

Observer: TuSmith
Reappointments Committee
No. of Students Observed: 23
Room: 208 Kariotis

Instructor: Kevin Cassell
Date/Time: Tu, 2/10/98, 11:45-12:50
Course: ENG 1111

TEACHER PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Summary of Class Session:

The session took place in a somewhat cramped room with students sitting all around and the instructor moving around in the middle. After preliminary announcements, the instructor gave a quiz (5 questions + 2 extra credit ones) on the assigned reading. The majority of class time (40-45 mins.) was spent on discussing Ellison's "Battle Royal" from *The Invisible Man*. A homework writing assignment was given in the final 5 minutes of class.

Course Planning/Preparation:

The syllabus has clearly defined guidelines and objectives for the course. Substantial emphasis is placed on building a professional-looking portfolio (70% of the grade) that includes 4 papers. Newsgroup postings, one-paragraph reading responses, and quizzes comprise the remainder of the grade. Since the course is divided into five units based on specific reading strategies, weekly readings are not predetermined (although there is an impressive packet of reading materials for the course). This allows for flexibility and focus on meeting instructional objectives. The substantial instructional materials--handouts targeting specific writing assignments as well as exercises in word choice, sentence structure, punctuation, etc.--that the instructor utilizes in his teaching are a great asset to students. Such materials reflect well on the instructor.

Classroom Strengths:

- The instructor has the ability to make literature "come alive"; his training and experience as an actor added a dimension to Ellison's text that successfully conveyed the power of language even to recalcitrant students.
- The instructor's uninhibited dramatic expression of the text encouraged student participation, conveying the message that students' ideas and enjoyment of the work were welcomed.
- The scope of the discussion was impressive. A potentially volatile story (where students might have gotten defensive) was covered in some depth with good attention to detail (e.g., scene, tone, mood, perspective).
- The instructor did a good job of presenting Marxist thought and connecting this to Ellison's story.

Suggestions for Improvement:

- While a single class observation is necessarily out of context, the observer would still like to remind the instructor that the goal of ENG 1111 is to strengthen students' writing. Thus, it is useful to keep the goal in mind even as instructor and students are engrossed in a literary discussion. The instructor might point out direct connections between a specific literary element or technique and actual problems and/or strengths in his students' writing during a discussion of literature.
- In class discussions, work on drawing out students even more so that the instructor doesn't put out most of the energy on a regular basis. There is the danger for students to mistakenly view the instructor as an entertainer rather than a teacher.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT:

Kevin Cassell is an exceptionally engaging, creative, and knowledgeable instructor. His written course materials and classroom presence attest to his commitment to and skill in teaching. While his vivaciousness stands out in staid academia, it is an approach from which there is much to learn.