UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

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Class Observation Letter
Instructor Name: Corinne Jones
Observer Name: Andrew Petrykowski
Course observed: ENC 1102 (Composition 2)
Date and Time of Observation: 9/11/2019, 9:30-10:20.
Classroom: Visual Arts Building (VAB) 217

Narrative of Class Session:

Corinne started class at 9:30 by reminding students that the day's lesson would focus on citation. She pulled up a powerpoint slide with five discussion questions, the first of which was "why do we cite things?". Corinne's students were quick to raise their hands to answer, and she took several answers. Students gave a few reasons, including to make their argument more valid, to provide an outside perspective, and to credit someone else for their work. After the answers, Corinne often prompted students to add to their answers, or asked them a follow-up question (e.g., "how does citation make your argument more valid?"; "does citing something imply ownership of it?"). After taking and talking through responses for about five minutes, Corinne talked about the reasons she cites articles and books in her academic work, building on the students' list and reinforcing many of their answers. She contextualized this conversation about why citation happens by telling students that they'd be expected to do a lot of citation in this class. In this explanation, she told students that they were joining an ongoing conversation and needed to show that they had done their homework if they wanted their arguments to be taken seriously. Connecting the act of citation to the idea of academic work as conversation could help students to understand why it must be done.

Corinne moved on to her next questions at 8:37, which were more procedural. She asked about the difference between in-text citations and the reference page, and the difference between quote and summary and paraphrase. While these are questions with specific answers, they did serve to allow some students to demonstrate their understanding while also allowing students who were confused to ask questions and better understand citation. Several students who did not understand paraphrase spoke up, especially regarding how much paraphrase was enough to get away from committing plagiarism. Corinne asked other students who were more comfortable with paraphrase to share their own paraphrasing strategies, rather than answering the question directly herself. Corinne wrote down several of the student responses, and then suggested her own strategy: read what you intend to paraphrase, then try to paraphrase it the next day. This way, she was able to recognize students' strategies while also sharing her own advice.
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Corinne also discussed source integration, stressing the need to 'sandwich' citations by introducing them and explaining why they are valuable in the context of a writer's work. To end the discussion, Corinne referenced several outside sources that the students could seek for help with citations, including the Purdue OWL and UCF's writing center.

At 10:00, Corinne had the students break into groups they had established in a prior class so that they could practice citations. Students came up to her desk to gather four different handouts with different documents that the students were to create citations for. Students could cite in either APA and MLA, and Corinne encouraged them to use the citation style that was appropriate for their discipline. The students worked quietly as Corinne watched from the podium and waited for questions to arise. When they did (how to cite an edition of a text, or what order to include citations on the reference page), she used the information on the Purdue OWL as a guide to answer their questions. After the 15-minute activity ended, Corinne used the last 5 minutes of class to go over upcoming due dates and course content.

Overall Thoughts and Impressions:

Corinne focused on student participation throughout the class. Before, after, and during each new bit of content, Corinne regularly asked questions that prompted students to consider their beliefs and thoughts on citation. She also frequently pressed students for further explanations of their answers, which had the double benefit of getting those students to further consider and explain their beliefs while also sharing them with other students. She often related students' answers back to a concept or argument from a reading, which legitimized their ideas. By frequently asking for student input and taking it seriously, Corinne cultivated a classroom environment in which students regularly and earnestly shared their ideas.

Corinne repeatedly referenced advanced aspects of writing studies research during her lecture on citation strategies, which should help students realize that citation isn't an afterthought, but instead a representation of one's beliefs about writing. For example, Corinne mentioned that some things are written with the intention of being shared and spread and repurposed, thereby introducing students to the idea of rhetorical velocity without mentioning the concept by name. She connected this to citation by asking students about how 'citation' works in songs or memes, outside of the academic context in which citation is usually discussed.

Overall, I believe that the entire structure of this lesson was indicative of a thoughtful approach to teaching that incorporates the philosophy behind the work that students must do. By focusing on the reasons why writers cite, rather than focusing on the actual mechanics of APA or MLA citation, Corinne invited students to understand citation at a level beyond the procedural. This deeper understanding of how and why to use sources positions students as discerning members of an academic community. At the same time, Corinne recognized that students were new to citation, and so she provided a good deal of resources for them to use during their learning. By introducing these resources and then using them to answer student questions, Corinne modelled an effective approach to learning the mechanics of citation.

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