Teaching What You're Not

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here was a time not long ago when the only complaints students levied against professors were that they assigned too much work or that their lectures were delivered in a soporific monotone. Today, radical changes in the composition of the university, the ongoing revision of canons and curricula, and the politicization of knowledge have profoundly altered the landscape, introducing an identity-based definition of credibility as an entirely new precondition of authority.

As a result, questions that previous generations of educators never considered have taken on a central importance: Can whites teach African American literature effectively and legitimately? What is at issue when a man teaches a women's studies course? How effectively can a straight woman educate students about gay and lesbian history? What are the political implications of the study of the colonizers by the colonized? More generally, how does the identity of an educator affect his or her credibility with students and with other educators?

In incident after well-publicized incident, these abstract questions have turned up in America's classrooms and in national media, often trivialized as the latest example of PC excess. Going beyond simplistic headlines, *Teaching What You're Not* broaches these and many other difficult questions. With contributions from scholars in a variety of disciplines, the book examines the ways in which historical, cultural, and personal identities impact on pedagogy and scholarship. *Teaching What You're Not* gets at the heart of the ongoing debates about identity politics in the academy, and society at large.

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Cover design by Adventure House, NYC

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS
Washington Square
New York, NY 10003