The Well-Tempered Lecturer

By Jay Parini

Despite well-meaning efforts to engage students, the lecture remains a common feature of college classes, and the lecture remains a highly frustrating format. The pace of higher education in the United States is so fast that few institutions can afford to shift course formats altogether. However, as Jay Parini notes, "Few professors can make every class exciting or memorable, even though many instructors believe that their teaching experiences must necessarily occur in their most stimulating, engaging ways, even though instructors themselves can sometimes find that their teaching is less than effective, even though they believe that their teaching could be more stimulating, even though they believe that their teaching could be more impactful."

"The Well-Tempered Lecturer," a collection of essays by Jay Parini, explores the challenges and possibilities of the lecture format. Parini examines the role of the lecturer in the classroom, the relationship between the lecturer and the audience, and the potential for lectures to inspire and engage students. He also discusses the historical context of the lecture as a teaching format and the ways in which it has evolved over time. Through his analysis, Parini argues that lectures can be powerful tools for teaching and learning, provided they are designed and delivered thoughtfully.

For instance, Parini suggests that lecturers can enhance the audience's engagement by incorporating visual aids, such as slides or videos, and by involving the audience in discussions or activities. He also emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive classroom environment, where students feel comfortable asking questions and sharing their ideas.

In conclusion, Parini's book offers valuable insights for anyone interested in improving their lecturing skills, whether they are new or experienced teachers. It challenges readers to think about the role of the lecture in the modern classroom and to consider how they can use this format to create more engaging and effective learning experiences.

"The Well-Tempered Lecturer" is a must-read for anyone who wants to enhance their teaching skills and make their lectures more effective and enjoyable for students. It is a thoughtful and practical guide that offers valuable insights into the art of lecturing.