

CLAIRE: Over the over the course of the first few weeks or what maybe the whole semester.

JIM: And I mean, a perfect example is the icebreaker, how many icebreakers are students doing in the first week of class? And then if you continue to do them, which some of us do on occasion, because again, we want them to get to know each other's names, but there is a there is a modicum of eye rolling going on. Sometimes when I do that, so yeah. So, this is a good way to, to incorporate that through the through the

breadth, length and breadth of, of your of your course. Right? So how about that third book?

CLAIRE: Okay, the third one *Learning Assessment Techniques*. This is kind of interesting because this is, as I said, Elizabeth Barkley is a protege of Patricia Cross's. And she refers explicitly to the cape Patricia and Thomas Angelo book about classroom assessment techniques in the introduction and says, you know, yeah, that's great. It's a classic. But time has gone on, you know, we've learned some more stuff. So, here's here is, here's some, here's some more, here's, here's some more. And the thing I really like about this book is that it is organized around assessing the seven domains of learning identified by L. D. Fink, in his book about designing significant learning experiences. Okay, so L. D. Fink says that significant learning experiences fall into basically he has these seven domains. This gives you a way to assess those, even though some of them we sort of think of some times as being kind of touchy feely. So, for example, L. D. Fink has the caring domain. And a lot of times, we as university faculty are a little bit reluctant to write a course outcome that something like students will learn to care about, you know, X.

JIM: Yeah.

CLAIRE: Or even you know, I mean, if you're teaching a music appreciation course?

JIM: Yeah.

CLAIRE: Probably, the main goal of that course, is that students are going to come away with a greater appreciation for music.

JIM: Right.

CLAIRE: But I think a lot of times, people are like, Yeah, but I can't assess that.

JIM: Yeah.

CLAIRE: I can't tell if they really have a greater appreciation for music.

JIM: Right.

CLAIRE: Um, but this offers some strategies for, yes. Assessing that kind of learning.

JIM: Yeah. And is that sorry, to stress. It's not just within the humanities, I mean, you know, the I know, I know, there's a course on campus that is essentially about getting students to, to care about chemistry.

CLAIRE: Yes.

JIM: And getting students to, to understand how it affects your life really?

CLAIRE: Well, and any entry level chemistry course, yeah, you know, that you want that to be you want that to be a learning outcome, or that course you want students to come

away wanting to know more about chemistry, otherwise, that's the last chemistry course they're ever going to take. And you know, and in two years, they're not going to be able to tell a mol from a molecule.

JIM: Right.

CLAIRE: You know, so what was the point?

JIM: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Exactly. So, let's not limited just to those of us who tend to teach in what may be considered more the touchy-feely disciplines, Yeah.

CLAIRE: I have no idea whether they care more now than they did before. Right. Right. So, no, any, any discipline any hard, you know, quote, unquote, hard science or whatever. We also want students to, you know, Ken Bain says caring comes first. If they don't care about what they're there to learn, then they aren't going to learn it. Sure. So, in essence, in some ways, our first job at any course, is to get students to care about the content. And, and yet, knowing whether we've done that is really, most of us just kind of scratch our heads and go, I have no idea. Yeah. So, anyway, hard techniques, I will tell you that I've used this book in my workshop on course design. And it's very, it's very prescriptive. To the point of, you know, there are steps in preparing for these strategies, like, you know, copy the handouts. Yeah, it's I mean, it's very, it's very detailed.

JIM: Right. Yes.

CLAIRE: Which I think some people really appreciate. And some people are like, seriously, you thought you had to tell me to copy the handout? So, I've had both of those reactions in workshops? Sure. Um, I have a great appreciation for this book. And I'm willing to "A" overlook that or "B" ignore it.

JIM: Yeah. Yeah.

CLAIRE: Oh, I'm not actually going to copy the handouts. I'm going to put this in the LMS you know, or something like that. I mean, that it's whatever. And that doesn't bother me at all. You know, and, and I don't think would bother Elizabeth Barkley either.

JIM: No, I don't think it would. And I think in student *Engagement Techniques*, her other book is a little bit like a to some of the steps and whatnot. And I always got the impression that that from a very practical standpoint, if I had a graduate assistant that was helping me prepare this, you know, I would actually be this stuff. So...

CLAIRE: Perfect.

JIM: So, I think some of that is in there because we realize that we're not the only ones that are preparing for our course.

CLAIRE: Right? Teaching was right. So, a lot of times we have a team, there's a whole team involved in teaching this course. Yeah.

JIM: So, three great books to kind of give you some new ideas, or if you have a particular itch that needs to be scratched or a particular question that needs to be answered. Or you just want to think of a different way of doing something.

CLAIRE: Something. Yeah. How can I, I'm so tired of doing acts this way. I do it the same way every semester. I have the same icebreaker every semester. And now, everybody my department uses it, right? It's a great icebreaker right now. My students are doing it four times on the first day of class.

JIM: Right. Like I said before eye rolling. Yeah. So, so no. So, it's a good way to kind of refresh and renew and whatnot, as we as we begin this new year. But it's also something again, these are touchstones that you can go back to throughout your teaching for the semester.

CLAIRE: Absolutely.

JIM: Anything else we need to know about these books?

CLAIRE: They are all available in? Well, they are all available in the CTLT resource common?

JIM: Oh, yes.

CLAIRE: I say that with the caveat that *Classroom Assessment Techniques* is our most likely book to wander off.

JIM: Yes.

CLAIRE: So, we go through, you know, we go through many copies of this. So, it's not always in the commons, we replaced it recently, it is.

JIM: It's a testament to how popular it really is.

CLAIRE: Yeah.

JIM: So, there you go.

CLAIRE: It is so but they're all there and they're multiple other copies, you know, around the building. So, we'll probably hear you know, you can borrow it from someone.

JIM: We can connect. You know, Milner has all of the

CLAIRE: Milner houses as well. So, they are available to you

JIM: Claire, this has been great. Thank you so much.

CLAIRE: Thank you. It's nice to be back.

JIM: And you've been listening to Let's Talk Teaching a podcast from the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology. You can go to CTLT.IllinoisState.edu. Click on the podcast link. You'll find today's show page and past episode to be able to listen to

including one where we talk about L. D. Fink's book. For Claire Lamonica, and everyone here at the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology. Until we talk again. Happy Teaching!