

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Small Teaching Online*

Flower Darby and James M. Lang. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2019. ISBN-13: 978-1-119-61909-3, 252 pages, \$29.95 US.

As a group of colleagues at Parker University, we formed a book club with the primary goal of fostering enhanced learning experiences in our classes. We chose *Small Teaching Online* authored by Darby Flowers and James Lang. This book offers practical insights into small but impactful changes that can be implemented in online learning environments to benefit students significantly.

Each chapter commenced with an introduction to its concept, followed by a concise overview of the current theories and academic research related to the topic. Finally, it delved into highly specific strategies for effectively integrating these concepts into your own classroom.

The book was organized into three parts. The initial section was titled “Designing for Learning,” which centered on course design and educational tools. Topics covered were backward design, scaffolding assignments, and effective technology selection. This section can be summarized with “When we in build plenty of engagement along the way. . .we provide the opportunity both for students to complete our assignments successfully, and for them to see the deep value and meaning of the work we are asking them to do (p. 32).”

The second section of the book is labeled “Teaching Humans.” This part underscored the importance of establishing a sense of community and effective communication with students. The topics included classroom community, quality feedback, and cultivating motivation and achievement, stating that “cheerleading has to happen!” (p. 131)

The last section of the book is called “Motivating Online Students (and Instructors).” We loved this section because not only did it give great strategies on how to motivate students to succeed in an online environment, but it also gave tips for us (instructors) to help keep us inspired to be our best. It helped remind us that we are “positioned to make a tremendous impact, not only on individual students, but our society as a whole (p. 178).”

A few ways we believe the book could improve are the following: (1) Most of the book focused on asynchronous ideas. Incorporating a few synchronous ideas would be helpful. Finding ways to improve these and increase attendance would be beneficial. (2) Adding a chapter on artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT would help us learn to use them in our courses and identify potential signs of student cheating.

Despite a few suggestions for improvement, we see this book as a treasure trove of information, offering practical strategies that can profoundly impact students. Reading this book will inevitably lead to discovering at least one remarkable idea to enhance your teaching practice.

**Carissa Manrique**, PhD, Associate Professor  
**Abdellatif Alsharif**, PhD, Associate Professor  
**Kelly Brown**, MS, Assistant Professor  
**Cynthia Calongne**, DCS, Professor  
**Terence Cockerham**, MA, Instructor  
**Themba Ngwenya**, DCS, Associate Professor and Assistant Dean College of Health Sciences  
 Parker University  
 2540 Walnut Hill Ln  
 Dallas, TX 75229  
 cmanrique@parker.edu

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