



To,
Heather Kerr
Instructor of Anthropology (Part Time)
Department of Geography and Anthropology
Kennesaw State University

November 17, 2015

Re: Classroom Observation and Evaluation (ANTH 1102: Introduction to Anthropology, Fall 2015.

Heather Kerr (henceforth Heather) is a part time instructor of anthropology at KSU. This letter is based on a one time observation of her classroom teaching on November 12th 2015 in Social Sciences Room 3021 between 8-9:15 am. This is Heather's first time teaching for the KSU Anthropology program.

Heather is an organized and passionate teacher. She is trained as an archaeologist sbut maintained a broad approach to her delivery of lectures in this four-field course. The specific topic that she was lecturing on was Economic Anthropology. Her examples and content drew on many cultures and societies. She also covered multiple time periods through her thoughtful visual and verbal examples.

Instructional Delivery:

Heather's use of Power Point was engaging. It got to the key ideas and concepts that she wanted to get across to the students with effective balance between text and visual content. She spent appropriate amount of time on each slide. She made sure that she paused at in a periodic way to enquire whether students had questions or clarifications.

Heather also included appropriate videos related to the course material and students seemed to really enjoy them. The videos also provided context for discussing and clarifying key concepts in the lecture.



It was very important that she also asked questions within the scope of her present lecture that would promote connective and critical thinking across the course material. What was noteworthy was that her lecture included macro questions to communicate to students the relevance of economic anthropology for the present and past world. For instance she asked students questions like “Are all people driven by scarcity?” or “Are people always motivated by rational choices?”

One way to further promote this kind of connective thinking would be to allow sufficient time for discussion in class or opening an online discussion component. The online discussion board is pretty effective for getting the quieter students involved.

Syllabus:

The syllabus for this course is well rounded. It included all necessary information about office hours, academic integrity, KSU Writing Center, ADA statement, grading scheme, expectations of class conduct, withdrawals and incompletes. It was good that she also included information about the library and relevant American Anthropological Association sub-sections by providing links.

What I really appreciated in Heather’s syllabus was the addition of a required supplemental reading “Applying Anthropology” (Podolefsky et al 2008). However the copy of her syllabus that I obtained by emailing Missy did not have a course schedule so I could not really assess how the two textbooks were combined to communicate the applied side of anthropology to the students. In general it would have been really helpful if Heather had sent me the syllabus beforehand so that I could get a better sense of her balance between the four fields in teaching this introductory course.

Collaboration and Classroom Management:

I think students are very comfortable asking questions and contributing to the class discussion. For an 8 am class students seemed very engaged. Students also felt comfortable to bring in material from outside the classroom that connected to the material for the day. I also noticed that some students stopped by after class to ask questions to Heather.

Two suggested improvements in the area would be to familiarize oneself with student names and pay more attention to the people sitting at the back. I did not get a sense that Heather

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knew everyone's name. The class was not extremely large (like a double section) and this would have made the classroom environment more collaborative.

Since ANTH 1102 is a core requirement for our major and also a potential recruiting opportunity to draw more majors into the program, this kind of personal touch would be appropriate. I also noticed that it took a while for Heather to get to the students at the back seats when they raised their hands to respond to her prompts.

Non-Classroom Observation Material:

I briefly spoke to Heather after the classroom observation was over and was able to confirm that she is using D2L tools to enhance course assignment delivery. I commend her for using online learning tools available through KSU to foster student learning.

Through this conversation I was also able to get a sense of her pedagogical philosophy pertaining to this course, especially since I did not have access to the course schedule to judge the balanced layout of the content.

Overall I think Heather was engaging, informative, and approachable and met my expectations from any instructor teaching introductory courses in a Gen-Ed curriculum.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Debarati Sen".

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