

U·A·L·R

DEPARTMENT OF RHETORIC AND WRITING
Department of Excellence

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Class Observation, Aaron Baker, November 22, 2005, 6 p.m., SUA102C

When I came into the classroom, you were silently working at the teacher station; your students were quiet. Having taught in 102C, I know it can be difficult at times to “stay connected” with your students from the beginning of each class—particularly when you’re trying to get materials organized to show on the document camera or open documents in Word or websites on the Internet. (I’ve caught myself doing exactly the same thing, so take this comment as something that we both need to think about.) **And** when you’re teaching after having worked all day, it can be difficult to be “up” and animated. It’s worth your while, though, to talk to students a bit when you enter the classroom or to say “hello” when they walk in.

Once class started, you said, “I’m going to be passing back . . .” but never said what it was you were returning. (I wanted to know.) I think it’s always a good idea to state what it is you’re passing back; making a few comments about what you saw, what they did well, etc., is also a good habit to get into.

You then asked about instruction packets, which you evidently had asked them to e-mail to you. As part of your discussion of instructions, you began talking about improper citation of images—and the importance of “calling out” the image and of giving the proper citation for that image. You explained this point well, and I could see on your students’ faces that they understood.

It was the last day of talking about the application portfolio assignment, so you reviewed next week’s activities: specifically, interview presentations (mock interviews), with you as the interviewer. I liked how you were very matter-of-fact in your response to questions about what to wear: “Dress up.

The conversation then moved to consideration of fonts—the best to use for body text, for headings. The Socratic questioning you used worked *very* well. I liked the fact that when you asked questions, your students actually *answered* you! That was great—no small feat for a night class full of folks who have probably just gotten off work themselves. And I liked how other students chimed in and answered classmates’ questions. You seem to have built a fine rapport with your students. They joke with each other and with you.

Given the way that the room is set up, the teacher ends up having to stay behind the podium. I’d like to see you out with the students. And I’d also like to see you have students sit closer together. There were two “outliers” in the back row in the right-hand corner. Get them with the rest of the class. Make them move off the back row. Don’t be afraid of telling people what to do. (Later on in the period, you told them precisely what you wanted to see in their application letters, and did they pay attention.) Try to make SUA102C—a very “lecture type” of room—a writing room.

You then put up sample resumes and application letters for critique—what could be improved or changed? What’s good about them? No one watching you would doubt that you know what you’re doing. And as your students responded, you complimented them for their answers. Letting students know when they’ve done well should be a common practice among teachers. Good for you!

It was time for students to complete class evaluations, so we prepared to leave. In short, I think you’ve done a good job as a first-semester teacher. That first class is always a challenge. Add to that the fact of your teaching after a full day of work in a lecture-style classroom, and anyone would be amazed at your doing so well. Having had you in class during the day, I know how much higher your energy level is then. I’d love to see you teach earlier in the day. Might that be an option for you? Our discussions over the course of the semester on your grading techniques and strategies were, I hope, helpful.

You’ve done well, Aaron. (As always, know that you can come to me for advice.)

