

External Course Observation

Sam Avery

COM 203 – Introduction to Media Writing

Online/Asynchronous, Spring 2024

Dear Evaluator,

As mentioned in my teaching overview, one of the most significant modifications in my teaching pedagogy since COVID-19 has been the development of my online course portal located at www.ProfAvery.online. The development of this learning management system has become a fantastic resource for me and my students, both in-person and online.

With that said, I invited Kerry Curran, Professor and Chair of the English Department at Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3), to observe and evaluate my fully online/asynchronous section of **COM 203 – Introduction to Media Writing** during the Spring 2024 semester. Dr. Curran's expertise in composition, rhetoric, and student learning assessment, particularly within online and hybrid instructional environments, made her well positioned to evaluate the structure, clarity, and effectiveness of a writing-intensive media course delivered in an asynchronous format.

Her perspective is especially valuable given the close relationship between media writing and traditional composition pedagogy, as well as her extensive experience with curriculum oversight and institutional assessment. This external review offers an independent, informed evaluation of my online instructional design, student engagement strategies, and learning outcomes, complementing the existing record of in-person teaching observations and providing a broader view of my teaching effectiveness across modalities.

Please know, evaluators have access to my COM 203 – Introduction to Media Writing course through the TEACHING menu on www.SamuelAvery.info if you wish to follow along with Dr. Curran's evaluation.

Additionally, previous in-person classroom observation reports have also been included in this document following Dr. Curran's report.

Respectfully,

Sam Avery

Tompkins Cortland Community College Faculty Observation Form

This form is intended as a way to enable more consistent and transparent evaluations over time with the goal of helping to encourage a culture of continuous development.

Please complete the following steps for your observation:

- Review the syllabus for the course that is available on Sharepoint. Request and review both examples of assessments and the course learning management site *prior* to your classroom observation and complete Section A below.
- Talk to the faculty member in advance of the class period you will be observing. The goal of this conversation should be to understand the objectives for that class and how it fits with the overall course and to provide an overview of the observation you will be conducting.
- Use the “Evidence / Notes” boxes to make notes regarding each question during the lesson. Please check NA if a particular item did not apply to the class you observed.

Observer:	Kerry Curran
Instructor:	Sam Avery
Course Name:	Intro to Media Writing
Course Number / Section/ Teaching Modality:	BL1
Date / Time / Room:	Online Asynchronous
Semester:	Spring 2024
# students enrolled / # students who attended	15 / NA

¹Adapted from the UTeach Observation Protocol (UTOP; Retrieved March 2018 from <https://utop.uteach.utexas.edu/>) by the Teaching Quality Framework Initiative (<https://www.colorado.edu/teaching-quality-framework/>) in collaboration with partnering departments at the University of Colorado Boulder. This work was sponsored by the National Science Foundation (DUE-1725959) - any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF.

Section A: Review of syllabus, assessments, and learning management site

<p>Did the observer receive and review the syllabus, assessment materials, and the learning management site prior to class?</p>	<p>Yes No</p>
<p>(a) Does the syllabus include the required sections per the TC3 teaching manual (e.g. Student Conduct; back up teaching modality; and Academic Integrity)?</p>	<p>Yes No*</p>
<p>(b) Does the syllabus clearly describe expectations and requirements for the course? Is the grade breakdown and a course calendar clearly outlined?</p>	<p>Yes No*</p>
<p>(c) Were formal assessments (homework, tests, quizzes, etc.) consistent with the Master Course Syllabus?</p>	<p>Yes No*</p>
<p><i>*If no in (a), (b), and/or (c), what was missing/unclear?</i></p>	
<p>(d) How did the learning management site supplement the course? In addition to overall observations, please comment specifically on things such as organization, grading clarity, and examples of added content.</p>	
<p>The site that Sam created is so well organized and easy to navigate with all parts of the course (syllabus, schedule, grades, modules, etc.) clearly labeled. He provides an excellent example of an education layout that is very accessible and engaging to a variety of learners!</p>	

Section B: Classroom Observations

B1) Organized and Prepared. Were the instructor's materials, activities, and resources (e.g. readings, PowerPoints, multimedia, website, etc.) well-organized, well prepared, clearly explained, and broadly consistent with stated learning goals for that class session.

Evidence / Notes:

Not applicable

The landing page is dynamic, yet cleanly laid out for students, making it very clear what the class content is and how to navigate the units.

B2) Resources. Did the instructor provide resources (e.g., readings, PowerPoints, board work, multimedia, website, etc.) that were accurate, and that contributed to students' understanding and learning at various levels? How did the content and examples the instructor chose support the themes and concepts of the class meeting?

Evidence / Notes:

Not applicable

I am so impressed by the way each unit breaks down into scaffolding pieces ("WATCH/READ/REVIEW/QUIZ/SEND"), taking the student through a linear progression of resources and examples, and always ending with an assessment that not only makes sure the student understands what they learned, it helps make the instructor's expectations clear.

B3) Learning goals and Participation. How were the students aware of the purpose of this class session, including lecture topics, class activities, and/or assignments? In what ways did the instructor work to achieve the goals discussed during your pre-consultation meeting and/or communicated during class? How did the instructor establish a classroom environment that gave all students the opportunity to participate fully (e.g., creates a positive climate inclusive of all learners)?

Evidence / Notes:

Not applicable

Sam created an introductory module that makes sure students understand the nature of the course, offers tips on how to succeed (which repeatedly encourages the student to reach out to him), reviews the core of the syllabus and course schedule, and provides an overview of the grades.

This introduction and the modules themselves are written in a voice that is very encouraging and even incorporates humor! I feel his students would be quite welcomed by his tone.

The only thing I would point out is the use of 3 major deadlines to complete all the work---I like the idea very much but also noted that 2 of his students disappeared. I am wondering if some students need even more

structure (or a schedule based on weekly deadlines) to stay on top of the load? I could see how a student might fall behind (out of sight, out of mind) if there is not a need to check in weekly.

B4) Engagement and Active Learning. In what ways did the instructor engage students in doing, sharing, thinking, writing, or other forms of active learning during the lecture/class session? In what ways did the instructor provide students with opportunities to engage with the course material, on their own or in small groups during the lecture/class session? (See Addendum on Active Learning for some examples.)

Evidence / Notes:

Not applicable

The ways that Sam shares content and learning is varied and interactive---in addition, his assessments are similarly varied and allow for a range of ways (“Send a Professional Email”, “Quiz: Feature Copy”, “Broadcast Vocal Test”) for his students to show their expertise and comprehension.

B5) Knowledge and Connections. How did the instructional strategies and activities help students make appropriate connections to other areas or real life, build upon prior knowledge, understand how learning the material connects to out-of-class issues, and encourage students to increase their reasoning ability?

Evidence / Notes:

I really liked the way Sam connected the skills he was teaching to current essays, movie themes, and real life examples from a variety of sources (Ted Talks, Instagram, YouTube, etc). By doing this, it encourages the student to not just memorize or regurgitate, but look for connections in the concepts and attempt pragmatic applications.

B6) Formative assessment and corrective feedback. In what ways did the instructor check in on and/or gauge student learning during the lecture/class session? In what ways did the instructor provide corrective feedback and adjust their teaching to address student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during the lecture/class session?

Evidence / Notes:

Not applicable

I am not completely sure how Sam provides corrective feedback, etc. He encourages the students to contact him, but I did not have access to a rubric or grading response.

B7) Accuracy and Depth. Was the instructor’s content information accurate and appropriately thorough (e.g. information written on board, in hand-outs)? How did the instructor demonstrate a solid grasp of the subject matter and content, and how did they scaffold the content to teach at a level appropriate for undergraduates?

Evidence / Notes:

Not applicable

He scaffolds his content so well, both within the modules, and as a progression overall across the units. For this reason, the content and work does not seem random or “busy”, but clearly lays out a plan. However, this does not mean that students are not challenged. Each module calls for an original work or quiz.

Addendum to Section B: Examples of active learning include, but are not limited to:

- Clicker concept questions
- Think-pair-share
- Participatory demonstrations and/or games
- Making time for students to discuss concepts with peers
- Active writing (e.g., minute papers) or speaking (e.g., in class presentations)
- Working through problems, scenarios, and/or arguments with students
- Organizing students for group work
- Routinely asking for and welcoming student input and questions
- Fielding questions in a way that encouraged further discussion
- Demonstrating active listening
- Providing opportunities for students to reflect, relate, organize, apply, synthesize, and/or evaluate information, etc.

Section C: Ratings

C1) Organized and Prepared. Were the instructor’s materials, activities, and resources (e.g. readings, PowerPoints, multimedia, website, etc.) well-organized, well prepared, clearly explained, and broadly consistent with stated learning goals for that class session.

Not applicable

Needs improvement

Advanced execution



Please explain rationale: **7—please see Section B comments.**

C2) Resources. Did the instructor provide resources (e.g., readings, PowerPoints, board work, multimedia, website, etc.) that were accurate, and that contributed to students' understanding and learning at all levels? How did the content and examples the instructor chose support the themes and concepts of the class meeting?
 Not applicable

Needs improvement Advanced execution

Please explain rationale: **7—please see Section B comments.**

C3) Learning goals and Participation. How were the students aware of the purpose of this class session, including lecture topics, class activities, and/or assignments? In what ways did the instructor work to achieve the goals discussed during your pre-consultation meeting and/or communicated during class? How did the instructor establish a classroom environment that gave all students the opportunity to participate fully (e.g., creates a positive climate inclusive of all learners)?
 Not applicable

Needs improvement Advanced execution

Please explain rationale: **7—please see Section B comments.**

C4) Engagement and Active Learning: In what ways did the instructor engage students in doing, sharing, thinking, writing, or other forms of active learning during the lecture/class session? In what ways did the instructor provide students with opportunities to engage with the course material, on their own or in small groups during the lecture/class session? (See Addendum on Active Learning for some examples.)
 Not applicable

Needs improvement Advanced execution

Please explain rationale: **7—please see Section B comments.**

C5) Knowledge and Connections. How did the instructional strategies and activities help students make appropriate connections to other areas or real life, build upon prior knowledge, understand how learning the material connects to out-of-class issues, and encourage students to increase their reasoning ability?
 Not applicable

Needs improvement Advanced execution

Please explain rationale: **7—please see Section B comments.**

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<p>C6) Formative assessment and corrective feedback: In what ways did the instructor check in on and/or gauge student learning during the lecture/class session? In what ways did the instructor provide corrective feedback and adjust their teaching to address student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during the lecture/class session?</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not applicable</i></p>	<p>Needs improvement Advanced execution</p>  <p>Please explain rationale: 5/6—please see Section B comments. This may be happening though and my “view” of the course might not have permitted me to see evidence of this kind of corrective feedback and adjustment.</p>
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<p>C7) Accuracy and Depth. Was the instructor’s content information accurate and appropriately thorough (e.g. information written on board, in hand-outs)? How did the instructor demonstrate a solid grasp of the subject matter and content, and how did they scaffold the content to teach at a level appropriate for undergraduates?</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not applicable</i></p>	<p>Needs improvement Advanced execution</p>  <p>Please explain rationale: 7—please see Section B comments.</p>
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Section D: Open-Ended Responses

<p>D1) Strengths and positive aspects of the course and/or the instructor’s teaching</p>
<p>Evidence / Notes:</p> <p>I would like to use Sam’s online asynchronous course set up as the gold standard for other courses in this modality. So logical, inviting, accessible, varied, and interesting. Well done!</p>

D2) Suggestions for the instructor to improve their teaching

Evidence / Notes: Please see C6.

Section E: Optional Instructor Response

**E1) If the instructor would like to respond to or add any comment to the observation, they can do so here.
Faculty are encouraged to consult their collective bargaining unit's contract regarding Professional Observation Visits, including additional visits.**

Notes:

Section F: Supervisor Statement

F1) Confirmation of Receipt

Name of Supervisor:

Date Observation Report Received:

Comments:

November 19, 2018

Dear Committee Members,

On November 13th, 2018, I observed Dr. Samuel Avery's dynamic and engaging COM 342: Video Production II course. The course met from 2:50-5:40pm. Structured as a collaborative workshop, six students produced, performed, and recorded a news program—six different times. Each student took a turn with a distinct role in the production: Director and Camera Switcher, Sound Tech, Floor Manager, Host, Weather Correspondent, and Sports Correspondent. Meanwhile, other students from the course served as Production Assistants to the primary group of students, running the teleprompter, serving as on-air guests, and performing other production related tasks. (As I learned, the roles would reverse on Thursday and the primary group that I observed would serve as Production Assistants to these students). The news program was entirely student generated—the students wrote their own script, chose their own media, and designed the look and feel of the news program (including a very impressive musical and graphic intro).

Dr. Avery's pedagogical work in this course session was multifaceted. First, he began the course with all the students gathered together, establishing a clear framework for this complex lesson. He connected the student's production to previous lessons in the course and clarified both the structure and the goal of the day's workshop. Then, he spent significant time working with the first student to serve as Director and Camera Switcher. The student guided Dr. Avery through all the details of their production. Dr. Avery fielded questions and helped the student with key issues, such as the use of cut-away videos and images during the interview and the insertion of transitions between segments. A particular focus was on the complexities of the "virtual studio," a digital program that enabled students to make changes to the layout and design of the video via the computer. As an outsider, I can say that the program and the technology that the students were in charge of appeared daunting and complex. Many students expressed nervousness about taking on the responsibility of Director. Dr. Avery reassured them and also gave them the permission to make mistakes and learn through the process. Indeed, the most impressive part of the class was that the Director/Switcher had to train their replacement (and this process was repeated for each student). While Dr. Avery stood by ready to answer questions or address concerns, each student became the "teacher" of another student—and it was evident how much this pedagogical responsibility cumulatively impacted their learning of all the aspects of a news production.

It is impossible to overstate the camaraderie and collegiality among the students that I observed—their genuinely supportive ethos is testament to Dr. Avery's pedagogical skill and his effectiveness in creating intellectual and creative community in the classroom. As Dr. Avery was working with students in the booth, the students in the studio stayed on task and helped one another; likewise, when he was in the studio, the students in the booth were laser focused on prepping one another for the next recording of the news program. It was impressive how much structure and coordination occurred within the span of the course and how invested the students were in supporting one another.

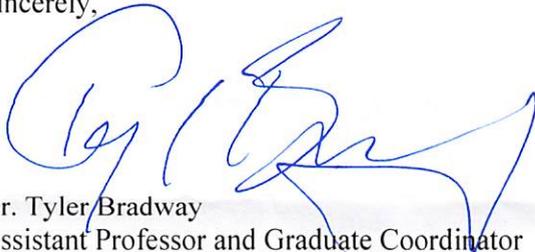
At the end of the course, Dr. Avery brought all of the students together to reflect on the success of the six performances of the news broadcast. They listened attentively. He affirmed their hard work and collaboration while also acknowledging the aspects of the broadcast that improved over each successive performance. Finally, he previewed Thursday's class, when the other student group would take over the primary roles and this group would become Production Assistants.

Overall, I found Dr. Avery's pedagogical style to be incredibly effective in achieving the goals of this particular lesson and for the course as a whole. His style moved between direct guidance and giving the students autonomy as necessary, and this clearly fostered more collaboration and responsibility among the students—which will be necessary for their self-directed final projects in this course and for their success as professionals working in fields related to video production. Of particular note was Dr. Avery's facility in handling the students' differing personalities—some were shier than others about appearing on camera; some were particularly nervous about being placed in the role of authority; some were anxious about having sole responsibility over the technology. Dr. Avery checked in with each student and encouraged the students to have confidence in themselves and their abilities.

It was a delight to observe this class—I was very impressed by the professionalism of the students and of their actual news production. Dr. Avery's course is clearly preparing students with the conceptual, technical, and interpersonal skills necessary to be successful in communication studies and new media.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at tyler.bradway@cortland.edu.

Sincerely,



Dr. Tyler Bradway
Assistant Professor and Graduate Coordinator
English Department
SUNY Cortland



To: Personnel Committee(s)

From: Larissa True, PhD; Associate Professor, Kinesiology Department

Date: 23 January 2019

Re: Peer teaching observation of Samuel Avery, Assistant Professor

In November 2018, I had the opportunity to observe Samuel Avery's COM 446 Advanced Filmmaking course. This opportunity for observation was unique for several reasons: 1) I am a faculty member in a completely different department/field (Kinesiology); 2) In addition to observing Sam's teaching, I was also playing the role of "Erica" in a short film he and the COM 446 class were shooting; and 3) The observation took place on two different occasions in two non-classroom settings (a conference room in the Professional Studies Building and the upstairs bar at the Dark Horse Tavern). The COM 446 class that I observed is an upper-level class with a focus on advanced techniques in short-form digital cinema production. The 10-12 students who were in the class received rigorous training from pre-production to post-production of a short film.

We first filmed a scene in a conference room in the Professional Studies Building, where my office is located. This occurred during COM 446's normal class time. Sam and his students arrived a few minutes early and stopped by my office to introduce themselves before going to the conference room to set up. As they were setting up, Sam provided instruction for the equipment set-up but also took great care to allow the students to make decisions regarding camera angles and locations for microphones and such. He would often ask the students "what do you think?" or "how should we set this up?" rather than taking over and micro-managing the students, which allowed for a conducive learning environment for an advanced-level class.

It became immediately apparent that Sam has a good working relationship with his students. While it is evident that he's in charge of the class and has the respect of his students, the class functions more as a cohesive team working toward a goal rather than a typical student/teacher course. One aspect that was particularly impressive and reflective of Sam's effective teaching style is that all the students who were present for filming that day were actively engaged in the process. Not one student was "slacking," or on their phone, or trying to avoid being part of the filming process. From an observation standpoint, it seemed that all students wanted to be there and genuinely wanted to make a contribution to the film.

The second time I observed Sam's COM 446 class was in a rather unique setting – we met at the Dark Horse Tavern at 10:00am on a Tuesday morning in November. I was impressed that all of Sam's students (and some extras) showed up on time and prepared for a class meeting at a somewhat odd location on a Tuesday morning. Similar to my first observation, the students showed up on time, on point, and were involved and engaged throughout the entire two hour class meeting. I was especially impressed during this session by the students' collective attentiveness and evident interest in the course and the film. There were a few instances where Sam needed to redirect everyone, as there was quite a bit going on, but the students seemed eager to listen to him and would immediately respond to his request.

As a faculty member in a completely different department and a very different field, I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to observe Sam's teaching from the perspective of a "cast member" and also a

fellow faculty colleague. I specifically recall making the remark to the students several times during the first filming session that “this is such a cool classroom setting!” and several students commented back to me that they “love” the class and their major. In my experience, students don’t make such comments unless they truly respect their professor, which was very evident.

In my opinion, Samuel Avery has excellent command of his class and maintains a positive balance between being a teacher and a director. He clearly has the respect of his students and it is very evident that he is in charge of the class, but also demonstrated a passion toward his students learning the necessary techniques to become a filmmaker. To say I was impressed would be an understatement.

In all honestly, if I could do my college career over, I would welcome the opportunity to take a class from someone like Professor Avery. He is an excellent teacher and clearly a brilliant scholar in his field. It was a pleasure to work with him and have the opportunity to observe his COM 446 class. Although I am not part of the Communication and Media Studies Department, I can strongly attest that Sam is an asset to his department and to SUNY Cortland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Larissa True'.

Larissa True, PhD
Associate Professor
Kinesiology Department
SUNY Cortland

Classroom Observation of Mr. Samuel Avery
COM 342 Video Production II
Thursday, October 12, 2017
Corey Union Building
2:50 pm
Conducted by Mr. Paul van der Veur

I found Mr. Sam Avery's teaching to be very effective. My observation was conducted during the seventh week of the semester. Students were acquainted with Mr. Avery's teaching style and methods of instruction. Mr. Avery appeared well prepared. His pedagogical approaches were appropriate to the course content. Students appeared engaged with the content.

Class was conducted in the Communication Studies television studios in the basement of the Corey Union building. Mr. Avery arrived at 2:45. The course is designed as a major specific introduction to studio television technologies and techniques. All students were either juniors or seniors. All had at least a foundational level of experience in video production.

Avery began the class by reviewing work accomplished during the previous class periods, outlined work to be accomplished during the class, and provided a brief overview of what would be expected during the next class period. This class would be a continuation of work conducted during the previous class. Students who had worked on script development previously would now be working in the studio while those who had completed their studio assignments would be working with the class teaching assistant on developing their scripts for the next project.

Once they were divided into their groups, Mr. Avery began working with the students involved in the studio production. He explained that they would each take turns fulfilling various roles within the studio, including: technical director, teleprompter operator, floor manager, gaffer, and talent. Their task would be to produce a program segment entitled, "TV: Behind the Scenes." The segment would cover fundamental concepts in studio lighting and would be based on a script he provided for the project. He further explained that each student would be responsible for setting up one of five different lighting arrangements; silhouette, gel, cameo, 3-point, and low-key lighting. He then provided each student with a diagram showing the basic arrangement for lights in the scenario.

Students took their positions and began working on their assigned rolls. Avery moved back and forth between the studio and control room providing guidance to students at each of the stations. Following each recording, students moved to a subsequent workstation. Avery continued to provide significant support and guidance while allowing students the freedom to experiment within the basic structure of the assignment.

I found this form of instruction to be particularly effective in teaching the materials at hand. Foremost, students received practical experience in each of the rolls assigned to them. They also received basic instruction and feedback at each post. In addition, since this assignment dealt with lighting concepts, students received instruction in the fundamentals of studio lighting through repetitive exposure to the scripted material. In their roll as 'talent,' students read the script through a number of times both silently and aloud. They read along with the talent when working in the roll of teleprompter operator, matching the speed of the script with the delivery of the talent. Then they heard to the message again in each of the other rolls they performed.

At the conclusion of the fifth reading, all students involved in the studio production worked to clean-up the studio. Avery then reminded students of what would be expected during the next class period before dismissing them at 5 pm.

As noted above, I found Mr. Sam Avery's teaching to be very effective. He had a clear plan of what he wanted students to learn, told students what would be expected of them, presented material in an accessible manner, and reinforced the message though inclusion of multiple modes of communication.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul van der Veur, PhD
Professor and Chair

To: John Hartsock, Chair, Communication Studies Department
Personnel Committee
From: David Hollenback, Associate Professor Emeritus
Communication Studies Department
Re: Class Visitation Report for Sam Avery
Date: September 30, 2014



I visited Sam Avery's COM 342 – Video Production II class on Thursday, September 25th from 8:30-11:10 am in the Corey Union Television Studio.

This was a laboratory project day, so students were to engage with the studio equipment using a set script and enhance their technical and directing skills. Attendance was 100% and Professor Avery began class with a review of issues that needed special emphasis, such as cue clarity, the importance of ready cues, timing, and attention to detail. He offered positive feedback to several individuals and encouraged everyone to concentrate on improvement. The students were very responsive, ready to get started, eager and energetic.

As the morning progressed, Professor Avery was constantly guiding individual students, asking questions, answering questions, pushing to move the process along, yet always giving positive, directed individualized instruction and feedback. For many of these students, this was only their fifth day of studio work. Their progress was evident and impressive. By the time the lab was over, each class member had directed and served on every piece of studio equipment. They had created 15 short 90-second programs that would provide ample material for review, critique, and growth.

Professor Avery has excellent rapport with his class. His comments were concise and relevant to the project at hand. The students asked very good questions and were extremely engaged with the material. There were clear behavioral outcomes achieved in the course of the morning. You could see individual class members gaining confidence and command of the tools of studio television. And, just as important, they were enjoying themselves as they learned.

This was an excellent class session. Professor Avery showed himself to be a master at class management, leadership, and technical skill. His enthusiasm for the students is only exceeded by their enthusiasm for him.

TO: SAMUEL AVERY
FROM: SAMUEL L. KELLEY
SUBJECT: CLASS VISITATION
DATE: SEPTEMBER 29, 2014

Classroom Visitation for Samuel Avery

I visited Sam Avery's class, COM 322: Media Writing, Thursday, September 26. The class meets at 1:15 in Sperry 103, which is a computer lab class room.

At 1:15 the class got underway, with one student arriving at 1:18. Fourteen of twenty students enrolled were present. It is worth noting that Thursday was Rosh Hashanah. Following completion of the attendance, the presentation began.

The primary focus of the class was preparing students for the experience of developing scripts for movies. As part of the process, some class time was devoted to helping students understand film as a visual language. The idea was to provide some background to students who have little or no knowledge about the form and structure in filmmaking.

This meant taking a brief look at the early pioneers and players in the history of motion picture development. The presentation included parallel developments in the international emergence of motion pictures as an art form. Samples of persistence of vision were shown—Edward Muybridge and the famous horse scene. Other figures include the Lumiere Brothers, and their "The Arrival of a Train (1896)," and George Eastman, noted for celluloid film development.

The emergence of the storyline in film and the evolution of narrative, as noted in the contributions of D. W. Griffith through the development of shots were briefly noted. Also noted was the emergence of new forms of cinema, including the famous documentary, *Nanook of the North*. Other segments included composition and framing, lighting, aspect ratio, elements of shots, lines, and how these shape and influence the shot. Several examples were shown that demonstrated the relationship between composition and light and eye movement. The Rule of Thirds was presented, with examples from several videos. In preparation for showing the videos, students were asked to turn off their computer screens and focus on the videos.

The area of the presentation on framing and shot composition explored the various types of shots—Extreme Long Shot, Close Up, Extreme Close Up, Medium Close, and more. This seemed to really engage students. The instructor devoted the last part of the class, approximately fifteen minutes, with an exercise in which students were grouped in pairs and given a short script with just dialogue and asked to provide shots appropriate to the dialogue. A quick review was made to determine student progress during the exercise. By now the class was ending. Students were assigned a five-minute script in which they were to develop a two-page column using a template that would include audio and video shots for the following Thursday, October 2nd.

Overall, the class succeeded in providing a substantial amount of information within a limited time frame. The pace was brisk but comprehensible, as the instructor found it important to provide some background in film as a basis for preparing students to develop their own scripts. As a filmmaker, the emphasis on screenwriting reflects the strength of Professor Avery's background, but students benefit directly from the expertise of a video professional as they develop their craft. He is a valued teacher and an important addition to our program.

RE: Observation of Sam Avery --Classroom Teaching
DATE: Thursday, September 25, 2014.
COURSE: COM 301: Mass Media & Society

It is my pleasure to report to the Personnel Committee of the Department of Communication Studies that I was very impressed with Sam Avery's teaching as evidenced in the 75-minute class I attended. Avery was very animated and enthusiastic in his review of the subject matter and conveyed a sincere sense of importance to the day's specific subject matter: Copyright Law. He emphatically stated the relevance of copyright law to students of the 21st century especially regarding their use of social media. As preface to the day's planned activity he also discussed briefly the challenges to traditional interpretations and applications of copyright law to the ever-changing modern media landscape. His caveat referenced the difficulty with trying to stretch copyright law written originally for books and newspapers to retrofit it to "borrowing" images, "sharing" videos, and "downloading" music. He provided a couple of specific examples to support his claims and referenced the textbook twice as he provided his overview. His students seemed interested in the orientation he provided and I saw several taking notes.

Avery then described the agenda for the rest of the class period. A debate had been scheduled and arranged for the remaining class time. The eight students read prepared Position Statements as the remainder of the class sat and listened and made notes and comments on previously distributed Critique Forms. Avery had appraised and provided the students with all the materials they would need for this elaborate class exercise ahead of time. I was extremely impressed to observe that he had created Critique sheets to guide student reactions and commentaries and maintain the focus for class discussion. As well, all students seemed to comprehend and follow along easily with the guidelines provided in advance.

Avery created a Facebook course page to supply additional information on the debate topics which change weekly; the textbook readings; a reiteration of student responsibilities; assignment descriptions and logistics; roles to play and group expectations in each debate. This page appears to make what could be a very complex system of debates, topics, group work, critiques, and an extensive semester long point system easily understood by the students and a very effective way to source out information. As I am already a proponent of using social media as a venue for classroom support I am not surprised by his approach but nevertheless astounded at the extent in which his Facebook page has been developed to reflect so thoroughly his class and all its components. It is one of the most advanced, sophisticated approaches I've seen of an Instructor using the newer technology accompanied by a thoughtfully prepared more traditional syllabus to provide students with materials that keep them engaged and current with the class. Avery should be commended for his thorough preparation of course materials.

During the student-led debate there were a couple of occasions where Avery needed to correct a student's claim. He interjected very thoughtfully and without discouraging the student from continuing to participate. In one case in particular, a student talked about plagiarism and seemed to blur the line between copyright infringement and plagiarism. Avery was swift to intercede, and emphatic but also friendly in his response by providing a careful explanation of how the two were very different things. He handled it with aplomb. Although the instructor is newer to the Cortland student and our program, he has obviously earned their respect because he treats them in kind. He was not hesitant to remind students about expectations and the level of work he expected. Avery also was firm in his conviction that he wanted students to pay attention, stay engaged, and participate and he was highly successful in motivating them to do this. In his final message to the class Avery reminded them of how they were to prepare for the next class and directed them to review the instructions provided on-line.

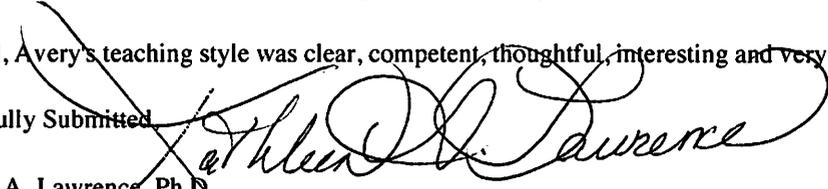
Overall, I found Sam Avery's ability to interact easily with our students most impressive. He was charming and warm, but very much in command of their attention as well as directing the class and keeping it on track. Although much of the class involved student commentary and participation, Avery never took a back seat to the action and seemed very much involved in the outcome. I have observed hundreds of colleagues in my 32 years of teaching at the undergraduate level, and I currently serve on two teaching awards committees, and I believe Avery is one of the most accomplished, polished, and professional teachers I have seen for a faculty member in only his second year.

Avery showed acumen with the class subject matter, and employed an integrative pedagogical style. He demonstrated competence with numerous interactive techniques in one class and his syllabus provides further evidence that he understands and practices additional forms. He appeared available and accessible to student needs and questions and attended to them. He carefully balanced his role as Instructor and expert with his naturally friendly and easy manner. He challenged them on multiple levels: with a significant amount of work, the expectation they will work effectively as individuals, as well as a contributing member of a research and/or critical team.

Some Avery highlights were:

- * Demonstrated a profound appreciation for the use of class exercises, group work, debate, discussion, etc. and used a variety of pedagogical methods to keep student involvement and interest high.
- * Showed excellent use of social media to organize class activities, readings, and assignments as well as to encourage student discussion.
- * Showed a current understanding, appreciation, and competency of class subject matter.
- * Recognized the importance of establishing a common understanding of terms related to Mass Media Topics and Theories to best prepare our students for additional course work.
- * Persuasively emphasized the significance of this course REQUIRED for all our majors.
- * Demonstrated an ability to incorporate relevant specific examples that helped make the topics even more compelling and memorable to the students.
- * Provided a smooth and cohesive integration of multiple components of the class.
- * Provided illustrations, transitions, and clarifications when needed and made efficient use of the class time without being overbearing or obtrusive about it.
- * Evidenced an easy, and empathetic ability to interact with students, blended with a clear sense of authority.
- * Emphasized his expectation that students take responsibility for their participation and product.
- * Acted as a role model for leadership qualities and the respectful communication and interaction with peers necessary to work effectively as a team.
- * Created a clever approach to group work and integrated the use of critique forms to keep students engaged.
- * Offered a thorough and extensive explanation of class plans and an assignment schedule.
- * Provided an effective and thoughtful integration of readings to class work.
- * Overall, Avery's teaching style was clear, competent, thoughtful, interesting and very effective.

Respectfully Submitted,


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