

From: Guardiola, Mayra MAYRA.GUARDIOLA@tcu.edu
Subject: Re: 10803 observation
Date: September 18, 2017 at 2:54 PM
To: Kelm, Sara S.KELM@tcu.edu
Cc: Leverenz, Carrie c.leverenz@tcu.edu

MG

Dear Sara,

Please see below for my teaching observation letter for your class:

On September 18, 2017 at 9:00-9:50am, I observed your English 10803: Introduction to Composition class located at Winston-Scott Hall 215. The goals for your class that day were to go over interpretation and focus as it relates to the Profile of a Place essay assignment, since as you pointed out, all writing is intentional. You also wanted to focus on how details and visuals contribute to their understanding of the focus and interpretation of an essay. Lastly, you wanted them to begin to think about how they plan to write their essay with their partner for the essay assignment.

Before beginning your lesson, you had a powerpoint ready to go on the screen, you quietly took attendance, answered some questions from students, and called the attention of the class. Before beginning to the bulk of your lesson, you took a few minutes to address some housekeeping announcements. Here, you pointed out that students should focus on what you're saying/teaching instead of staring on laptops and using their phones during class. You also made sure to point out that they must be present and prepared for class, which includes bringing class materials needed for that day. You also forecasted some news for the classes next week, mostly about holding partner conferences at the TCU Bookstore Starbucks, and to make sure to sign up for a time on the Conference Sign Up sheet that is going to be passed around throughout the class. For the announcements part of the class, most students were attentive, but there were a few people with laptops that were checking their e-mail while you were reminding them of "adult things" we all have to do and keep in mind.

From here, you proceeded to address the powerpoint you created for the lesson on focus and interpretation. You went on to the next slide, which had the word "intentional" in big, bold letters across the screen. After asking the class what you mean by writing is intentional, you took some responses from students, whose responses were pretty spot on. You emphasized that all writing, including the essays that they read, was written intentionally and with a purpose. You moved on to the next slide, which contained some clarifications and details to look for in regards to focus and interpretation. For this slide, I can't remember exactly what you had on it, but I do remember that your next slide contained some questions for the students to consider when they break off into groups. For their group work, they were to break off in four groups, two were dedicated to the "Zydeco" essay and the other two groups were dedicated to the "Village with no Children." The questions you wanted them to interrogate include what the main idea and focus/interpretation of the essay was, what are some specific details of the visuals and text that support their focus/interpretation, lastly, they were to state what the effect of this focus/interpretation had on readers. You wanted everyone to engage with these questions, and stated that they didn't have to turn in anything in.

You gave the groups about ten minutes to go through the questions and answer them, then all the groups that read the same essay grouped together and discussed what they got for the questions in relation to the essay they read and analyzed. After giving these two large groups five to seven minutes discussing the similarities and differences between their answers, you had them report out to the class on what the groups collectively came up with. All throughout their group discussions with each other, you made sure to see how they were getting on by walking about the room, answering any questions. During the class discussion on the group's respective findings, you made sure to respond to each student's response, and also point out how practicing to identify how writing is intentional benefits their understanding of the text and incorporate that into their own writing. After the discussion, it was evident to you that a lot of students did not read the texts, or even skim. You then addressed this issue by telling the class the importance of coming prepared to class, even if it's a quick glance at the text, since you base your lessons on the readings. In the last 15-20 minutes of class, you had the students pair up with their essay partners and they were to exchange research notes, respond to their teammate's notes and note the similarities and differences between the two. They were to talk over their findings from each other's notes, and lastly, attempt to focus and narrow in on their focus and interpretation and potentially start to form an outline for their first draft.

Before my observation, you sent me an e-mail that you particularly wanted me to pay attention to, which was student engagement to your instruction and discussion, and your time management in relation to your activities. For student engagement, overall the students seemed a bit distracted in the beginning, but later perked up during your activities. During the two exercises, which were splitting the groups into four groups and then later, joining the groups based on the essay they analyzed, it was evident that some students took the lead in answering the questions, and others were either distracted with laptop or phone or weren't engaging with the rest of the group. Especially evident of their disengagement was when they broke up into the two big groups. When one group started talking about their findings from the research questions, the other group would stop paying attention and revert back to their computers (except for a few students). I also noticed that while I was seated at the center of the class towards the back, it was often hard to hear the students speak, especially in the front rows and on the other side of the room. Perhaps that's another reason it's hard for student's to engage, because they can't hear their classmates on the other side of the room. Lastly, I think your activities were appropriately long, and you seemed to have a good pace. You were concerned in your e-mail to me about having two activities, but I thought they went well, and was helpful for students to practice spotting focus/interpretation, which was evident in their responses to you. During the last 15-20 minutes of class when the students were paired up, almost all of the pairs seemed to be on task, discussing their research notes, and finding times to get together to work on their essay 2 assignment. They was a bit of chit-chat, but that's okay so that they can get used to each other and be more comfortable. You seemed really comfortable in your teaching and you were clear about what you wanted from them. I also liked how you addressed the last question, "what is the effect of the details/focus/interpretation on readers," by honing in on a student's physical and emotional response to the material in that the village essay was "eerie and creepy." This helped your students realize that responding to that question, doesn't necessarily have to be this long response. Your students, for the most part, were engaged in the activities, and seemed to learn a great deal more about the importance of having a clear and distinct focus/interpretation with details from the text/visuals to back up that focus/interpretation.

I enjoyed observing your class and learned a lot from your teaching style. For example, I plan to also emphasize the focus and interpretation of the text and do a very similar activity in order for them to see how it works for other people's essays but lastly, how they can incorporate it

of the text and do a very similar activity in order for them to see how it works for other people's essays but really, how they can incorporate it into their own essay. As far as keeping your students engaged, I have a few suggestions: 1.) ask them to put away electronics when it's time for class discussion of the group work. 2.) require them to turn their answers in to the questions from the activity, even if its not for a grade. This will let you know who's paying attention and will also help with accountability, 3.) maybe consider setting a timer for each activity to ensure you get through everything within the time limit. For example, 7 minutes for announcements, then set another for 10 minutes for instruction, 10 minutes for each activity, etc. If something goes over or under, you can adjust accordingly (set a timer not an alarm!).

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns from this observation letter and thank you again for having me in your class!

Best wishes,

Mayra Alejandra Guardiola

M.A. Candidate & Graduate Instructor
Department of English
Texas Christian University
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On Sep 18, 2017, at 6:37 AM, Kelm, Sara <S.KELM@tcu.edu> wrote:

And I forgot to copy Carrie on this! Apologies again!

Sara Kelm, M.A.
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On Sep 18, 2017, at 6:23 AM, Kelm, Sara <S.KELM@tcu.edu> wrote:

Mayra,

I apologize for getting this email to you so late — I am observing Tyler this morning at 8, and so I completely forgot that you would be observing me this morning at 9a (in Winton Scott Hall 215)! I will print this email and give it you in class, in case you don't have a chance to read this before you come in. Again, sincerest apologies.

1) During this class, I'd like students to learn more about the interpretation and focus part of the profile assignment. I realized during our RAP discussion on Friday that they weren't quite getting it, so I built this in. I also want them to see how the visuals and details help support that interpretation. I also want them to start thinking about how they are going to write this essay with their partner.

2) We will spend part of the class discussing in groups the two readings they had. I'm hoping that groups work will help them to talk to each other and learn from each other. I'm going to try it where I break them into four groups (two groups on each reading), and then have the two groups that discussed a particular reading meet up and see how their discussions were similar or different. I also want to make sure they have ample work time with their teammates. I want them to look at each other's notes from their observations and use that to start developing their theme or focus. If they don't have observation notes, they can jump straight to the outline. I'm certain we will run out of time.

3) I would like a response to the balance of activities. I really struggle with time management when I try to do two things in each class. I know I should keep it to one, but there's so much to cover! I would also be interested in how you think the discussion activity goes. I've tried this sort of thing before with varied success, so I'm uncertain if it will work. Lastly, just any sort of other insights you might have about the class environment and student engagement would be great.

Again, I'm sorry for the lateness of this email, but I am looking forward to having you in class today! See you then!

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