

The other sections deal with working with the faculty (performance counseling, managing conflict and implementing change). The stages of performance counseling were introduced in the earlier sections and are elaborated on here. Conflict is defined as a natural event in human groups and is to be managed in order to attain objectives. The chair is not expected to resolve conflicts but to manage them. The change process is based on open communication and participation of those responsible for implementing the change. The last section deals with external agents: the dean, other units within the university and community partners. In each section, the emphasis is on understanding the needs of the party and preparing communication strategies that work.

If there is a shortcoming to the book, it is the lack of material dealing with relationships between department chairs and students. There is only casual mention of students in the text. If the text is to be used as a basis for workshops or study sessions with chairs, then this gap will have to be addressed with other materials.

The book presents realistic issues and gives chairs tools for dealing with them. I recognize myself in some of the cases and recognized colleagues in many others. Many times I found myself wishing that I had a guide such as Higgerson when I was confronting the day to day issues that come to a chair. I am glad that I have read the book. I strongly recommend it to others, not only to colleagues within the university, but to administrators everywhere.



**Robert Boice. (1996). *First Order Principles for College Teachers*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Co., Inc. Pp. xiv; 169; Price: \$24.95 US.**

Reviewed by Gary Poole, Centre for University Teaching, Simon Fraser University.

*First-Order Principles for College Teachers*, by Robert Boice, reads like a survival guide; not just for junior faculty, but for all of us who feel overwhelmed at times by the demands of teaching and writing. By learning how to survive well, Boice argues, we become better teachers, and we do so with less stress and strain. The central contention of Boice's book, then, is that there are ten "first-order principles" that must be

attended to and practised if we are to become effective and satisfied college teachers.

Boice has derived these first-order principles from his many years of working with faculty and from systematic observation of successful teachers, though Boice reports little in the way of empirical classroom research in support of these principles. Nevertheless, he makes numerous statements about the teaching enterprise that someone with an empirical bent would probably like to see backed up with data.

The claim that we can become better teachers by looking to a finite and manageable number of tangible principles is compelling in its directness and simplicity. The reader, harried by the demands of faculty life, may well be impatient to digest these secrets of survival. However, in his introduction, Boice cautions against this impatience. He advises, "This book is not to be read quickly . . ." (p. xiii). He calls his work, ". . . a book about patience for often impatient readers" (p. xiii).

This is no small point. Patience is a theme that runs throughout the book. Whether it be in the preparation of classes or manuscripts, the reader is advised to work in short, manageable segments. Binge working is discouraged. Playfulness and relaxation are encouraged. First-order principles, in the main, are behaviour therapy for Type A coronary prone approaches to work.

For example, the second principle is called, simply, "Wait." More specifically, Boice introduces something he calls "active waiting" (p. 30). What he means by this apparent oxymoron is to think before committing to plans when fashioning a course, and to actions in front of the class. Don't be made anxious by silence that comes when we stop pounding the keys or moving our jaws. Become sensitive to physical messages of tension and be willing to pause, breathe and let them pass.

All this flies in the face of concerns stemming from the fact that many of our students have been raised on television, a medium that abhors "dead air" and attempts to hold attention by constant stimulation. The prevailing belief is that, because of this influence, students have short attention spans. When we pause, won't we lose them to some other distraction, never to get them back? Boice would say no.

Patience is the prevailing virtue in other first-order principles as well. Principles such as "Work and teach in brief, regular sessions," and "Stop" invite us to rethink the pacing of our work. This is all well and good, though Boice does not address the contention that there is

considerable inefficiency in repeated start-up time if longer tasks are revisited in short sessions.

To work in these short sessions, we need the discipline to stop regardless of where we are in the process. Hence, Boice makes stopping one of his principles. He tells us that writing can be stopped in mid-sentence. Classes can be stopped without coming to a tidy resolution. But I wonder about this. I wish I could trust myself to be able to return to a place in my manuscript with the same clarity I had when I was immersed in the thought the day before, and I am not certain that unresolved class endings don't have the potential to frustrate students. Having said this, I must confess often wanting to get just a bit more done, a habit that, according to Boice, makes us chronically late for our next obligation. Sound familiar?

Some other first-order principles include:

- Begin before feeling ready
- Moderate overattachment to content and overreaction to criticism
- Moderate negative thinking and strong emotions
- Let others do some of the work

There is some good advice contained in these principles. For example, regarding overreaction to criticism, Boice tells us, ". . . it turns out that trying too hard to save face is an invitation to losing it . . ." (p. 72). Another piece of advice, this time about moderating negative thinking, could have been lifted from the tenets of sports psychology: "It almost never hurts to pause to look at both kinds of processes as you teach: the one internal, in our own mind, and one external, in the class" (p. 81). And I couldn't agree more when Boice states that we should be "moving away from the solitude and autonomy teachers claim to prefer . . ." (p. 88) toward a more open sharing of ideas about teaching.

In my view, the best principle is Boice's first one: "Moderate Classroom Incivilities." The chapter discussing this principle is frank, illustrative, and helpful. The point is made that disruptive classroom behaviour is rarely discussed openly among faculty. As a result, little is done about "classroom terrorists" (p. 11) as Boice calls extremely disruptive students. This is not a chapter of name calling, though. Indeed, Boice places the responsibility for moderating classroom incivilities squarely on the shoulders of the instructor. The essential rule here is to use "prosocial immediacies" (p. 3). Get to class early, talk to

your students, smile, make eye contact. In short, let them see you as a warm person so that they become more likely to treat you as such.

Thus, the first eight principles contain valuable, though occasionally repetitious, advice. I would have advised Boice to stop there. Principles 9 and 10 offer nothing new. If anything, they are frustrating in the misleading nature of their titles and subtitles and the unnecessary repetition of themes we have read often enough in preceding principles.

Principle 9 is "Welcome Learning and Change." This might lead one to believe that this is about open-mindedness. In fact, the chapter provides a précis of two well known books in instructional development: McKeachie's *Teaching Tips* and Weimer's *Improving College Teaching*. Boice argues that, while these are fine books, there are ways in which his is better. For example, about *Teaching Tips*, Boice suggests that the advice presented is either too general or too specific. He does not go so far as to say McKeachie and Weimer should not be read, rather that his book complements theirs. Nonetheless, it is hard to fathom what all this has to do with welcoming learning and change.

Principle 10, "Building Resilience by Limiting Wasted Effort" is a repeat of the patience theme. For my taste, the repetition, and thus the principle, is unnecessary. The chapter moves the book away from the concrete advice it claims to provide and it hurts the credibility of the other principles in doing so. Moreover, there is a subsection entitled, "Be Patient," but it isn't about patience. It is about trying to "let go of involvement" (p. 107), "risk taking," "discomforts," and "disappointments" (p. 108). And again, it is difficult to see what all this has to do with the principle.

Ten is a tidy number. It puts us in mind of the Commandments and our number system. However, when it comes to first-order principles, I would argue that eight is enough.

Regardless of their actual number, the most important question remains: What evidence is there that these principles work? The chapter, "Research Showing That FOPs Work," then, is an important one. Unfortunately, this chapter does not document research supporting the efficacy of first-order principles. Instead, it outlines a program Boice has used to help faculty become more effective and efficient writers.

Granted, Boice provides a good rationale for helping faculty become better teachers by helping them become more efficient writers. The parallels between writing and preparation for teaching are cleverly drawn

and insightful. Some evidence is presented to show that participants in Boice's program tended to comply with the principles, and some brief testimonials are provided indicating participants' satisfaction with the writing program in particular, but the research proving that first-order principles work is scant at best.

Some readers will be more disappointed than others regarding the lack of empirical evidence for a number of the claims Boice makes in his introduction. Much of his advice makes intuitive sense, and perhaps that is enough. Still, there will be those who want proof for a statement like, "FOPs bring the fastest, easiest success in classroom performances." (p. xii).

Evidence aside, there are some valuable lessons to be learned from this book. Many readers, myself included, would benefit from Boice's advice about the pacing of their work. Not only do we "binge work" unnecessarily, we accompany these binges with a sense of anxiousness that does nothing for the quality of our work or our lives. Robert Boice tells us to start projects earlier (regardless of whether we feel ready) and spread our work out over time. We should work on our teaching, whether it be preparation or grading, in short, regular intervals. (It is perhaps worth noting that I adopted this approach in writing this review and I believe it did make the task a more pleasant one for me.)

Closely related to pacing is Boice's invitation to maintain a level of playfulness in our work, both when we plan and when we are in class. Binge working is rarely playful. When we have the time and energy, we are more able to experiment and experience the excitement of that experimentation. How often is our goal to simply "get it done" rather than to explore interesting ways in which it can be done?

The term "prosocial immediacies" may be language that only a psychologist could love. Nevertheless, the concept is a very useful one. The time taken to establish rapport with students and present oneself as a human being is an investment that pays tangible dividends in teaching. It starts a constructive cycle in which classroom incivilities are reduced, thus allowing the instructor to relax more, which in turn enhances rapport. The end result is a classroom atmosphere in which students learn more.

Finally, Boice's eighth principle, "Let Others Do Some of the Work," reminds us that teaching is more manageable and enjoyable when we make it collegial. Faculty and students both benefit when we talk about our teaching.

*First-Order Principles of College Teaching*, then, contains advice with the potential to enhance our working lives as teachers and writers and to help us survive well. Perhaps Robert Boice has plans to write a follow-up that would present research testing that potential in systematic ways. If so, I would be a keen reader.



**Peter C. Emberley. (1996). *Zero Tolerance: Hot Button Politics in Canadian Universities*. Toronto, ON: Penguin Books. Pp. xvi; 313.**  
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Peter Emberley begins his book by quoting Matthew Arnold: "No one ought to meddle with the universities, who does not know them well and love them well." Emberley is a political scientist and Director of the College of the Humanities at Carleton University. It is obvious that he knows universities well. After reading this book however, many people may see Emberley as an iconoclast who does not love them. Don't be fooled. The Greek philosopher, Aristophanes, said that people can learn a considerable amount even from their foes — foes who love the battle. Emberley obviously loves to battle. This book will bring him into conflict with both his foes and friends.

In chapter one, Emberley argues that the university is at a crossroads. Professors are burning out, budgets are shrinking, administrators are not making tough decisions, faculty unions are trying to protect privileges like tenure and sabbaticals, support staff are taking stress-leaves because their responsibilities are increasing, students are wondering if a university education is worth the money, time, and effort that is required, and citizens are wondering if universities could be equally effective, managed more efficiently, and cost less.

In Emberley's mind, the traditional scholarly culture of universities has been taken over, in different ways, by both the cultural left and the corporate right. The agenda of the cultural left is to attack the sexism and racism (and other "isms") that they believe are endemic in universities, while the agenda of the corporate right is to force universities to educate students in disciplines where there are jobs and to do this with less money. Both groups are fighting to have their perspective become the prevailing orthodoxy. Both groups are intolerant of their adversary,