

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Dean Ramser

English 102

1.30-3.10 pm, October 29th, 2013.

Observed by Bidhan Roy

Description: Dean Ramser was in class preparing materials prior to the start of class. By 1.30 pm around 26 students were present.

1.35 pm. Dean began by making some announcements regarding the midterm exam and upcoming assignments; a bibliography and research essay. Students appeared interested and engaged.

1.40 pm. Dean then moved on to discuss an annotated sample student essay (projected for the class to see) in order to model the upcoming assignment. Dean provided a line-by-line analysis of the essay, explaining his comments and annotations in order to highlight common problems and issues in student writing. These included subject verb agreement, dangling modifiers, sentence clarity, audience and language usage. Dean then connected discussion of the sample student essay to the reading he had previously assigned from the St Martin's guide to writing, listing key ideas of the reading on the board (audience, purpose, context, stance, media, design).

1.55-2.25pm. The next section of the class was devoted to student presentations. In groups of six, students were required to present on assigned sections of the assigned readings. While the group allotted to present in today's class prepared their materials, Dean met with each of the other groups to make sure that they were on track for their presentations and understood what was required of them. The group that presented during my visit by, in large, engaged the class and were able to involve their peers in questions and discussion points. Their presentation explored how to write a "profile essay," and possible methods and challenges to writing research essays. While entertaining, the presentation tended to ramble, forcing Dean to do an admirable job of marshalling it by interjecting and clarifying misleading or ambiguous information.

2.25pm. Following the presentation, Dean asked the presenters how they might go about writing a profile essay on one of the authors they had previously read during the quarter. This proved to be a good way of clarifying some of the more confusing aspects of the presentation.

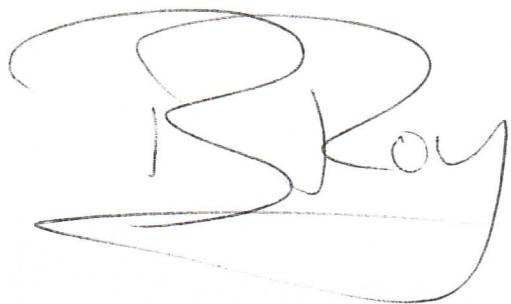
2.35pm. Dean then broadened discussion of the profile essay to include the rest of the class. Together, listing their ideas on the board, Dean and the class worked through how they might write a profile essay about the "487 bus" (suggested as a topic by a class member) and what kind of information they would need to research and include in such an essay. The exercise seemed to work well as a means of summing up the reading and modelling the prewriting process.

2.55pm. The rest of the class period was devoted to discussing the requirements of the two upcoming assignments (research essay and bibliography). Dean was clear and detailed in his instructions and students appeared engaged and clear about what was required with the task at hand.

Summary: Dean had a first-rate relationship with the students, was very comfortable in front of the class, well organized, and managed class time expertly. Particularly impressive was Dean's teaching presence and his ability to motivate students and engage them in the activities he had planned. The class activities were well designed, effectively executed, and, through repetition and active student participation, appeared to achieve their intended objectives.

One area that might benefit from further refinement, however, was the class presentations. In particular groups of six appeared too large and the broadness of content each group covered was somewhat unwieldy. One simple way to address this might be to divide the class into smaller groups and have them cover smaller sections of the reading, in order to make the presentations more focused and engage all of the presenters more directly.

Overall, this was an engaging class by an excellent instructor who, I thought, was well organized, animated and extremely personable, and who employed a range of learning strategies in the relaxed classroom environment that he had created.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "B. Key". The "B" is a large, stylized initial, and "Key" is written in a smaller, flowing script below it.