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In *A Guide to Teaching Introductory Women's and Gender Studies: Socially Engaged Classrooms* (2021), authors Holly Hassel, Christie Launius, and Susan Rensing draw on their years of experience designing and teaching introductory Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) courses as well as the insights of key feminist educators (Catherine Denial, AnaLouise Keating, Catherine Orr, and Carolyn Shrewsbury, among others). Their writing style is engaging and approachable, and they succeed at addressing the concerns of both students and teachers by considering the growing demographic diversity in WGS classrooms. Educators within the field of WGS—graduate students, new faculty, and experienced professors—will find within this text a rich range of pedagogical materials that can be tailored to a variety of different educational settings. Moreover, high school teachers and educators in fields adjacent to WGS may find useful the “threshold concepts” (pp. 10-14) and metacognitive approaches (pp. 101-103) that are clearly outlined. In what follows, I analyze how the authors combine threshold concepts (“new language,” “divergent entry points,” and “affective learning”) with model classroom assessments and anecdotes about their personal teaching experiences. By providing concrete examples of assignments and by demonstrating how educators can effectively assess how students' thinking evolves throughout a course, the authors give educators the tools necessary not only to create innovative, inviting curricula and transformative classroom environments, but also to anticipate their own needs and those of their students.

Reminding readers that “threshold concepts and other new ways of seeing, thinking, and knowing can be tremendously disruptive to students' existing sense of themselves” (p. 67), the authors encourage pedagogues to invite students to challenge their beliefs, while considering how deeply ingrained these beliefs can be. They argue that, in an introductory course, students will become simultaneously familiar with academic concepts and correlated discourse (“new language”) that may be quite foreign to them. Thanks to social media, students may have heard terms such as “toxic masculinity,” but might not understand what this term signifies within the field. Thus, part of the learning process includes an “*unlearning*” stage in which one comes to understand what a term means in a new light. In a particularly helpful section of the book entitled “Anticipating and Addressing Learning Roadblocks” (pp. 72-76), the authors provide clear strategies for educators to address “new language” problems and a variety of other issues—including gender essentialism, misreadings, and misconceptions about the field.

As many WGS educators have witnessed and written about, students' varying levels of background knowledge, or “divergent entry points” (p. 11), as well as their emotional reactions to course content (part of the “affective learning” process (p. 12)), can create challenging classroom situations, making it difficult to create equitable spaces. Throughout the text, the authors examine evidence they collected during a study of seventy-two students enrolled in an introductory WGS class, showing how educators can meet individual students' needs without over-relying on the concept of a “safe space.” (They include a useful summary of critiques of the “safe space classroom” on pp. 45-46.) The authors point out that scaffolding remains one of the most effective ways to create parity in the classroom. Beginning with simple materials for students who struggle to understand key concepts, educators can work their way up to more

complex activities and assignments, which students with prior knowledge about WGS will find challenging. In “Beyond Textbooks” (pp. 64-66), the authors, after carefully laying out the advantages and disadvantages of classroom textbooks, suggest that teachers not only scaffold materials, but also incorporate “StoryCorps segments, Ted Talks, and podcasts” (p. 66) into their courses, as these can help students identify with individuals and their stories, thus encouraging affective learning.

In the fourth chapter of the text, which may well be its strongest, the authors briefly walk readers through feminist resistance to assessment, and then argue that assessment is fundamental to successful instruction (see: “Reclaiming Assessment,” pp. 86-89). The authors tie together the different themes of the text and the content-and-skills-based learning outcomes covered in previous chapters to explain how best to chart student growth. They demonstrate that instructors should use students’ work to understand what they have grasped, and which parts of the curriculum have proved challenging. The fifth and final chapter of the book includes the assessment prompts that Hassel, Launius, and Rensing quote throughout the text. The authors provide readers with little explanation about why they created these particular assessments. More context would have made this part of the text richer, helping educators better anticipate how they might incorporate their values into the classroom. The book could also benefit from a more sustained explanation of how to assess the fourth threshold concept the authors introduce: “macro thinking.”

At the end of “Cultivating a Teacherly Persona” (pp. 40-43)—one beautifully-crafted section of the book that puts pedagogical theory in conversation with Rensing’s personal evolution as a professor—the authors ask, “How do we position ourselves in relation to our course materials? Do we see course materials as extensions of our own views or understanding of an issue? ...Do we even reveal our own positions on issues under discussion?” (p. 43). One might also ask: do we attempt to transmit our personal values to students, and, if so, how and why? The authors put forth many possible answers to these questions, but ultimately leave readers to arrive at their own responses—a wise decision that reflects the authors’ open-ended approach to the WGS curriculum and their commitment to Keating’s “pedagogies of invitation.” No matter their level of pedagogical experience, feminist educators will benefit from reflecting on the pressing questions this book raises about transmitting feminist values in the classroom.