



The University of New Mexico

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## Teaching Observation of Kevin Cassell

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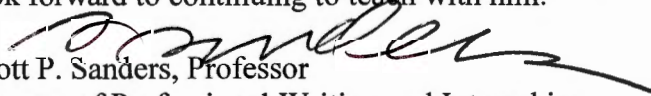
I have observed Kevin Cassell teach English 219 Technical Writing in a variety of venues during the fall 2005 semester and the intersession associated with that semester. Initially, Kevin gave me access to his WebCT, fully online section of 219. I logged in to the class, navigated around the assignments, lectures, and so on, and noted that he had made several changes to the “template” for WebCT 219s that Valerie Thomas developed and is used in varying degrees (for many it is used in its entirety) by the various instructors. The site was orderly, complete, and looked very usable to me.

This first look through Kevin’s online 219 was early in the term, and followed up on a conversation we had had in late summer. Before the term began, Kevin and I talked about his plans to adapt the existing 219 template so that it would better match his approach to teaching technical writing. When I saw the course on the screen, it matched our discussions – basically Kevin uses a slightly different suite of assignments in a very different order, so the alterations weren’t, in my judgment, all that major, and the end result was a very usable 219 section.

Later in the term Kevin shared with me a notebook with, among other things, student responses to some of the aspects of the online course. I reviewed some student portfolios of work that included memos, letters, a report, and so on. Again, the materials were clearly within the bounds of a solid section of 219. Teaching an online 219 is like writing a 219 textbook: lectures are all written, comments back and forth to students are all written, and so on. Kevin invests much time in this work, and his students clearly appreciate his commitment to their work.

During the intersession I observed Kevin teaching in the computer classroom next to mine, holding conferences with students one on one during breaks, and, finally, he and I discussed the unique features of the 5-hour, 8 meeting classes we were teaching on several occasions after class. In all of these venues of observation, I was impressed by Kevin’s energy and his evident, freely expressed enthusiasm for the material and for his students.

I know Mr. Cassell is interested in continuing to develop new ways we can teach 219 – which means curricular development within the course online “template” as well as exploring new delivery methods – online, hybrid, 8-week, and intersession sections. Tech writing is one of our most over-subscribed courses, so all of this innovation directly addresses a key problem in our core writing offerings. In Kevin Cassell we are fortunate to have a colleague who is talented, engaged, and working in one of the more pressing areas of concern in our core curriculum. I look forward to continuing to teach with him.

  
Scott P. Sanders, Professor  
Director of Professional Writing and Internships