

Kristin LaFollette
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Dear Kristin,

In class today (August 30, 2016), you began with small talk with the students. I thought that this was good way to establish rapport with your students, and this tactic did the class well because they immediately participated once you began activities. The first activity of today's class was to review thesis statements where the students gave you what a thesis statement consists of (or does not), and you wrote that information on the board. You went over the main points they shared in detail to reiterate how the students should be writing thesis statements and why they should be writing them this way. After this, you helped the class construct a three-point thesis; you utilized their argument and ideas for evidence and walked them through the experience of writing a thesis. Upon finishing this activity, you transitioned to discussing the first assignment: a literacy narrative. The students were, once again, prompted to provide the information about the topic you discussed last class and then you shared how to work through a possible composing process of this literacy narrative beginning with brainstorming, then moving onto you modeling a thesis. The rest of class time gave students the opportunity to draft a thesis as well as begin writing while they had you at their disposal to answer questions that may arise while drafting.

I thought it was interesting when you brought me into the class discussion on theses to prove that thesis statements do not have a determined length. By utilizing us "scary observers," you humanized them to the class – this encouraged an environment that is not filled with judgment and, more importantly, that they, as writers, do not need to prescribe to rules that they may have previously been taught. And this theme of deconstructing the rules they previously learned continued on throughout this class, which is something I also try to do in my courses; I believe it is important for us, as instructors, to prepare students for a "real" academic writing environment rather than for testing. Another feature of your teaching that I view valuable (and try to incorporate myself) is your focus on empowering the students – they provided the information that you already reviewed and you made them provide the examples; you did not do all of the work, nor did you throw information at them hoping that it stuck. By making them show their knowledge, you're reinforcing that knowledge. Finally, something that I found inspiring was how you made the writing process transparent by modeling various aspects of writing. I felt like this gave the students a better idea of what was expected of them because the students were engaged (and told you they understood), so I will try more in-class modeling in the futures in order to demystify the composing process for first-year writers.

Overall, this was an effective class session. There a was good amount of dialogue between you and your students – I never felt there was a time where you were lecturing too much or they were taking over the discussion – so the class felt balanced. I hope the rest of your semester goes as smoothly as this class!



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Happy teaching,

Maggie Collins
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