when the course is offered, overcoming that obstacle should be considered early in the ODL course development process.

Recalling his opening claim that his book addresses students' needs, cost effectiveness, and the course quality of ODL courses, Melton has dealt with these aspects convincingly. Despite the omissions (exceptional students and multicultural needs) noted earlier and an over-reliance on references to the UK OU, Reginald Melton's book is a worthwhile read for anyone with little or no experience who faces the task of developing an ODL course.

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Brabazon, T. (2002). *Digital Hemlock: Internet Education and the Poisoning of Teaching*. Sydney, Australia: UNSW Press. Pages: 240. Cost: $34.95 AUD.

Reviewed by Doug Symons, Acadia University and Visiting Scholar, University of Queensland.

Digital Hemlock reflects the concerns of many faculty as they integrate technology in their teaching in a pedagogically-sound fashion. Tara Brabazon uses a refreshing mixture of prose, research, and stories from her daily life as an academic to advance her argument that what is best about teaching in a university setting is under attack. While "under attack" is sometimes equated with either "faculty resisting change" or "union rhetoric," this is not the definition here. She is concerned with an attack on effective pedagogy to the detriment of student education, academe, and society at large. The fact that this book is written by an Australian within the Australian university system does not matter: the issues covered are global in nature, and seemed particularly pertinent to recent developments in Canadian universities.

The central focus of this book is on teaching and technology. Brabazon is not writing as a faculty member who avoids technology, but rather, as one who has used it extensively in small and large classes, been involved in on-line and correspondence courses, won national teaching awards, and speaks from experience about the trials and tribulations. In brief, technology in teaching is a means and not an end. For the most part, faculty are not against the use of technology, but believe that technology is an adjunct to learning. By analogy, calculators became standard tools in the sciences, but learning how to use a calculator was never a primary learning goal. It was just something that happened along the way, and was not without costs, as students quickly forgot how to confidently do calculations in their head. Similarly, Brabazon is not against the use of computers and information technology, but argues that professors must start with teaching and learning goals, and only then, determine how technology can assist these functions.

Part I of this book is titled "Assume the Position," and in this section, she lays out some fundamental problems in academe today. She deals with how new professors, with minimal teaching experience, teach new university students with minimal learning experience. Integration of information technology into the learning environment can have huge time commitments for faculty, and expectations that students have about instant accessibility of professors can be quite burdensome. Academic administrators who serve as indiscriminate technology cheerleaders are of little help to faculty. At the same time, university funding has been reduced, faculty workloads have increased, and investment in on-line education has not proven to be a panacea.

Students thinking critically in education require research materials. Part II is titled "Surfing, Reading and Thinking," and within this section, Brabazon provides an interesting comparison between university libraries and the Internet as sources of information. I enjoyed her passion for the great libraries of antiquity, as well as

books, journals, and newspapers in their traditional (paper) forms. She raises a number of significant issues with respect to digitizing information and maintaining accessibility to it through the millennia. Also, she provides an analogy of the Internet as a huge vandalised library with no table of contents, the indices removed, and important information mixed with the unfiltered messages of "cranks and sages." If students ever need critical thinking skills from their educational experience, it is in weighing the information and misinformation available on the Internet.

Engaging students in a passionate and humanistic fashion is covered in Part III on "Teachers and Teaching, Students and Learning." Brabazon discusses the critical issue of motivation in learning. Students who are unmotivated can be passive learners and expect to be spoon-fed. Bombarding students with PowerPoint slides, which they then memorize and regurgitate on exams, is not a pedagogical advance. Lectures which are downloaded when students miss a class provide little opportunity for learning. Didactic lectures, challenging questions, intense debate, and changing the way students think about things gets student attention and enhances motivation, but how much of this goes on these days? E-mail contact with professors can be an opportunity for intellectual debate outside the classroom, although students often misuse e-mail to ask for information already at their disposal, ask for work to be proofread before it is submitted, or think they will get an immediate response to a message, even when it is sent in the middle of the night. She laments these examples of student failure to show self-regulated learning.

These issues are juxtaposed with a consumer/business model of education in which course evaluations are increasingly relied upon for promotion, tenure, and even salary decisions. Brabazon addresses these issues head on. She suggests that motivation is a problem when students write course comments similar to "I liked the course because I could download the lecture and not go to

class," "I liked e-mail so I did not have to go out in the rain to see the professor," or "I liked his shoes." These are comments that I myself have occasionally received over years of teaching, similar to those reported by the author. Despite a significant body of research questioning the validity of numerical student ratings, they continue to grow in use, and even public distribution, because they are confused with accountability, proof of "excellence," or facilitating student "choice" when little is available. At the same time, students also provide some comments that show that education can be a life-shaping experience, as students learn to think critically. These teaching moments are what faculty live for, in addition to other research moments of success not mentioned in this book. So faculty take the good with the bad and the irrelevant.

The book is entertaining. Brabazon uses her own background in cultural studies and history to her advantage by using quotations from popular culture notorieties such as The Pet Shop Boys, Hans Solo, and Bachelor Girl, as well as analogies to Star Trek and Monty Python movies. While entertaining, a few quotations seem to be somewhat tangential or used for shock value. Little is sacred. At times, scorn is directed at teaching administrators who do not teach, governments who cut funding and then declare "crises" in universities, distance education, students who do not know why they are at university, and anyone who chants the many education technology "buzzwords" of the day. Part IV deals with social justice, gender issues, and the cultural shift that may take place if a university education turns students into consumers, information into a commodity to be bought and sold, and the citizenry into watchers and not thinkers. Brabazon closes her preface with the following: "Without attention to social justice, critical literacy and social change, our students will know how to send an e-mail, but have nothing to say in it" (p. xiii).

There are redundancies in some of the chapters, and I found the organization of the book somewhat confusing. If you either do not like humour, or cannot stand satirical comments about

professors, administrators, educators, students, and well-funded policy documents calling for budgetary restraint, then this may not be the book for you. But if you want examples of common faculty concerns about IT in education, then this will be an engaging read. Faculty will identify with many of the examples, and appreciate that despite it all, professors care about students, as well as the importance of teaching, research, and learning to society.

With reference to the book's title, educators who wish to debate teaching and technology issues may be offered hemlock for their Socratic efforts, because on-line education is presumed by some to be inevitable. But by analogy, educators who do not think about these issues nor question the "inevitable" may already be on a digital narcotic.

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