

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

October 30, 2008

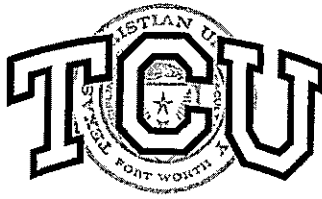
Laura Knudson
TCU Box 297270
Fort Worth, TX 76129

Dear Laura,

Thank you for letting me visit your class on Wednesday, October 14, 2008 in Beasley. Just before class began, you asked students to put their desks in a circle, no small feat in a room your size. Students displayed a friendly banter as they were doing this; already I sensed a good rapport among them. After students settled in, you asked them to turn in their midterm reflection letter, which only one of them did. You reminded them how important their feedback was and asked gave them another class period. I think it's appropriate to make this assignment optional, but the expectation for feedback should then be low. It is a challenge to expect stressed first-year students to do an optional assignment. If you want to be assured some feedback, I'd make this mandatory in the future or make some time in class.

You then asked students to do some writing about some of their readings for today (these were readings moving them toward Essay 3), and most students seemed to be writing diligently. One suggestion I have (from learning the hard way) is to put the prompt on eCollege in advance or write it on the board so they have it to refer to as they write—it can help them focus and allow you to not have to continually repeat it. Some students who discussed what they wrote about made some great insights. During the discussion, your enthusiasm and interest in their work was obvious. I thought there were a couple of opportunities here as well to dive in and extrapolate a bit more, perhaps making meaning from what a student said or delving a bit more into some detail. A couple of times you marked something as important but didn't really elaborate why or how as much as I think you could have (I'm thinking here of when you went over Ballenger's "features of the form" and mentioned how important they were and could have spent a bit more time on the features themselves). There was another moment when a student mentioned a movie as an example of an ethnography, and I think there was an opportunity there as well to have asked him to explain his point.

Your next major activity for the class was the object exercise where students write about their views on the objects of another student in the classroom. This activity was orchestrated nicely, especially since you were in a circle, and students, again were very engaged. Three students volunteered to discuss what they wrote about and why, and a good discussion ensued about what assumptions we might find in the objects. You wrapped up class by pointing students toward some sites for research (student organizations, for example) and asked them to begin researching by the next class period.



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As we also chatted about, another recommendation I have is to not feel too constrained by the "script" or your plans. I think this connects to what I mention above about some opportunities for meaning making in class; perhaps some of these were missed in feeling you couldn't diverge from the plan. On that score, I'd just remind you to trust yourself to shoot from the hip at times. Your class time went quite well, and you're doing good work.

Laura, I look forward to seeing your continued development as a teacher in coming semesters at TCU as you gain exposure to new courses, and I'm confident you'll serve as a good model for future new GIs to turn to for advice. Please let me know if you have any questions or want to talk further about my visit. Thanks again for letting me visit your class.

Sincerely,

Dr. Charlotte Hogg
Associate Professor
Director of Composition