

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

POST OBSERVATION CONFERENCE MEMORANDUM

Date of Discussion: _____

Observation date: _Oct. 12-14, 2021, viewing the week of 10/7-10/14_

Candidate's Name: __Rebecca Mazumdar__

Department: ___English_____

Representatives Present: _____n/a_____

Course & Section: _ENG2001/OL25_

Name of Observer: ___Patricia S. Rudden_____

Name of Observee: _____Rebecca Mazumdar_____

Date Observation Filed: _____ with Chairperson _Robert Leston_

P&B member or other assigned by chairperson: ___n/a_____

Signed__Patricia S. Rudden____ Title: ___Professor_____

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 _____  _____ 10/26/2021 _____
date

NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
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FACULTY CLASS OBSERVATION REPORT FORM
FOR OBSERVATIONS OF HYBRID AND ONLINE COURSES

Semester/Year Fall 2021

Department English Course/Section ENG2001 OL25

Name of Observee Mazumdar, Rebecca Rank Associate Professor
Last Name, First Name

Untenured Tenured Adjunct

Name of Observer Patricia S. Rudden Rank Professor

Date(s) of Observation Oct. 12-14, 2021. Period of course viewed: Oct. 7-Oct. 14
Online platform and/or online environment: Blackboard, with additional material in EdPuzzle (video lectures), Perusall (required readings and annotations/discussions) and Padlet (social).

Brief Summary of Material Viewed

This section of Introduction to Literature I: Fiction is constructed on the theme of displacement, and its five modules concentrate on different aspects of the experience of displacement. I viewed Week 7 of Module 3: Forced Migration and Slavery, which began Oct. 7 and will end on Oct. 14. I surveyed the week's Announcement, the course syllabus, the current video lecture on YouTube, accessible in EdPuzzle with embedded quizzes), the module's Discussion Board, as well as the general framework of the site (links to course information, ways to contact the instructor, and the Paper 1 assignment directions and submission links). The specific literary works in this lesson were sections of James McBride's *The Good Lord Bird* and Leslie Marmon Silko's story "The Storyteller."

This form is to be used only when evaluating the online portion of an online or hybrid course. Please complete each item. This report will be returned unless each category contains supporting comments. Use additional pages if necessary.

FOR HYBRID AND ONLINE COURSES: observation of online course components is required; observation of a face-to-face class meeting is optional.

1. COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATION

Includes instructor's ability to develop and organize material, including the course syllabus; to create an easily navigable and informative course site and/or other online environment; and to require students to spend adequate time on task through well-conceived activities that foster understanding of the course material.

() Excellent (x) Very Good () Satisfactory () Unsatisfactory

Comments:

This course has many moving parts: Blackboard for general information, discussion board/blogs, announcements, EdPuzzle for video lectures with interspersed quizzes, Perusall for annotation of texts, Padlet for more informal and social interaction. There is almost too much to do, too many activities in too many places. It's clear that Prof. Mazumdar is trying to duplicate in every way she can the various aspects of in-person instruction that asynchronous courses lack, but this is not so much a lack as an opportunity to re-focus. Would a face-to-face class also have this number of elements? The frontal teacher-student interaction of in-person instruction is less necessary than many of us think when we first start teaching asynchronously, and can be fruitfully replaced by more horizontal interaction among students. See below for specific suggestions.

2. COMMUNICATION

Includes instructor's ability to project a professional presence online; to communicate clearly; to establish a rapport with students; and to establish a supportive, well-managed online learning environment by providing frequent announcements, clear instructions and adequate information for students to complete activities and assignments.

(x) Excellent () Very Good () Satisfactory () Unsatisfactory

Comments:

Prof. Mazumdar is a pervasive, solid, reassuring and accessible presence throughout the site and ancillary sites (Perusall and EdPuzzle). If anything, her presence verges on the overwhelming, since there is comparatively little student presence in Blackboard or elsewhere. Announcements are frequent, instructions are clear (if a bit verbose), and students in search of clarity on assignments can find details in more than one place and contact the professor with specific questions. Prof. Mazumdar uses lively and humorous graphics (perhaps of limited utility), many of which (this week) urge attendance at the real-time office hours held twice weekly. There are links to a number of places where students can get various kinds of help.

There are fora in the Discussion Board but the prompts ask for what amount to blog posts, with little provision of opportunity for student interaction. There could be more opportunities to discuss the works. See below for some suggestions.

3. SUBJECT MASTERY

Includes instructor's ability to demonstrate subject mastery through the use of a Web-based course platform and/or other online environment; to present subject matter effectively; to use proper terminology; and to incorporate applicable, up-to-date resources and content.

(x) Excellent () Very Good () Satisfactory () Unsatisfactory

Comments:

Prof. Mazumdar is well versed in imaginative literature, and fluently discusses themes, techniques, characterization, use of language, and other aspects of literature. Her choice of the theme for this course, the Fiction of Displacement, is wonderfully congruent with our students' experiences, and student comments on Perusall and in the discussion fora allude to how their lives mirror what they are reading. The readings for the week I reviewed are contemporary, which can make them more accessible, but a theme like this can also be used to study some more historical texts for variety.

The lecture I viewed in EdPuzzle was deliberately interrupted four times by quiz questions which are also used for attendance (see below). The lecture was engaging, informative and easy to follow, with relevant graphics (slides), but much of the material could have been discovered and delivered by a student committee (see below for one way to do this).

4. STUDENT-INSTRUCTOR INTERACTION

Includes instructor's ability to interact productively with students (including appropriate questioning of students and recognition of their contributions) within a Web-based course platform and/or other online environment; to communicate with students online through discussion posts, blogs, wikis, email and/or synchronous means of communication, such as chat; and to provide timely and effective feedback, as specified on the syllabus.

(x) Excellent () Very Good () Satisfactory () Unsatisfactory

Comments:

Prof. Mazumdar is in constant communication with her students. How much communication goes in the other direction is not something I was able to discern from a student view of the course, but there were few annotations of the Silko story in Perusall (one student commented once, another student commented twice, and a third commented very perceptively seven times, with one comment getting an upvote from the instructor). No comments had yet been posted in the Discussion Board forum for this module. It was not possible for me in a student role to see any communication that was not visible to the entire

class, but it seemed that not many were participating actively. The announcements were largely pleas to attend office hours, which is a clue that not many are showing up for that either, but in an asynchronous course this is often simply not a realistic expectation. However, Prof. Mazumdar has provided many ways for students to communicate with her.

5. **OVERALL EVALUATION** (categories 1 through 4)

Online Component of the Course (Required):

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

Comments:

My rating should be somewhere between “excellent” and “very good” because of the elements discussed above, but it is very clear that Prof. Mazumdar has worked with great energy, purpose and good intentions on her Blackboard site and the other online elements of this course.

6. **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT** (Use additional pages if necessary)

Comments and Recommendations for Improvement:

This class is overwhelmingly centered on the professor, as an in-person class will often be. I recommend taking advantage of the flexibilities and strengths of the asynchronous format to foster greater interaction among students.

1. Assign students to groups of 4-7 from the beginning, and assign each group something specific to specialize in—one work, one author, one theme, or anything else that works in the overall scheme. These groups are then the class experts on their assigned area, and can put together a presentation on their specialty to be given when their subject comes up in the syllabus. These can be videos, podcasts, slideshows or whatever they think works best, and can take the place of the canned lectures. (This also works in f2f classes.)
2. Create rubrics for all assignments (papers and presentations) in Blackboard and make them available to students in advance so there is no confusion about how they will be graded. (This also makes grading assignments more efficient.)
3. Rather than trying to reproduce real-time attendance and office hours in an asynchronous course, let students arrange individual appointments/emails/chats &c when they can actually do them (within reason), and let successful completion of the course be evidence of attendance. (A statement to this effect at the end of the semester is an acceptable alternative to the spreadsheets required for real-time courses.) In any case, an office hour is a clock hour, not a full class period, and only one hour is expected for each section taught.
4. Use the Discussion Board to initiate discussions, not just to house blog posts. I recommend setting up a forum for each week or each work with three or four prompts related to the works under discussion, and then asking students to choose ONE prompt

and respond with a brief paragraph, and end their post with an open-ended question, then go through previous posts and respond to another student's question. They should only respond to one prompt, to prevent the forum from becoming an electronic workbook. This leads to some lively exchanges, but it doesn't happen spontaneously, without the ground rules.

5. Maybe lose some of the graphics and achievement badges. Entering freshmen may find this welcoming, but by the time folks are in 2000-level courses those gimmicks risk trivializing the work. (Of course, if they are actually working for you, disregard this piece of advice.)

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



10/26/21

Signature of the Observee

Date

Signature of the Observer

Date