

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,

which contravenes the ideal of a university where competing perspectives can be debated. This is why the book is entitled, *Zero Tolerance*.

In the next eight chapters, Emberley examines the issues of tenure, political correctness, under-funding, postmodernism in curricula and administration, research, the use of modern technology in classrooms, curriculum reforms, bureaucratic growth especially in the middle-management and student services, the increasingly cynical perspectives of students, and the perspectives of taxpayers. His evidence is drawn from newspaper articles, reports of provincial commissions, internal reports of various universities, and books that have been written about universities.

In using these data he paints a picture of a composite university that is seething with conflict between the cultural left and the corporate right. In building this composite picture, he picks on some universities more than others. Carleton University (his home) is referenced only five times, while the University of Manitoba (my home) is referenced nine times, and Concordia University (Valery Fabrikant's home) is referenced ten times. At least, Emberley has the good sense not to scratch the noses of his colleagues at Carleton though he does not mind scratching our colleagues' noses. Nevertheless, the kaleidoscope he draws of universities will be dismissed by many readers as being over-generalized. The picture does not represent any one university. Emberley knows this, but his intention is to goad all universities to realize that they have serious problems that need to be addressed. Unfortunately, this message may be dismissed by many faculty members and administrators.

In the final chapter, Emberley presents ten "hot button" issues, derived from the discussion in previous chapters, that need to be addressed. All of these issues are worth examining, but we have selected three for review. First, he tackles tenure and argues that it should be preserved. He argues that tenure committees should not be composed of either friends or foes in a candidate's department, but should be composed of people with an "arm's length" relationship to the institution. In addition, he recommends that tenure should be subject to periodic reviews and it should be revoked if professors do not maintain good scholarship and good teaching.

In his second "hot button," Emberley argues that over the last 30 years professors have been rewarded for creating increased numbers of specialized courses and programs that, in the best possible light, match their research interests and competencies. In this expansion, the basic

courses that introduce students to the disciplines have been turned over to graduate students and lecturers on term appointments. Now that universities are attempting to contract, faculty members want to hold onto their specialized courses and programs and they do not want to teach the introductory courses even though there is little money to hire other people to do this work. Emberley correctly suggests that regular faculty members must be encouraged to teach the basic courses and to reduce the number of specialized courses and programs they have developed. University administrators must, in turn, help faculty members do these things. This is a very big problem with no easy solution.

The final "hot button" that he discusses is the recommendation that entrance into universities must be based on a standardized (Canadian) scholastic achievement test and that graduation must be based on another examination akin to the foreign service exam used by the Federal government. This idea is a value-added perspective on university education. Emberley correctly points out that the public is not really interested in the percentage of students who graduate because they know that if standards are reduced far enough, everyone could have a university degree. Instead, they want to know if students have learned anything in university, and that criterion should be used to determine if universities are fulfilling their proper role in society and using their money effectively.

Emberley examines seven other issues (value-for-money and value-added auditing, tuition as a user fee, distance-learning technology, a modularized curriculum, the inclusive university, academic freedom, and accountability). All of these issues are hot topics in Canadian universities, and all of them need to be examined. More importantly, all these issues are the bases for policies and procedures that need to be reviewed and changed if universities are going to survive. If we do not address the issues Emberley has identified, we will probably have to deal with more serious ones in the near future. It is about time that faculty members and administrators took off their boxing gloves and began the hard work of recreating universities so they will survive. For this to happen, however, people who know and love universities must do something more than box with each other. Peter Emberley points towards some of the things that need to be done, but he also makes it clear that the competing special-interest groups that would like to transform universities make the orderly introduction of such recommendations highly unlikely.

