

Class Visitation Report

Instructor: Michael Russo Observer: Cameron Bushnell Date of Visit: 11/07/17

Subject of Class/Course Name and Number: Engl 1030

Reading Assignments: No readings needed in preparation for this assignment

Writing Assignments and Activities: **Introduction of the Multi-modal Project; opportunities to think about and practice with the effects of re-mediation.**

1. Course content, goals, and activities this day. How did the instructor present the goals and content in the framework of the course as a whole? What were the student responses to the presentation?

Michael presented the day's lesson as an Introduction to the Multi-Modal project. The framework for the day's lesson was personal anecdote: sending my dad a birthday greeting that said, "I love you."

He reviewed the rhetorical structure of speaker, audience, and message, and then introduced the relevant idea for this project: how does the medium change the message.

He treated his students with great respect in introducing sophisticated, but useful vocabulary, such as 1) the medium being an "interstitial" element or the material between speaker and message, and 2) each choice of medium offered "affordances" and "constraints." These terms formed the basis of the lesson.

2. What were the methods used by the teacher this day (e.g. lecture, discussion, leading, group work)? Which were most effective, and why? What strengths could this instructor build on?

Michael introduced the new project through engaging lecture. That is, even though he was doing most of the speaking in the first 15-20 minutes of class, he came out from behind the podium to minimize the distance between himself and students. He had their full attention.

Michael also used discussion tactics to talk about the re-mediation possibilities for the birthday message – students came up with the possible media, i.e., text, email, letter, and so on. He then solicited input from the students as to what would be the affordances and constraints of each medium.

This low stakes discussion about media that students use everyday allowed them to quickly grasp that each medium allowed for different kinds of communication; each had its good points and its drawbacks.

Throughout this discussion period, Michael offered ongoing, informal tips about the project – a review of ethos, pathos, logos and their permeability as categories, a reminder that they would have TWINE as a tool to produce videos, reassurance that he would be helping them learn all the tools they would need or want for the multi-modal project.

After the discussion section, Michael assigned each group a message scenario – sell a hamburger, elect a class president, and so on – and asked each group to come up with 3-4 different media for communicating the message. The group table I was participating in was electing a class president and thought of posters, candy/food, PA announcements.

Michael rotated the room, checking in with each group frequently. At our table, he very usefully made a distinction about the candy/food. Food in itself, he suggested, was motivation but not message; it would be message only if it had words, such as “vote for Ed” on a cupcake.

Michael also wisely upped the stakes and increased interest in the group project by throwing in a “wild card” – communicate your message in a medium quite unusual to your subject matter, for example, on a gravestone for the new burger, by statue (without placard) for the class president.

3. Comment on the teacher’s preparation; command of material; clarity of explanation, exposition, and delivery; interaction with students, and overall manner. How does this teachers “come across”?

Michael was thoroughly prepared for this lesson. He referred to the syllabus and to his lesson plan notes during the period, but only as reminders. For the most part, he was speaking freely off the cuff, talking to students easily, attesting to the good rapport he has built with his students.

He made good use of signposting during the period – we have 10 minutes for this, and we have 2 minutes to finish up, and so on.

He used the white board to list the affordances and constraints of the birthday message media, but then asked students to write on white boards the affordances and constraints for the “wild card” medium. This seemed like a good use of student time at the board – each team listing a few points, on what was arguably the most intriguing medium for the message.

Each group was able to talk through the situation and come up with the effects of various media choices. In checking with students at my table, lecture followed by small group work was often a strategy that Michael used. Thus, they were familiar and ready to participate without confusion.

Michael ended class with a brief description of their homework, which was to play a video game, a low-stakes assignment “well-earned” after finishing up the research project.

In my opinion, Michael is a gifted teacher. He converses easily with his students; he makes good use of his own experiences and challenges, and he knows his material well.

My advice for Michael might be that he open up discussion to student participation even earlier than he did. He and his students are quite comfortable with his own easy repartee, which might mean intentionally ending it in order to maximize student input.

Students were clearly engaged in the class discussion; he expected their thoughtful participation and they met his expectations.

Instructor Response

Signing this response, with or without comment, indicates that you have read and discussed this visitation with the observer, and that you understand that it will be filed with your records.