

Dear Sara,

Thank you for allowing me to observe your class on September 11th, 2017. It was a pleasure! You are such a thoughtful and organized instructor. It was clear to me – and I think your students, as well – just how much thought and intention you put into each classroom activity.

Your goals for the class were for the students to: [1] feel comfortable with the assignment, [2] start the thought processes connected to field research, and [3] land on a topic for the Essay 2. The first two goals set were amply achieved during the class time, and although some student groups had a difficult time settling on a topic by the end of class, you gave them a concrete plan for determining a topic before the next class meeting.

You began the class by passing out an updated course schedule to the students. As this class took place at the beginning of Unit 2, I thought this was a wonderful way to remind students of their upcoming responsibilities in 10803. By providing a hard copy of the calendar, it drew the students' attention to something that they may have skimmed over online in D2L or in an email.

The lecture portion of your class focused on Essay 2. You made sure to emphasize to students that their research should address social situations, trends, or problems, and that complexity of thought is important for this assignment. During the lecture, you also foregrounded any concerns they may have about group work with a preface on collaborative writing. You made it explicit that in the "real world," aka in a professional position after college, students will have to work with colleagues, and sometimes colleagues they do not personally share any interests with. I thought this an insightful example for the students. I also found it interesting that you used a survey to pair them. As a pedagogical approach, I can see how this takes some of the pressure off the instructor to create pairs (even though you're still the one reading the surveys) and gives some responsibility to the students. You finished the lecture portion by reminding the partners that they are now accountable to each other, as well as to you. I think this will encourage attendance during the essay writing process and help lower the amount of complications that arise from absenteeism during a collaborative project.

The activity portion of the class encouraged students to consider what their research questions might mean in the context of a community or a culture. You asked students to write field notes on their classroom environment and to break up their comments into two groups: evaluative (Who? What? When? Where?), and interpretive (Why? How?). You then assigned them their Essay 2 partners and asked them to discuss their classroom field notes. After some discussion, the partners reported their thoughts. You ended the activity by allowing the partners time to discuss a topic and/or swap contact information, while sharing that the next class would focus on research interviews.

Throughout the class period, your students seemed to understand the lecture, as well as appreciate the practicality of the activities. I know you expressed some concerns about lecturing too much, but I thought you strove to provide a healthy balance between activity and information. One thing that I do in my class (which is also early in the morning), and that may help with the energy of your students, is have them do an activity or pair-and-share right off the bat, so that way they know they are going to be responsible for generating the content and discussion. Another one of your concerns was running out of time, but the pacing of the class was spot on! The activities you selected were appropriate, relevant, and flowed well.

Thank you again for allowing me to observe, and I look forward to having you visit my class next Monday!

Warm Regards,
Tyler Jean Duker