

NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

POST OBSERVATION CONFERENCE MEMORANDUM

Date of Discussion 13 November 2014

Observation date 3 November 2014

Candidate's Name Dr. Jason Ellis

Department English

Representatives Present _____

Course & Section ENGL1101 D377 Dr. Mary E. Nilles
Name of Observer

Name of Observee JASON W. ELLIS

Date Observation Filed _____ with Chairperson _____

P&B member or other assigned by chairperson _____

(Attach additional pages if necessary.)

Signed Mary E. Nilles Prof.
Title

I understand that my signature means only that I have read this memorandum and that I may attach any comments I wish.

Staff Member's Signature J.W.C. 13 Nov 2014
6/96 date

NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY of the
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
FACULTY CLASS OBSERVATION REPORT YEAR: 2014-2015

Observee: Jason W. ELLIS

() tenured

Department: English

Name of Observer: Mary NILLES

Date of Observation: 3 November 2014

Time: 1:00 pm – 2:15 pm

Assistant Professor

(x) untenured

Course/Section English 1101 D36

Room: A 626

Texts: John Medina's **Brain Rules**;
Jonathan Gottschalk's **The Storytelling Animal**

Lesson Topic & Brief Summary:

As Professor Ellis' detailed Lesson Plan explained, this class session focused first on work related to **Brain Rules**; then on writing a paragraph that would become part of a longer essay, the second major project of the course. The subject of the paragraph: students' selected majors and career paths, or paths that each would like to explore more fully before selecting a major. Students previously had been given the assignment: to research and write a multimodal, research-supported blog post and a 5-minute, PowerPoint based presentation (See attached Course Outline; and ENG 1101 Project 2, "Using Your Brain to Explore a Career Path"). On this particular day, everyone was to engage in a carefully-crafted series of Project-related reading-writing-speaking-listening and research tasks; the work was arranged in three phrases.

First, students were to summarize in writing their reading of the "Gender" chapter of **Brain Rules**; their handwritten notes were to be typed up and posted before the next class meeting. Second, they were to listen to and briefly discuss one student's presentation on the "Gender" chapter in Medina's book. Third, after this "warm up," students would focus for 50 minutes on paragraph development. They would write this paragraph, working individually and in their groups, during this class period. The in-class process of outlining and then writing would provide a model for paragraph organization and development in the larger Project, as well as in other assignments. The process of organizing and writing would be as important as the resulting paragraph-product.

This class involved both individual and group work. It was clearly related to previous and to upcoming assignments. A "seamless web" of learning was reviewed and strengthened; organizational, research, reading, writing, and evaluative skills were explained, exemplified and emphasized.

The objectives of this lesson were clearly-stated and well coordinated. The writing topics were those to which all could relate: choosing a major, understanding its related course requirements and job descriptions, and the skills needed to secure desired employment in one's major field. All students paid close attention as they were guided in organizing and writing a paragraph, and in quoting from various sources. This paragraph would become part of their Project 2 essay.

1. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT (prompt start; efficient attendance check)
(x) Satisfactory

The class began promptly at 1:00 pm. Twenty students were present. Two more had arrived by 1:15 pm. Chairs were arranged facing the instructor and two computer screens. Professor Ellis took attendance and announced that the class would proceed in three phases: the first, connected to the "Brain" readings. He asked all present to write summaries of the "Gender" chapter just read as homework. Students responded immediately; all seemed to compose without great difficulty. Each of the four sitting nearest to me quickly filled up a page! Professor Ellis assigned students to post these summaries, in polished form, before the next class meeting. He asked everyone to check his notes on Blackboard, and referred students to the Library website.

He then turned to the development of oral production, note-taking skills, and group discussion, asking one student (students had signed up to report on various topics) to speak briefly about the "Gender" reading. Many students took notes as discussion of gender issues ensued. Professor and students remarked on how studies of large populations seemed to reveal complex genetic, anatomical and behavioral differences between the ways in which males and females understand, speak and remember. When several female students said they found some of author Medina's assertions stereotypical, sexist and biased, this short discussion was further enlivened! Professor Ellis urged everyone to reflect on how the issues in this reading might relate to them individually. The previously-read chapter on "Stress" was referenced, thereby connecting this lesson to previous learning.

The next two phases of the class focused on writing a paragraph, step-by-step, and including in it references to materials students had brought to class, or would locate on web sites. He allowed time for peer review. Professor Ellis stood near the center of the room facing the students as the class began. He moved to and from the computer station as he outlined the lesson. When students assembled into groups, he watched their interactions and listened to their discussion about their majors, future jobs and the job market. He stopped at each group to encourage discussion, ask and answer questions. He utilized the computer to list sample topic sentences, transition phrases, as well as sources to be consulted.

Dr. Ellis was firmly in control of this class. He held everyone's attention throughout this carefully-structured session. He spoke clearly and projected well. The hallway door remained open for ventilation in this somewhat stuffy room until 2:10. At that point, when students awaiting the next class in A 626 made noise outside, the door was closed.

2. PROFESSIONAL TRAITS RELEVANT TO TEACHING (PROFESSIONAL APPEARANCE AND Demeanor)

Satisfactory

Professor Ellis was appropriately professional in dress and demeanor. He was clear and precise in his presentation. He urged students to remain focused on his comments, to copy topic sentences from the screen, discuss them in groups, and then use them in their own paragraphs. He was serious as he urged everyone to remain committed to the learning process, to make connections and associations among the "pieces" of the composition process ("Don't fall behind now!"). He displayed good humor, too, as he smiled and urged all to "keep writing, on the "Brain topics" first, then on anything, but keep writing!" He emphasized the need to read well, and challenged students to formulate sentences, and then paragraphs, that were "spot on." Dr. Ellis engaged all with his careful pacing of the class, review of basic skills, clear outlines of present and future assignments, repeated encouragement, as well as willingness to be available during his office hours and after class. The students followed him at every step and seemed to enjoy the lesson.

Professor Ellis knew the names of the students, and projected the membership in six working groups on the screens. He was supportive of each person's responses. He attempted to engage everyone as he asked questions and followed up responses with appropriate tag questions and encouraging remarks. He carefully "scaffolded" the learning, moving from the word to sentence level; from the paragraph outline to topic and supporting sentences; from use of quotes from outside sources, to the fully-written paragraph.

3. SUBJECT MATTER (accuracy of presented material; use of appropriate terminology)
 Excellent Very good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

Professor Ellis displayed an excellent mastery of the subject matter, in his reference to material previously covered, as well as in his introduction of new material. He reviewed previous assignments and then outlined the new. He showed students how to create topic and transitional sentences. He provided a roadmap for writing success.

The class was pitched at an appropriate level, and students remained attentive. When asked to work in groups, they immediately did so and seemed comfortable working with each other. Professor Ellis challenged students to think; to make connections to materials previously covered. He sequenced the learning process to help all students express themselves verbally and in writing. He was thoroughly familiar with the material taught, and offered students his diagrams of the sequencing of each sentence in the paragraph (topic sentence, to a discussion of your major; transitional sentence; discussion of your desired job; finally, a conclusion).

4. ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MATERIAL (clear statement of objectives; logical sequence; budgeting of time; review, summary, and outside assignments as appropriate)

Excellent Very Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

Professor Ellis announced the sequence of the carefully-constructed class, and then asked students take notes, complete two writing exercises (a summary and a paragraph), engage in group discussion; review models of topic and supporting sentences, research the topic assigned; in class integrate quotes from research materials (excerpts from books, and articles) into their paragraphs; and then complete the assigned paragraphs as a step leading to the eventual completion of Project 2.

Students joined in the discussions and interacted with the instructor and each other in a friendly and respectful manner. Each came to class with a notebook of some type, a book and a phone. Most took notes; they wrote and spoke with their classmates about the assignments. Professor Ellis made excellent use of course outlines and sample sentences and of paragraphs projected on the screens. He urged students to post their work, and he clearly stated rules for class performance. For example, he explained that after this week, students would no longer be allowed time for as many at-home revisions. The message was clear: Professor Ellis was serious about developing skills that would enable students to write paragraphs of good quality upon demand, on the first try. As the class ended, he repeated the homework due next class—complete the paragraph and then bring three printed copies of it to class.

5. PRESENTATION OF MATERIAL (level and clarity of presentation; appropriate use of learning aids; clarity, volume and pace of speech; relevance, variety, and clarity of questions; choice of modality of instruction; use of instructional technology as appropriate)

Excellent Very Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

Professor Ellis was clear and engaging as he taught. The lesson was divided into three distinct but related phases.

Phase One (25 minutes):

In the first segment of the class, students wrote a summary of their reading of the “Gender” chapter from Brain Rules. One student spoke briefly on the “Gender” chapter and referenced “Stress” (students are assigned to take turns making these presentations). Professor Ellis then reviewed the structure and focus of the paragraph that would be written in class. This review provided an overview of Project 2; the paragraph completed today would serve as a portion of the larger Project assignment.

Phase Two (25 minutes):

Next, Professor Ellis led the class to consider the academic major in which they were enrolled (or wanted to enroll). They were to write 3-4 sentences of introduction to their college major, and then transition to a short discussion of the jobs they intended to get

after completion of their major studies. Two examples of such introductory sentences were provided:

--"To better understand my decision to be an X major pursuing a job in Y, it is useful to know the following facts;"

and

--"The following facts about my major in X and my future career in Y provide helpful background material that supports my choices."

Students were urged to consult the College Catalogue section for descriptions of specific majors and thereby locate ideas and facts that could be quoted as evidence in this part of the paragraph. Professor Ellis provided a series of questions to help students define and describe their majors:

---How is your major defined?

---What will your major enable you to do?

---What will you learn in your major?

He then showed students how to use their own words to start the paragraph, and then include statements from the College Catalogue. For example:

---The 2014-2015 New York City College of Technology Catalogue tells us that, "the Professional and Technical Writing Program will teach me many important workplace skills, including, 'writing, editing, problem solving, document design, rhetoric, interpersonal communication, collaboration, specialized expertise, and fluency in modern communication technologies.'" (City Tech 84)

He urged students to discuss their writing of such sentences with group members, and with him as he moved around the room.

Phase Three (25 minutes):

In this phase students were to turn their attention to writing about their job or career choices and the use of quotations from other sources--books or articles found in the City Tech Library (Selection of these materials had been assigned previously). The instructor cautioned that Google-originating sources were not permitted in this assignment, because Library sources were to be introduced.

The second half of the background paragraphs was to inform the audience about the job that each student was seeking. Professor Ellis offered these questions for consideration:

---What is the job title? What does one do in that job?

---Are their jobs openings available at present?

---What salary can you expect, at entry-level and later?

He also exemplified how students might use transitional sentences to move from the description of their majors to the discussion of jobs for which graduates of these majors are being prepared. For example:

---"By earning a degree in X, I will prepare myself to gain a job in Y;" or

"A degree in X will enable me to get a Y job."

Finally students were asked to review models for quotation from outside sources:

For example:

---"What does a technical writer do? Based on my research, as Tech Directions, a trade publication about tech trends explains, 'Technical writers research, gather and analyze information, then write, edit and publish technical and business documents either in print or online'(Tech Directions, 28)." As the class ended, students were reminded to complete the paragraph and bring three hard copies of it to the next class on Wednesday. At that time, Professor Ellis would show students how to format Works Cited and properly place quotes around materials copied.

By the time this class ended, students had been led step by step through the process of writing a paragraph that included quotes from relevant outside sources, as indicated with appropriately in the text and on the Works Cited page. In the space of 75 minutes, students had reinforced skills and learned the theory and practice of composing a paragraph on topics of relevance to their academic pursuits and future in the world of work.

6. STUDENT-INSTRUCTOR INTERACTION (appropriate recognition of student contributions; establishment of rapport with students)

Excellent Very good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

The class remained attentive, immediately wrote summaries when asked, and moved from work as individual learners into group participants. Professor Ellis skillfully engaged the students and held their attention. He showed respect for their comments, and their writing. Students seemed to enjoy the class work and their teacher. Professor Ellis had an excellent rapport with the students. They seemed to enjoy the class; they immediately went to work when asked to read, write, speak, listen, and then write again!

7. OVERALL EVALUATION (categories 1 through 6)

Excellent Very Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

Overall this was an excellent lesson. Professor Ellis helped students organize their thoughts, outline and write a summary and a paragraph referencing various sources, work individually and in groups. He created a full circle of teaching-learning.

8. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT (Use additional pages if necessary)

---Urge all students to see a tutor to assist with assignments, including note-taking and outlining a paragraph;

---Check on the notes students are taking (or not taking); perhaps ask them to present their notes to you, and others, to be sure that they are using their phones appropriately in class, and really understanding the main points of your lecture.

I have read and have been given a copy of the above report, and so signify by my signature below.
I understand that I may attach additional comments to this document.

J. C. Co. 13/NOV 2014

Signature of Observee Date

Mary E. Miller 13/NOV 2014

Signature of Observer Date