



TO: Lauren DeCarvalho  
FR: Marie Hardin *mh*  
DT: Oct. 27, 2010  
RE: Teaching evaluation, COMM 205  
Oct. 25, 2010

Lauren,

I thoroughly enjoyed observing your interaction with students in your COMM 205 (Women, Minorities, and the Media) class on Monday of this week. You were prepared, organized and – perhaps most importantly – truly engaged with the material and with your students throughout the class. I commend you for what I observed as a strong class session for you and your students.

I observed that you started class right on time. This is a great way to signal to students the importance of arriving early and ready to dive into the material as soon as class begins.

You used PowerPoint to help the class stay “on task” as you moved through essential announcements before moving to the topic of the day. One particularly interesting note to me was your announcement that you had, after considering your participation policy, that you had changed it to more effectively encourage and reward student participation. I saw no objections. I think your willingness to do so signals to your class that you are thoughtful and reflective about your teaching and that you want them to succeed. Again, I commend you for signaling this to your students.

The topic of the day – videogames – was (as you had explained to me) not an area of expertise for you. But you drew on web sources and video material to help students make sense of the reading. You mixed “softball” questions (“What is the name of a videogame that you have either played or heard about?”) that encourage strong participation with questions that are designed to reward students who have completed the reading. Along the way, you strategically invited students to integrate their personal experiences with the subject matter. I was most impressed with your use of names as you talked to students. You’re teaching a large class, yet you knew and used the names of almost every student you called on. Memorizing this many names and faces is no small feat – I know.

You showed portions of a Media Education Foundation video on videogames and then elicited comments from students about the video. I would encourage you – to get even more power from the video – to discuss the video before showing it: What is its name and who made it? When was it made? What do you want them to watch for? What do you plan to discuss after the video? Tell them why you're showing it and what kinds of things you'd like them to note as they watch. You'll find that the post-video discussion will be more robust.

I would make the same general suggestion for your use of any material, including websites. Tell the students why you're showing them a particular website, and figure out ways to help them link the lesson to the images themselves – the lesson will be more powerful.

I hope you feel very good about the session I observed, Lauren – because I do. You have told me about some of the comments your students have made to you about the difference the class is making in the ways they see the media and its influence in their own lives. After sitting in on your class, I'm not surprised.

Lauren, your use of class time, your interaction with students, and your deep connection with the material and concepts in this class is apparent. I look forward to continuing to help you grow and develop as an effective teacher – you're well on your way.

Best wishes for a strong finish to this semester.