

## Book Review

# Teaching Ethically: Challenges and Opportunities

DeDe Wohlfarth<sup>1</sup>

Citation: Landon, R. E., & McCarthy, M. A. (2012). *Teaching ethically: Challenges and opportunities*. American Psychological Association.

Publishers Description: Educators work within a fluid academic and social landscape that requires frequent examination and re-examination of what constitutes ethical practice. In this book, editors R. Eric Landrum and Maureen McCarthy identify four broad areas of concern in the ethical teaching of undergraduate psychology: pedagogy, student behavior, faculty behavior toward students, and considerations in the diverse classroom. Together with their team of experts, they provide evidence-based advice and case studies that illustrate the application of relevant ethical principles.

Ethical teachers need to reflect on commonly accepted practices and make individual decisions about responsible teaching behaviors, such as honoring individual differences and respectfully challenging beliefs. Other challenges examined in this book include grading, textbook adoption, honor systems, online instruction, and conducting and using research on pedagogy to improve classroom practice. Infusing the undergraduate experience with ethics is the focus of chapters on supervising student internships, coauthoring research with students, and modeling appropriate professional boundaries.

Readers will find a host of practical suggestions for approaching ethics proactively in both traditional and virtual classrooms. This book will become an instant resource for all teachers in the social and behavioral sciences who care about ethical interactions between faculty members and students.

I don't know you, but I suspect we have something in common: we are both busy. You are likely too busy to read this review to its conclusion and are probably skimming its surface for a quick "yea/nay" bottom line. And I can promise that I was too busy to read a book and write a thoughtful review on it, between juggling four kids playing soccer and basketball and their concomitant endless laundry to wash with a full time professor job with its concomitant endless stack of papers to grade. But as I finished R.E. Landon and M.A. McCarthy's (Eds.) *Teaching Ethically: Challenges and Opportunities*, I knew I had to write a smashing review. So, the short answer regarding if this book is worth the \$49.95 cover price is: YES! BUY IT! READ IT! IT'S FANTASTIC!

The more nuanced rationale behind my opinion follows. On the first day after I read the book, I quoted from Chapter 1 to help resolve an intense debate in a faculty meeting regarding the tension between academic freedom and program cohesiveness as epitomized by the question of whether the department needed to adopt the same textbook across all class sections. On the second day after I read the book, I referenced Chapters 5 and 7 to answer my department chair's Dilemma Du Jour regarding the best ways to promote academic integrity and decrease cheating in on-line courses. On the third day after I read the book, I was running (where I do my best

---

<sup>1</sup> Professor of Psychology, Spalding University, [dwohlfarth@spalding.edu](mailto:dwohlfarth@spalding.edu)

thinking) and did some soul searching about how we, as faculty members, have both successfully navigated and horribly botched the muddy terrain of faculty-student boundaries over the last few years. Chapter 12 helped me find some new perspectives regarding boundaries and I could finally put some issues to rest that had once dominated my thoughts for every mile that I ran. The following day, some students approached me with a question about managing some tough conflicts around the ethics of participating in university research interest groups, particularly in regards to the “rules” for receiving publication and presentation credit. I was able to answer them in a thoughtful manner as I recalled Chapter 16. And finally, when a doctoral student working on her dissertation asked me if I knew of any current research regarding professors’ responsibilities to accommodate students with disabilities, I shared Chapter 11’s references for her as we discussed the current research in this area.

In summary, this book has already become a favorite because it has made my chair think I am smarter, my students think I am more helpful, and my colleagues think I am wiser than I really am. (To be fair, it has only increased my children’s opinion of me as a colossal nerd-mom, but that’s hard image to shake when you read textbooks while waiting at sports practices.) I have dog-eared pages, highlighted sections, and written peoples’ names in the margins of ideas I want to share with them. I have loaned out the book twice in two weeks, only to ask for it back because it helped me to ethically and thoughtfully resolve yet another challenge.

In short, read the book. And a bonus to you busy people, who I thank for still reading this review: lots of white space on each page and short chapters makes for easy reading while cooking macaroni.