Review of Pagowsky, N., and McElroy, K., (Eds.) (2016) *Critical Library Pedagogy: Essays and Workbook Activities.* Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries 280p. and Pagowsky, N., and McElroy, K., (2016) *Critical Library Pedagogy: Lesson Plans,* Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries 272p.

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Abstract: *Review of Critical Library Pedagogy: Essays and Workbook Activities.* Edited by Nicole Pagowsky and Kelly McElroy (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries 2016. 280p.) and *Critical Library Pedagogy: Lesson Plans* Edited by Nicole Pagowsky and Kelly McElroy (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries 2016. 272p.)

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Until recently, librarians interested in engaging with critical library pedagogy were encouraged to participate in pre-established, collaboratively organized Twitter chats using the #critlib hashtag. During these hour-long discussions, librarians whose backgrounds span disciplines, continents, and contexts, dive into questions that probe issues of power, privilege, identity expression, and positionality within library work at large. While its inaugural April 2014 chat was spearheaded primarily by a core group of academic librarians, it has since grown to encompass library staff at all levels while promoting discourse that bridges the work academic, special, and public librarians undertake. However, #critlib conversations have also faced scrutiny from active participants and "lurkers" alike, primarily within the context that Twitter chats operate. On June 30, 2015, moderators hosted a segment called "Critiquing #Critlib" allowing participants to speak openly on the initiative's shortcomings ("critiquing #critlib | critlib," 2015). Broadly speaking, users voiced that #critlib's focus on dense theoretical frameworks alienated those who had not engaged with them prior to the discussion. Others mentioned that this made it challenging to position their lived experience as valuable alongside the theory-laden discourse.

Critical Library Pedagogy: Essays and Workbook Activities and *Critical Library Pedagogy: Lesson Plans* are two volumes borne out of that tension. Editors Nicole Pagowsky and Kelly McElroy intentionally curate chapters juxtaposing theory and praxis, recognizing each as essential to the work of critical librarianship. The contributing authors reflect a myriad of voices from within and beyond the #critlib community, as each chapter highlights many of the topics discussed during the monthly twitter chats. However, Pagowsky and McElroy also use these volumes to address the root of that earlier tension; both volumes feature introductions that offer thorough primers on foundational theories and concepts "for those just starting to explore critical pedagogy" (p. xviii). This includes an overview of the "banking concept of education" from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and various lenses through which "conscientization" can be dissected (p. xix). In turn, the volumes are organized around two themes: Volume 1 reflects on "personal practice, describe[s] projects, and explore[s] major ideas," and Volume 2 "consists of lesson plans" that "include everything from small activities to multi-session projects" librarians can implement to begin or further their critical pedagogy practice (p. xix).

Opening with introspection at its core, author Heidi LM Jacobs discusses "Falling out of Praxis," encouraging librarians to develop "reflective habits of mind" that continually assess their progress in fostering critical learning environments (p. 1). Volume 1 continues with dialogue surrounding risk, inviting librarians learning to lean into their discomfort; Anne Jumonville Graf takes opportunities for "risk and reflection" by "sharing control and power in the classroom" and "prioritiz[ing] student voices" (p. 10, 12); and Ian Beilin embraces a willingness to dispatch with one's lesson plan, describing three teaching experiences where his own work embodied such risk. In chapters 4-6, Karen P. Nicholson, Carolyn Caffrey Gardner and Rebecca Halpern, and Emily Drabinski and Meghan Sitar sequence through a variety of topics that consider the transformation of educational institutions into neoliberal universities valuing "the formation of student-as-commodity for the market" (p. 30). They design value-based assessment methods featuring "learner-centered approach[es]" (p. 44), and the fraught nature of ACRL's *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* as "another standard" whose "disavowal of power only makes that power harder to identify and grapple with" (p. 54). Conversely, Ashley P. Ireland's chapter on "Queering Library Instruction for Composition" uses queer theory to postulate the *Framework*'s contents as malleable and "liberating," allowing it to support a variety of instruction methods (p. 139). Rounding this discussion out, Elizabeth Galoozis and Caro Pinto build upon the neoliberal university framework that Nicholson introduces, positing that combatting "increasing emphasis on the monetary and capitalist value of higher education" involves "empower[ing] students to act on their own behalf…as agents of their own learning" through liberal education models (p. 162, 163).

A fair bulk of Volume 1's chapters then segues into practical approaches for critical pedagogy: Gr Keer points out the "messy…groundwork" required for successful implementation of critical pedagogy methods (p. 66); Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe encourages meeting "additional [critical pedagogy] learning outcomes" by carefully selecting the examples we use "for demonstrating search strategies and tools," a key suggestion woven throughout later chapters in Volume 2 (p. 75); Jessica Critten and Andrea G. Stanfield focus on "social constructivist pedagogy" as a tool for moving "…away from guided classroom activities and toward helping students develop a critical consciousness" (p. 86); and Kenny Garcia shares

lessons learned from coordinating a summer learning program to "empower working class youth of color through popular education and social justice projects" (p. 94). Several chapters then delve into using collaborative teaching methods as a tool within the critical pedagogy shed; Jessica Hochman details how partnerships between LIS institutions and public libraries affirm personalized student learning by drawing on their community identities (p. 101), and Patrick Williams furthers this discourse by discussing collaborative learning within special collections and archival instruction. Williams used physical maps in sessions to make "palatable the interactions in these spaces between…hundred-year-old books and the young people using them; each student's perspective and experience overlaid on the map of our city in complementary, personal ways" (p. 112). Later sections veer into approaches for incorporating "anti-racist pedagogy" into library instruction and bringing "hip hop" into the classroom; both Melissa Kalpin Prescott and Danielle Rowland provide fresh takes on how librarians might approach these strategies in Chapter 25 and Chapter 27, emphasizing race and student identity as focal points within the library instruction session. Alongside this, Maura Seale suggests strategies for "incorporating critical information literacy" in "situations that are frequently out of our control," a useful piece for teaching amid challenging constraints (p. 230).

The volume then moves from these frameworks to those challenging neutrality using critical government documents instruction and embracing feminist pedagogy as a teaching tool. In Melanie Maksin's chapter, readers are encouraged to "problematize the process-and-product model of government information" and realize "that we can intervene in [its] production and dissemination" (p. 122); Caitlin Shanley and Laura Chance share how they encourage intersectionality, "fearless expression," "making mistakes," and "taking up space" among participants in their "Girls Rock Philly" summer camp program (p. 153).

Some chapters also embrace macro-level analyses of the academy and the role of teaching librarians within it; Alison Hicks and Caroline Sinkinson assert that critical pedagogy should challenge "assumptions … underl[ying] understandings of [student] retention" within colleges and universities, and that the current practice involves making students feel that they "must disconnect from their own reality…to be subsumed into authoritative or dominant institutional values and norms in order to be successful within academia" (p. 173, 174). Compare this alongside Kevin P. Seeber's take on the "Failed Pedagogy of Punishment," for it

characterizes traditional institutional responses to plagiarism as "disproportionately impact[ing] students who have limited exposure to higher education" (p. 131,136). Finally, Aliqae Geraci highlights the uncoordinated nature of government and institutional statistics tracking library instruction metrics, noting that more standardized data collection is needed if librarians are to "build solidarity" with other teaching faculty (p. 190).

Volume 1's final chapters circle back to the theme of self reflection as pivotal to critical pedagogy; Marisol Ramos, Dawn Cadogan, Sharon Giovenale, Kathleen R. Labadorf, and Jennifer Snow ask the reader to enact their own "critical vulnerability" by leaving notions of expertise "at the door" (p.197); both Donna Witek, and Megan Watson and Dave Ellenwood's chapters suggest one embrace silence in their next instruction session while building relationships of trust with students; Robert Schroeder aims to invert negative stereotypes surrounding student resistance and one's response to it; and Xan Goodman provides a much-needed reminder that examining one's whiteness within the profession remains key to "cultivating sensitivity and awareness about our patrons' cultural backgrounds" (p. 224). Elizabeth Mens, Julia Skinner, and Nicole A. Cooke bring these narratives home by asking pertinent, self-reflective questions: "how did you get where you are today?" to map your previous transformative learning experiences (p. 239), "what are information worlds?" to inspire creation of self-made diagrams articulating your position within the information lifecycle (p. 244), and "how would you like to be remembered by your patrons?" as a way to "deepen our practice" of reflective introspection (p. 248).

Volume 2 is where practical applications of earlier narratives shine; this book is composed of lesson plans sectioned into logical parts: *Introduction*, *Learning Outcomes*, *Materials*, *Preparation*, *Session Instructions*, *Assessment*, and *Reflections*. Some authors have also appended teaching materials to their chapter, creating opportunities for reuse or remixing of original worksheets, questionnaires, slides, and other illustrations. Given this formula, Volume 2 operates around distinct themes that further define the instruction strategies presented. The first primarily focuses on centering learners using collaborative instruction methods; Maura A. Smale and Stephen Francoeur sought to "acknowledge students' prior experiences with research" by having them contribute anonymously to a shared online document during class activities (p. 9); Romel Espinel used active learning to engage students

in-session about authority, authorship, and Internet research, striving to make them "conscious of their role in knowledge production as authors" (p. 22); Eamon Tewell and Katelyn Angell's student-driven, critical questioning of authors and authority within scholarly discourse relied heavily on "student input" contributed via in-class presentations (p. 49); Jacob Berg's chapter on "Googling Google" encourages expanding discourse beyond the classroom, as students were required to contextualize their search habits after learning about the company's problematic algorithms; Amy Gilgan had students critically assess zines and other "feminist subcultures," encouraging them to collectively "shar[e] their search process and sources with the rest of the class" prior to wrapping up (p. 104); and Angela Pashia's activity involved completing a collaborative final semester assignment wherein student groups peer-reviewed submitted class projects to simulate grant funding selection methods. This encouraged students to see themselves not just as "information consumers," but as a meaningful part of larger knowledge production processes (p. 190).

Another meaningful theme peppered throughout Volume 2 was the use of feminist pedagogical methods as a means to achieving critical pedagogy goals. Sharon Ladenson's purposeful pair-share work included a "worksheet that involve[d] raising critical questions" about the "representation of women in animated films," followed by an "interactive" class discussion (p. 42); Gina Schlesselman-Tarango and Frances Suderman helped students contextualize information lifecycles and "issues of power" embedded within them, using feminist pedagogy to design "small-group work, student-led instruction, and group discussion" activities (p. 60, 61); Dory Cochran encouraged students to explore "multiple sides of an argument" using pop culture and feminist assessment methods such as "freewrites" (p. 109, 112); Lydia Willoughby and Kelly Blanchat used feminist pedagogy to posit that in-class hashtag searching allowed students to engage critically with "community-based research content" (p. 208).

Authors also utilized artistic, non-traditional modes of learning by enabling student-created projects; Lauren Wallis "question[ed] implicit power dynamics at work in scholarly conversations" by having students diagram connections between articles and their authors (p. 2); Nora Almeida created a podcast assignment that allowed "engage[ment] in public cultural dialogues" (p. 27); Sarah Polkinghorne "created a simple visualization of the main elements

that are in play when we search for information," exchanging tools-based teaching methods for critical discussion of "human information-seeking models" (p. 81, 82); Robin Potter and Alycia Sellie encouraged a "collective questioning of how information is constructed, disseminated, and understood" by having students create a one-page zine within the one-shot format (p. 118); Haruko Yamauchi used faux Library of Congress call number labels to structure a book-sorting activity, allowing students to "create their own meaning" before learning about previously constructed information organization models (p. 126); and Dave Ellenwood and Alyssa Berger used hip hop as a primary source, positioning students' contributed annotations within the larger scholarly discourse (p. 198).

Volume 2 also thrives on efforts to center marginalized perspectives within instruction; often, authors simply focused their efforts on selecting meaningful materials to teach. Kelly Wooten used zines as primary source documents, but instead chose to specifically highlight those "written by queer or transgender people, people of color, young people, people living with disabilities, and people from various class backgrounds" (p. 95); Xan Goodman asked students to interrogate "the pseudoscience of scientific racism" by selecting oppressive, outdated medical terminologies in an effort to "critically [question] health sciences authority" (p. 135, 132); Alan Carbery and Sean Leahy unearthed documents showcasing "perspectives in the encounter between nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants and an increasingly hostile American legal system" to parallel today's immigration debate (p. 156); Margaret Browndorf asked students to select one personal item from their bag, then trade documents and take turns "describing what they [could] learn" about each other based on those primary source materials (p. 166); and Gina Levitan used historical newspaper searches to frame topics like "Women in Computer Science," encouraging honest discussion about perceived social progress (or lack thereof) in the one-shot session (p. 171).

When considering technological, data, and digital literacies, authors also had a bevy of lesson plans on hand; Christine Photinos "challeng[ed] the neutrality of numbers and images" using "a series of illustrations, discussion prompts, and activities" during sessions (p. 71); Andrew Battista and Jill Conte created data visualizations on social justice issues to use as "teaching tools," then paired those with "critical questions for students to ponder" alongside materials (p. 149); Erin Pappas, Celia Emmelhainz, and Maura Seale compared "different

visualizations and interpretations based on the same data" to challenge narrative assumptions about that dataset's completeness or truth (p. 180); Jolanda-Pieta (Joey) van Arnhem used mobile library applications to introduce "multicultural students in summer transition programs" to pivotal library resources (p. 227); Ilana Stonebraker, Caitlan Maxwell, and Jessica Jerrit empowered students to explore "corporate social responsibility" and ethical corporate behavior by investigating consumer marketing data (p. 140); Joshua F. Beatty's offered an interesting example on teaching Zotero workshops from the ground up; and Fobazi M. Ettarh provided an excellent example on teaching digital literacy using gendered advertisements. More importantly, Ettarh suggested ways to better accommodate students with mild to severe cognitive disabilities while doing so, providing one of the few concrete examples on how best to support this.

Several chapters also offer micro-instruction methods and advice on scaling information literacy efforts to accommodate larger undergraduate first-year program sizes. Jenna Freedman shares a brief collaborative brainstorming exercise, emphasizing that learning to "sacrifice content the students need in favor of engaging [their] heads and hearts" might help to ground one's critical praxis (p. 225); alternatively, Rachel Gammons discusses how to expertly transition critical information pedagogy instruction from sessions designed for smaller groups to ones for "thousands of students," with particularly meaningful outcomes being "greater levels of vulnerability and trust" from participating librarians who worked to make the transition critically reflective for all involved (p. 236, 239).

Despite the breadth of literature introduced and resources shared within these texts, Pagowsky and McElroy assert that these volumes "are not endpoints—[they] do not have everything [one] need[s]" to do the work of critical pedagogy (p. xx). Still, they provide a robust starting point both for those newly acquainted with the field, and veteran pedagogues alike. There are some topics that suffer from lack of perspective, specifically, portions on teaching hip hop from the perspective of whiteness without encouraging that librarians interested in doing so actually listen to the genre, but almost all do an excellent job of pushing readers to consider their positionality with respect to the privileges and oppressions they experience in and outside of the classroom. Overall, authors and editors do a fantastic job at emphasizing the messiness of attempting to implement critical pedagogy, asserting that an iterative

approach is needed to continually grow within one's practice. Powerfully, authors encourage readers to remember that hierarchical, oppressive structures are part of the package -it is how librarians operate within and challenge these structures that matter most, and centering student experiences within such efforts remains key to meaningful teaching, no matter what critical pedagogy lens you use.

References

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