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

## POST OBSERVATION CONFERENCE MEMORANDUM

Date of Discussion: Oct. 29, 2015

Observation date: Oct. 21, 2015

Candidate's Name: Rebecca Devers

Department: English

Representatives Present:

Course & Section: English 3401, D554

Name of Observer: Carole K. Harris

Name of Observee: Rebecca Devers

Date Observation Filed_____ with Chairperson_____

P&B member or other assigned by chairperson

_____

(Attach additional pages if necessary.)

Signed _Carole K. Harris_  _Oct. 29, 2015_

Associate Professor

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**_____  _10/29/2015_

date

**NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY**
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# FACULTY CLASS ROOM OBSERVATION REPORT    Year 2015

**(X )Untenured**                                                        **( ) Tenured**

**Department: English**                    **Course/Section**: ENG 3401, D554

Name of Observee:  Devers, Rebecca                Rank:  Assistant Professor

Name of Observer:  Carole K. Harris                Rank:  Associate Professor

Date of Observation:  Oct. 21, 2015                Room:  Namm 505A

Lesson Topic & Brief Summary:

In the first fifteen minutes of the lesson Professor Devers assigned and clarified project #2, which asks the students to create a podcast focusing on one of the characters in Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*. Students then broke into three teams and played *Jeopardy!* in order to review for the midterm exam. In the last ten minutes of class, Professor Devers went over the format of the exam.

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

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

Professor Devers started and ended class on time. She took attendance by calling each student by name and greeting him or her with "hi."

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

Professor Devers spoke clearly and professionally and has a warm rapport with the students. She was responsive to students' questions and concerns about the podcast project and the midterm. In the rounds of *Jeopardy!* she made an impressive M.C., lively but firm as she assigned teams, set rules, fielded answers, kept score, and negotiated disputes.

3.    **SUBJECT MASTERY** (accuracy of presented material, use of appropriate terminology, competence in use of equipment)

( X )Excellent ( )Very Good ( )Satisfactory      ( )Unsatisfactory

For her section of "Law through Literature," I was intrigued by Professor Devers' original pairing of Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* and the podcast *Serial*. The latter is a twelve-episode podcast that examines the 1999 real-life murder case against Adnan Syed, who is currently serving a life sentence in Baltimore. Sarah Koenig, the journalist who narrates the episodes, has researched the case thoroughly and found inconsistencies in Syed's trial. Creating the *Jeopardy!* board, with the clues coming from both texts, took a lot of time and creativity on Professor Devers's part, and the students loved playing it. The game inspired competition and friendly banter among students, who ended up arguing about *Serial* in sophisticated ways. For example, students debated over who is the story's protagonist–Koenig or Adnan. They put into practice a common vocabulary for talking about texts: first- vs. third-person point of view; episodic vs. chronological plot; humanization vs. de-humanization; static vs. dynamic character; case vs. story.

Professor Devers intervened when necessary to correct students on content and nuances of language. For example, one team chose "Evidence" for a Daily Double: "The absence of a pay phone at Best Buy had this effect on the weight of Jay's testimony throughout the series." When a team member responded, "What is inconsistent?" Professor Devers revised the question to "What is unbelievable?" Students argued back, but she held firm. She made the point that "inconsistent" describes the character, not the "effect on the weight of his testimony."

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

(X)Excellent  ( )Very Good  ( )Satisfactory      ( )Unsatisfactory

The class had a satisfying arc to it. At the beginning and end of the lesson Professor Devers led the students through a serious review of material–project #2 and the midterm–and within this frame students played *Jeopardy!* This sequence of activities, with a hearty emphasis on fun, focused the students' energy in a productive way.

Professor Devers announced clear objectives throughout the class. To introduce project #2, she distributed a handout that explained the assignment. Students are to use Koenig's investigative methods in *Serial* to tell the "untold story" of one of Miller's characters. They are only required to write the script and post it to Open Lab, and they also have the option of recording it. Professor Devers encouraged students to begin reading *The Crucible* with the goals of the podcast in mind; she emphasized the project's importance by saying it would count 20% of the grade; and she directed students to prioritize studying for the midterm since it came first. Playing *Jeopardy!* certainly helped students prepare for the midterm. To transition into playing the game, Professor Devers reminded everyone of the rules: "No one gets hurt" and "Make sure your response is in the form of a question." Then at the end of class Professor Devers reviewed her

expectations for the midterm (regarding thesis, use of quotation, etc.) and helped students figure out how to budget their time when sitting for it in class.

5. **PRESENTATION OF MATERIAL** (level and clarity of presentation, appropriate use of learning aids)

(X)Excellent   ( )Very Good  ( )Satisfactory      ( )Unsatisfactory

Every aspect of the lesson was clearly presented.  Professor Devers made good use of the screen to project the *Jeopardy!* board, and she used the white board to outline the format of the midterm.

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

(X)Excellent   ( )Very Good  ( )Satisfactory      ( )Unsatisfactory

The structure of the game itself created a snappy, democratic atmosphere in the room, inspiring students to work with each other as team members or competitors.  Their desire to win had the effect of shifting their focus away from the teacher as expert.  I particularly loved those moments when contestants would argue with the M. C. over whether their response was accurate or not.  Professor Devers never lost the opportunity to lead students toward a deeper analysis of *Serial,* including Koenig's compelling methods of storytelling.

The students clearly trust their professor as evidenced by how many contributed to class discussion.
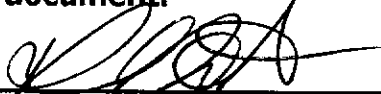
7. **OVERALL EVALUATION** (categories 1 through 6)

( X )Excellent        ( )Very Good
( )Satisfactory
( )Unsatisfactory

This was a satisfying lesson that demonstrates a high level of learning in the classroom.  Students were engaged with each other and the material, and Professor Devers is modeling for them approaches to analyzing literary texts that can be applied to current cases involving social justice and the law. Clearly a lot of thought went into planning the syllabus for this course.

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

None.

**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.**

_(signature)_                                          10/29/2015

Signature of Observee                              date.

_Carole K. Harris_                              Oct. 29, 2015

Signature of Observer                              date