

Observation #1 (lecture-based class)

“The class was a mix of lecture and two interactive activities. In the first activity, students worked in pairs to practice calculating an index of dissimilarity and in the second activity, they engaged in a Think-Pair-Share activity to brainstorm the mechanisms behind inequality in the workforce. I thought both activities were effective and engaging ways to get the students to interact with the material.

I thought Lauren’s class struck a great balance between lecture and activities. I liked how Lauren asked students to make predictions before revealing graphs – this really helped engage the students with the material and made lecture more interactive. Both the practice calculation activity and the Think-Pair-Share activity worked well by getting students to work together. Lauren also did an excellent job of circulating around the room during the activities to clarify the task instructions and assist struggling students.

Most students were on task (e.g., writing notes, working on the activities with a partner) – I only noticed one student who was not on task. Lauren had this student join a group for the activity and also called on her to give an answer during lecture to regain her attention. In general, the students seemed to struggle with the first activity. Lauren circulated around the room to answer questions, help struggling students, and check on each pair’s progress, which helped clear up the confusion.

Lauren was clearly well prepared, knowledgeable, and professional. She repeatedly encouraged the students to remember what they had learned in previous weeks to draw connections to the current material. I really enjoyed observing her class!”

Observation #2 (discussion-based class)

“Lauren held a discussion session on Inequality in the House, the Home, and the Family with 29 students. She started the discussion with asking students to turn in their assignments and then introduced requirements for the final paper project. Lauren described material in a calm, understanding manner, highlighting main points of the final paper process. In particular Lauren highlighted all resources available at Duke (such as the writing workshop) to help students with the literature search. She encouraged students to explore their own topics. The requirements Lauren stated were very clear in terms of minimum number of references, number of words, size of the paper and its formatting, which is always nice for students to have in advance to understand the amount of effort needed to be put into the final project.

The rest of the discussion was dedicated towards an interesting activity Lauren had invented for this particular class. The activity started with students forming a circle, quickly moving desks around the classroom. There were four student leaders selected in advance for this discussion topic who asked questions on papers students have read before. Then all students were discussing these questions and issues they raised. When discussion of a particular question was ended, student leader proposed another question for the discussion. A few times Lauren stepped into the conversation in order to (1) elaborate more on given topic, (2) remind students how they can relate just discussed question with material they learnt before, (3) answer specific student question, and (4) bring student discussion back on track if they had a change of the topic. As Lauren explained to me after the class, the main goal of such type of seminars is to let students to interact more with each other and that she's trying to have less influence on the conversations with each discussion session.

Lauren possesses a great way of explaining material in a very approachable way, stating clearly all requirements and posing very direct, understandable questions. Her class was well organized, everybody knew the part they needed to do and what activities to follow.

Also Lauren has a well-developed natural feeling of how to answer students' questions in an interactive manner. For example, during the discussion, a student asked Lauren a question on how to survey the homeless. Lauren readdressed the question to the class, asking what survey methods they had already learnt. Afterward Lauren explained more on whether each of those methods could be used for surveying the homeless.

Another interesting aspect of the discussion session was that around two-thirds of the class expressed their opinion and answered at least one question. Lauren had effectively implemented a system that allows each student to earn credit if he/she is active during the discussion.

The activity Lauren invented for the discussion teaches students how to choose questions, lead seminars, express their opinion. However, Lauren also has an excellent style of teaching.”