Classroom observation for: Danny Ledonne
Date: Monday, Oct. 13th, 2014
Observed by: Leslie Alvarez
Debrief meeting: Wednesday, Oct. 15th, 2014

Summary:
I observed an evening class, COMM 365, Digital filmmaking for approximately 1 hour. Danny began by reviewing his preliminary responses to assignments submitted via emailed earlier that day and then turned to an introduction to documentary film. Students discussed their preconceptions of documentary film followed by viewing a compilation of clips. After viewing the compilation, more discussion ensued followed by a second review of the compilation with instructor commentary. After this initial introduction, students took turns making a “pitch” for a proposed documentary. During their pitch, students answered both peer and instructor questions regarding their idea.

Strengths:
- Great inclusion of assignment due that day into initial classroom discussion (immediate general feedback)
- Great leading questions for student discussion
- Excellent rapport with class
- Nice combination of “lecture” and student involvement

Challenges:
- Classroom behavior management--Some apparent disengagement/use of cell phones during class
- Attaining participation from more students
- “wait time” following discussion questions was very brief

Debrief and Recommendations:
Upon meeting for our debrief, we discussed approaches to technology and classroom management. There is considerable variation among instructors’ tolerance and approaches to technology use in the classroom. We discussed some strategies to engage students more explicitly during student pitches and video viewing to help combat technology use during these less structured times. We also discussed a possible student of concern (Danny followed up with Gregg Elliot).

From my observation and our debrief, two main recommendations emerged:
1) Allow for more wait time with leading discussion questions.
2) Consider more explicit instructions/activities for less structured periods of class. For example, while students are watching the video compilation, ask students to write down reflections or responses to video clips that can be revisited during a subsequent discussion.
2 October 2014

Dear Visiting Assistant Professor Ledonne,

Thank you for inviting me to observe your teaching on September 15, 2015. I found it to be an engaging, entertaining, and informative class. In your interactions with students, you were knowledgeable, comfortable in front of them, and highly personable. Through your use of questions, you created a dialogue with students that kept them involved and advanced the evening’s curriculum. I appreciated how you were able to politely “call out” a student when he was not being completely honest with you (the student who claimed he has attended the film festival).

When you teach, do you normally teach seated from behind the podium/computer table? There is nothing wrong with that choice. In fact, it allows for a conversational tone as you sit and talk with your students. However, the rectangular shape of the room creates a decent distance between you and students on the opposite of the room. While your students were mostly very attentive, there were a few moments where your physical distance from the students allowed for some side conversations. From a communications and pedagogical perspective, studies show that teachers who are active are viewed by students as more dynamic and learning actually increases. Of course, each teacher has his own style and you should do what works for you. But if you are finding yourself behind a podium for most of the class, consider ways in which you can change things up.

It was a pleasure to observe you teach. You know your material, you relate well to your students, and you are passionate about your subject. Well done!

All my best,

John Taylor
Professor of Theatre

Adams State University Theatre
Practicing the Art of Making a Difference

208 Edgemont Blvd – Alamosa, CO 81101 – Fax: (719) 587-7522
http://theatre.adams.edu