

Enrico,

Thanks for a wonderfully productive semester in PDP. I am impressed by your work in the classroom. You are clearly a teacher who seeks the best for students and that you are dedicated to developing your expertise as a teacher. I am sharing here my response to the class I visited in November. Though we've discussed your teaching in other ways and you've moved beyond this class to give your attention to the spring semester, I hope my response gives you a bit to think about as you continue to hone your classroom approach.

I visited your evening (6:30) Rhetoric course, and was pleased to observe you lead an energetic group. That evening, as you told me just prior to class, you weren't feeling well. I doubt very much that students noticed. In the class, you were engaged and engaging and your approach was comfortable and professional. You came across as approachable while at the same time emphasizing the value of the course and your own expertise.

The class began with question role, and you used students' names as they shared their responses. Students were not only interested in sharing their answers, but seemed to be genuinely interested in their peers' responses. You modeled that engagement well by remaining focused on what students were saying and drawing them a bit deeper with follow-up questions.

Students were beginning the *Serial* podcast, season 1, and you asked them to pay attention to visuals as they listened to the first minutes of the first episode. It was pretty clear that students did not have much experience analyzing audio essays/podcasts, so this activity was a good way to get them started.

You then had them focus more on the story. What are the tactics? Students found their way into the *Serial* story, and I even enjoyed participating in the classroom discussion. I hope I didn't distract too much.

At the end of the *Serial* exercise, I found myself thinking that perhaps the visual components were not exactly the best fit with the first episode. That first episode is so much about memory, so perhaps a revised approach could be to have students try to recreate an arbitrary day in their lives from exactly 6 weeks earlier. Then try to recreate a day in their lives when something significant happened—like a day they got some bad news or some good news. This could get them into the spirit of the podcast episode a bit more directly.

Students then moved into the groups that were assigned for their own podcast projects. I sat with a group that was looking at the Adler Building. They were engaged and on task. They had good ideas and good questions for me. The exercise of having them describe the place they were examining worked very well, since it made students really consider how they would portray a place in an audio project. Some of the students hadn't yet visited, and so those who had visited used them as a trial audience to see whether a description could be vivid enough. I prompted my group to draw more detail on a map of the space. As the groups started digging, then found themselves better able to add details.

This kind of in-class work is vital to a group project's success. As a suggestion that might improve group outcomes, require students to discuss next steps, group-mates' individual responsibilities, and deadlines each class period. The more you require them to be clear with one another, the more likely they will be to collaborate with each other.

Overall, observing this class was a fun experience. I count myself lucky to work with you this year. Thanks again for inviting me to observe. I hope you enjoyed your first semester teaching Rhetoric and that your second semester is rewarding, too.

Best,
Matt