

Class Observed: English 220-02
Instructor Observed: Christina Katopodis
Observer: Mark Bobrow
Date of Observation: October 16, 2014

As part of the unit on poetry, this 50-minute session focused on Emerson's "The Poet." After a brief explanation of why she chose the essay and a bit of background on Emerson, Ms. Katopodis had the class create a "collective description" of the essay. Students contributed key phrases from the essay, as well as their own brief summaries, which Ms. Katopodis wrote on the board, highlighting key words as she commented on the contributions. This proved to be an excellent way to involve a good portion of the class, and for her to see how students managed a difficult reading.

Using student comments, Ms. Katopodis turned discussion to ideas about American experience, "first encounters," and how Emerson figures the place of the poet. Asking what Emerson might have meant by saying that poetry was written "before time was," she elicited several fine responses about the relation between nature and poetry. This led to a surprisingly sophisticated conversation about representing experience in language, which much of the class eagerly engaged.

It was only at this point, having established a common vocabulary and a strong sense of some of Emerson's main points, that Ms. Katopodis talked about the difficulty of reading Emerson, how he forces us "to break the way we read by making the familiar unfamiliar." Although addressing the challenges of reading Emerson mid-way through the session may seem counterintuitive (one would expect it at the beginning), Ms. Katopodis had already established that difficulty could be engaging, enlightening, even exciting, as was amply evidenced by the students' splendid contributions to discussion. Now she used the idea of difficulty and defamiliarizing the familiar to discuss poetry. Picking up on the point, one student used the example of Dickinson's "fly" (from a previous class session), and how "Dickinson makes us see the fly and the whole idea of a fly in a new way." This led Ms. Katopodis to ask, What does poetry break? How does it make the familiar unfamiliar? This led to active and well informed discussion about poetic form, using previous readings of Dickinson, Whitman, and Lorde as examples. Particularly insightful was a student response, picking up on the central trope of Lorde's "Coal," that "prose is like coal; poetry is like diamonds. Poetry compresses language." Other students jumped in, and Ms. Katopodis deftly guided the discussion, offering comments at times while taking her cues from the students' comments. Brilliantly pulling together the various strands and incorporating previously read poems, she led the class to the understanding that poetry "puts language under pressure," and can do so in various ways.

Ms. Katopodis's command of the material is matched, if not exceeded, by her ability to encourage student participation, guide class discussion, and make difficult ideas and readings seem inviting. At least three quarters of the class participated, and often it seemed I was

observing an advanced course for majors rather than 220, such was the level of instruction and student discussion. This was one of the most effective and thrilling classes I have observed, and that is clearly due to Ms. Katopodis's expertise, preparation, pedagogical approach, warmth, and enthusiasm. Though it is only her first semester teaching 220, it is abundantly clear that she is already a talented and highly effective teacher.

This is a *very* favorable observation.

Class Observed: English 220-76
Instructor Observed: Christina Katopodis
Observer: Josh Schneiderman
Date of Observation: March 20, 2015

I visited Christina Katopodis's English 220 class on March 20th, 2015. It was a terrific session, and I learned a great deal from Christina and her students. Class began on time at 9:45. Christina opened with a five to ten minute mini-lecture on Wallace Stevens and modernism, during which her students were quite attentive. She then split the class into groups of two or three to continue on-going work on Stevens's "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." Interestingly, students were split into thirteen groups, one for each section of the poem. During the roughly twenty minute small group discussion period, Christina moved around the room to check in on each group.

What followed this part of class was a very sophisticated discussion of "Thirteen Ways." Each group offered smart, creative interpretations of their assigned section, and Christina responded with questions that spurred the students to think deeper about the poem and forged connections between the interpretations of the groups who spoke previously. Throughout the class, I noticed that Christina asks thoughtful, probing questions, a teaching skill that is not to be underestimated. The class discourse clearly operates at a very high level.

The class then transitioned into a discussion of Emerson's challenging essay "The Poet." Again, using expertly formulated questions, Christina spurred her students to identify the numerous characteristics that Emerson offers to define his ideal poet, and she charted them on the whiteboard. Because of the structure of the class, all but a few students participated at some point over the course of the hour and fifteen-minute period.

Christina then broke the class into different small groups, providing clear instructions for what would come next. Each group was assigned one poet that the class had studied over the course of the poetry unit, and their task was to argue that this poet could be considered "a poet" by Emerson's criteria. Christina connected this to the process of formulating an arguable thesis in an essay, which was a very smart pedagogical move. The whole group work portion of the class was highly effective. Each group offered a great response, which in turn stimulated discussion throughout the whole class. Christina's students clearly left with a better, deeper understanding of Stevens, Emerson, and all of the other poets they had studied that semester—not an easy feat!

Christina is clearly a highly effective teacher of English 220. Her intelligence, generosity, and empathy were on full display. The class I observed was exciting and rewarding for all involved. This is a **very favorable** review.

Class Observed: English 38573.01 Gender in the American Renaissance
Instructor Observed: Christina Katopodis
Observer: Kelvin Black
Date of Observation: October 22, 2015

I had the great pleasure of visiting Christina Katopodis's class on October 22, 2015.

Ms. Katopodis began by making class announcements, and discussing one of the theoretical lenses being used for the day's discussion, which was disability studies/theory.

Ms. Katopodis is a skilled leader of class discussion. She has a very engaging classroom presence, to which the robust student participation that session attests.

The discussion topic for the day was Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Ms. Katopodis initiated the discussion by prompting her students to consider the question whether Ahab aspires to be "God-like." She then used a disabilities studies theoretical framework to discuss the ways Ahab's status as an amputee shapes his aspirations. Ms. Katopodis did an excellent job of navigating the novel's chapters, and generally guiding her students through the text.

Ms. Katopodis also prompted students to consider the role of 'nature' in the novel, and did an excellent job of linking student comments to an eco-theoretical framework they have also been using in the course. Additionally, students were encouraged to consider the role of gender in the novel, both in terms of its implications for viewing the whale, and the ways it shaped the perception of the struggle between it and Ahab.

Throughout the session, Ms. Katopodis used directed questions to enhance the students' understanding of the text – questions such as "How does sight function in the text?" and "In what ways does the whale represent/reflect a pursuit of "the self?" not only prompted a lively class discussion, but also enabled her students to acquire a bevy of new insights into the construction of the text.

Ms. Katopodis has also set-up an innovative class blog where a range of student writing assignments provide opportunities for application and synthesis of the course topics. And the depth of thinking encouraged there was most certainly on display during the class session observed, by both students and instructor alike.

Again, fantastic instruction and facilitation of student participation throughout the session – Ms. Katopodis creates a classroom environment that is both enthusiastic and discerning.

In conclusion, this is a **very favorable** review.

Class Observed: ENG 220-10 Introduction to Writing About Literature
Instructor: Christina Katopodis
Observer: Professor Jan Heller Levi
Date of Observation: March 21, 2016

(1) I was knocked out by Ms. Katopodis and how she led her class. If I was a student, she would likely be my favorite teacher—not only because she is upbeat, energetic and interesting in class—but because she is a brilliant explainer, interpreter, and discussion-inspirer—of texts, writing strategies, critical approaches to literature, theory, and the historical and cultural time when the text was written. She kept me thinking and wanting to stay on (after the class was over!) in one of those dreadful, windowless rooms in our basement, and it was clear that the students would have been happy to continue the discussion, too.

The subject of the class I was fortunate to observe was about Webster's The Duchess of Malfi. Ms. Katopodis had organized the class superbly—a smooth flow from one component to another, using various modes of learning. For example, she included a very witty, also very trenchant video explaining “the uncanny”; she had students work with a partner at one point to discuss and agree on a study question on the text they wanted to present to the class; then Ms. Katopodis collected these study questions, and using them, and adding skillful prompting questions of her own, led all the students in a full-class discussion that was serious and satisfying, filled with regular reference to the text (and everyone that I could see actually had their books) and intellectual and creative connections. It was clear that, under Ms. Katopodis's excellent, engaging tutelage, students were grasping and appreciating The Duchess of Malfi in literary and historical terms, were able to negotiate a variety of ways of talking about it.

At the end of the class, I was impressed to see that Ms. Katopodis was also arranging an individual conference with each student to discuss his or her upcoming paper.

(2) Ms. Katopodis is a fantastic teacher. She is that wonderful combination of intellectual rigor, excellence in the presentation of material, and energy, clarity, patience (and perfect timing) as she guides her students through complex work. I hope we can keep Ms. Katopodis forever—not just as a graduate assistant or adjunct, but as a full-time tenure track addition to our Hunter English Department. She is a treasure. Our students are flourishing with her.

NJCU English Department Adjunct Faculty Observation Form

Instructor: Christina Katopodis
Date: November 3, 2016
Course: EC1
Observer: Michael Basile
Number of students present: 17

Please check the appropriate box below. Based on the observation, you would:

<i>Strongly recommend</i> this instructor for rehire	X
<i>Recommend</i> this instructor for rehire	
<i>Recommend with reservations</i> this instructor for rehire	
<i>Not recommend</i> this instructor for rehire	

NJCU English Department Adjunct Faculty Observation Form

The purpose of this classroom observation is to provide data for adjunct faculty teaching evaluations and to evaluate teaching practices to improve faculty performance.

Please evaluate the instructor according to the following criteria, using a scale of effectiveness from 1 (least effective) to 5 (most effective). Comments are most helpful, so type as much as you'd like in the Comments field for each evaluative category:

I. Syllabus (format is clear and detailed; weekly assignment schedule is clearly presented and represents appropriate degree and level of reading and writing; course requirements, learning outcomes and methods of assessment are stated clearly; appropriate policies are stated clearly):

Check one: ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4 ___x___5 (with 5 being most effective)

Comments: Professor Katopodis' syllabus is carefully detailed, so the students know what is expected of them and when. She asks a lot of them, as she should, for young writers must write often to improve their skills. The types of writing assignments are nicely varied; I'm sure such variety keeps her students involved and interested.

There is no attendance or lateness policy. I recommend she adopt one for her spring, 2017, class(es). Our department policy allows students to miss, without penalty to their grades, 4 full classes. For EC1, a class that meets for approximately 3 and ½ hours per week, that means 7 hours of allowed absences. Our department has no lateness policy that I know of. I allow all students to arrive, without penalty, up to 10 minutes after the beginning of class. After 10 minutes, all latenesses become ½ hour absences.

3 of the 17 students arrived late, and the last two quite late. Admittedly, neither the rest of the class nor Professor Katopodis appeared disturbed by these latenesses.

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2. Organization and Clarity of Class Session (concepts, principles and methods were explained; subject matter was clearly presented; lesson was structured; class time was used efficiently):

Check one: ___1___ ___2___ ___3___ ___4___ x___5___ (with 5 being most effective)

Comments: I cannot in this space adequately describe the class session I witnessed. Instead, I will attach to the email containing this observation a link to a document provided to me by Professor Katopodis: the document's title: "Introduction to the Game."

I can report that the class session was among the most focused, energetic, and exciting I have ever witnessed. It was structured, yes, but with a healthy dose of improvisation. Professor Katopodis occasionally intervened to guide the students along, but it was quite obvious that the students felt invested in "the game" and drove it along mostly by their own volition.

3. Pedagogy (methods of instruction and classroom activities were relevant to lesson objectives; content knowledge was demonstrated):

Check one: ___1___ 2 ___3___ 4 x 5 (with 5 being most effective)

Comments: From my observation of the class and review of the three graded and commented upon student papers Professor Katopodis gave me to review, class activities and written assignments are carefully integrated so that nothing appears to be “busy work” and all functions as integral parts of a pedagogical whole.

And, yes, Professor Katopodis seemed on top of “the game” herself.

4. Instructor-Student Interaction (instructor encouraged, listened to, and responded thoughtfully to student comments; instructor encouraged interaction among students; class atmosphere was inclusive; quality of interaction encouraged learning):

Check one: ___1___ 2 ___3___ 4 x 5 (with 5 being most effective)

Comments: Again, ironically this class was both more free-wheeling and structured than most I have observed over the years. Professor Katopodis is quite obviously a nurturing and inspiring classroom instructor. Most students participated in the class debate over “taxation” (please refer to “The Game:”) and many needed

absolutely no prompting from the professor, decked out in her best tricorne hat.

I should add that the student observations were glowing. 12 students rated her among “the most effective” professors they had had; 5 rated her “more effective than most.”

Responses to the question, “would you recommend this instructor to other students,” were unanimously positive and often enthusiastic. One student wrote, “already have.” Another wrote, “very much. She made me stay in college.”

5. Evaluation of Student Writing (instructor provides clear, legible, specific, and substantive comments; comments represent a balance of criticism and encouragement; letter grades are aligned with written comments):

Check one: ___1 ___2 ___3 x4 ___5 (with 5 being most effective)

Comments: Professor Katopodis offer substantive and clear comments on her student papers. Since the papers and comments are all digitalized, her comments are easy to decipher. Her letter grades are reasonable if (to my mind) a bit inflated.

6. Post-Observation Meeting (instructor's reflections on class session were thoughtful; instructor exhibited consciousness of own strengths and limitations; instructor expressed openness to observer feedback and suggestions):

Check one: ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4 x5 (with 5 being most effective)

Comments: Since our schedules did not easily align, Professor Katopodis and I conducted our post-observation meeting via email. She suggested she might make changes to her syllabus to reflect a clear attendance policy.

She was open to the few suggestions I had.

7. Further Comments and/or Suggestions (feel free to attach additional sheets if necessary)

If imitation is the sincerest form of praise, then allow me to say I am going to investigate how I may use “The Game” in my own classes--starting next semester. For all of the reasons I note above, Professor Katopodis’ class was among the most stimulating--if not **THE MOST STIMULATING**--I have ever had the pleasure to witness.

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Jeremy Matthew Glick
Associate Professor

Christina Katopodis's 395-02 class was phenomenal. It was such a pleasure to observe.

Katopodis fully avails herself of digital/new media. The class set up a twitter account and the session I observed was partially organized around questions "tweeted out" by the students. The class staged a fascinating and highly engaged discussion on Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" (thought alongside Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle"). Katopodis engaged everyone in the room by name and the students produced simply brilliant critical insights on both works in conversation. The arc of the conversation was dense and complex and included: the portrayal of marriage and women in both stories, the representation of the forest in the works, the portrayal of the "nagging" domestic, the triumvirate of voice, echo, and castigation, dream work in the text, how the text relates to *Exodus*, *Young Goodman Brown* and *Rip Van Winkle's* sense of causality as characters and texts, the tension between thinking causality as happenstance versus inevitability, the relationship to the supernatural and the dream in Hawthorne as it relates to the advent of psychology, questions of genre and the "reimagined American origin story", the cognitive map/topographical implications of the desert versus the forest, the function of "the Indian" in Hawthorne, the way nature is imagined in the texts, the relationship between these texts and some seminal Wordsworth poems, Christina Rossetti poems, the way that patriarchy impacts oppressor and oppressed (by way of bell hooks), the critical work of gnomes, questions of agency and ecology, religion as structure of feeling in the text, and finally, a fascinating discussion of where "Young Goodman Brown" fits genre-wise. This last thread of reasoning was my favorite: Katopodis walked the class through various options: thriller, cautionary tale, horror, fable, gothic and gothic subdivisions: gothic-romanticism and

gothic-ecology. This was such a superb class and it confirmed my awe in the smarts of our instructors and the smarts of our students. This is an extremely favorable review.