

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

FACULTY CLASS ROOM OBSERVATION REPORT Year 2015

Untenured

Tenured

Department English Course/Section ENG 1101/ D380

Name of Observee Ellis, Jason Rank Assistant Professor
Last Name, First Name

Name of Observer Nina Bannett Rank Associate Professor/Chair

Date of Observation Oct 7, 2015 Room Midway 301

Lesson Topic & Brief Summary: Discussion of John Medina's *Brain Rules*, chapter on attention; peer group work on Writing Project #2

Please complete each item. This report will be returned unless each category contains supporting comments. Use additional pages if necessary.

1. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT (prompt start, efficient attendance check):
 Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

Prof. Ellis was in class on time, with his Open Lab course site already projecting on the screen. About twenty students were present at the start of class, and an attendance sheet was circulated for students to initial. The class began with students doing in-class writing.

2. PROFESSIONAL TRAITS (professional appearance and demeanor, clarity, volume, and pace of speech; establishment of rapport with students)
 Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

Prof. Ellis was professionally dressed and demonstrated a calm, approachable demeanor throughout the class session. He announced his office hours for the day.

3. **SUBJECT MASTERY** (accuracy of presented material, use of appropriate terminology, competence in use of equipment)
 Excellent Very Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

Prof. Ellis clearly has an excellent grasp of Medina's book, which is the main text for class. However, connections between Medina's writing on attention and the writing process were not discussed with the students, and this was a missed opportunity—see suggestions in #8. The section of class in which Prof. Ellis talked about Medina's exploration of attention seemed disconnected from the overall writing goals of ENG 1101.

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

The class was organized in the following way—this class plan was posted on Open Lab and available on the screen throughout the class:

- 1-ten minutes prewriting on attention
- 2-one student gave a brief Powerpoint Presentation on the book chapter on attention
- 3-Prof. Ellis lectured on Chapter 7 and showed students some YouTube videos that featured selective attention tests (approximately thirty minutes)
- 4-students worked on Writing Project #2 in groups of four. Writing Project #2 asks students to write an informed essay about their prospective careers.

Each component of the class seemed well thought out but the class as a whole did not always present itself as a writing class.

5. **PRESENTATION OF MATERIAL** (level and clarity of presentation, appropriate use of learning aids)
 Excellent Very Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

The prewriting that students did and the oral presentation from the student were great activities, but they seemed to exist somewhat independently from Prof. Ellis' lecture on attention. He discussed some connections to being attentive in the workplace, but not with writing. He showed the Wikipedia entry for Dr. Oliver Sacks to the class since he is referenced in Medina's book, and I liked his use of YouTube videos.

6. **STUDENT-INSTRUCTOR INTERACTION** (relevance, variety, and clarity of questions, appropriate recognition of student contributions)
 Excellent Very Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

Prof. Ellis gave students lots of opportunities to ask questions, talked with them about their career prospects and their other college courses. He modeled note-taking with the class, and showed them his own handwritten notes from a college meeting. He is interested in all aspects of their college experience, and this is commendable. Prof. circulated among the groups as they worked on Writing Project #2, offering helpful feedback.

7. OVERALL EVALUATION (categories 1 through 6)

- Excellent
 Very Good
 Satisfactory
 Unsatisfactory

Indeed, this class session was very good, with Prof. Ellis demonstrating he understands the needs of college students, whether it be with general education, note-taking, or oral presentations. The class syllabus has a fairly narrow focus, and I think the next step is to make more explicit connections between concepts like attention and the writing process.

I think with some fine tuning, this session could be even stronger. Prof. Ellis is clearly invested in his students' success, and his classroom demeanor shows this.

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

I would recommend making explicit connections between Medina's arguments about the brain and students as writers throughout the class session and the course at large.

For example, ask students what distracts them when they write, how do they keep a reader's attention. While I understand that analyzing Medina's own language was part of the class plan that didn't wind up happening, there are other ways of connecting the dots for students. This topic could have segued quite easily to a discussion of writing an introduction, and how to attract a reader's attention. At a few points, I felt like I was in a cognitive psychology course as opposed to a writing course. I think a cognitive approach to writing is great, but it was unclear if students were making the connection between cognition and writing on their own. City Tech students may need more guidance this early on in their college development. Such a narrow focus on the brain may need a little fine tuning for our student population.

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.

JLG
Signature of Observee *10-14-2015*
date

Wine Barnett
Signature of Observer *10-14-15*
date

1/04