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Feminist Teacher, Volume 19, Number 1, 2008, p. 70 (Article)

Published by University of Illinois Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/ptr.0.0020>



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The Old Woman and the Rug: The Wonder and Pain of Teaching (and Learning) Chemistry

CATHERINE HURT MIDDLECAMP

Learning can be both exhilarating and painful, as is pointed out in the Sufi tale from which this essay takes its title. In our college classrooms, we (and our students) are spared neither of these emotions when we engage in the learning process. This personal essay reflects on the author's experiences teaching two different chemistry courses that have wider societal issues at their core. The

first, Chemistry in Context, is a large lecture course. The second is a small course taught at the intersection of indigenous people and nuclear chemistry. This essay weaves together stories from these two courses. The resulting tapestry can reveal to us something about the nature of who we are and what we do in the classroom, perhaps with a bit of wonder and pain.