

# UNIV 109 REFLECTIONS

Teaching and Course Reflections: Co-Teaching UNIV 109

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## Class Reflections: September 25 – November 4

### Reflection 1 & 2

Thursday, September 25, 2014 & Tuesday, September 30, 2014

This is my first and second reflection because I did not write about my first class. I meant to, but I forgot...so I'm combining the two.

The first class went really well. Marilyn suggested, before class, that I give the students a little feedback card. Great idea! The comments I received from the students were very kind and encouraging. Most of them were able to report what they learned that day, which was aligned with the goal. There were some that still had questions about the "They Say", "I Say" aspects, which is to be expected. The responded well to my energy and even commented on it in their feedback. In regards to my actual teaching, I think it went well. I had to rush through most of the lesson because there wasn't enough time to get to everything, which I felt bad about. I know that this will be some complex material for them, but of course they are fully capable. I just want to make sure they have enough time to truly digest everything, rather than me flying through everything and hoping they will catch up.

The second class, Tuesday, was a little difficult. Just about everyone was exhausted or looked like they didn't want to be there, which was pretty intimidating. I was able to get a little bit of a rise out of them every once in a while, but the energy from them was really lacking. I wasn't as prepared for this class, which is my fault. I thought I had everything together because I had already constructed it back in April during Course Design, but it's been a good 5 months since I've *really* looked at everything. It was my mistake to think that everything was fresh in my mind and to not look over it again with depth. I was rushing at the last minute, but I was able to make it through class. It wasn't a complete failure because some of them were able to understand the elements of an argument and I walked through the entire article with them. There are still many questions in regards to what "they say" and "I say" actually is. We definitely need to do some more practice. We probably spent about 20 or 30 minutes on group work with the *Don't Blame the Eater* article. That ate up more time than I had anticipated. Timing is definitely something I need to work on. Marilyn says it's something that will always be difficult. Just about every teacher struggles with it...I'm guessing...right? The comment cards were really helpful this time because I can see that they need that extra help in identifying the parts in an argument. I will read through TSIS again and look specifically at the "They Say" chapter. I will look for more articles or perhaps newspaper articles that will reflect this more. Hopefully we can do some more practice in class on Thursday or the following Tuesday. I believe getting them to fully understand what the parts are and how to find them are more important than diving into the reading right now. I also need to read back over the *Meditations* again and refresh my memory. Here goes nothing.

### Reflection 3

Thursday October 2, 2014

Today's class rocked! It went so well. Despite the many hours I poured into creating an extra lesson to help them with understanding "They say", the success of the class rested on an impromptu lesson that I decided to go with as I was teaching. Woo!! Here's the breakdown: **Before class** – created lesson based on Huffington Post article. After going through the Writing Guide for They Say, students would construct an argument on their own based on the article and the comments from others in response to the article. Marilyn suggested that I make it more active somehow. After using the restroom, I came back and had an idea for how to make it competitive

and more like a game. Marilyn and I were rushing last minute to think of comprehension questions and how to create the game.

**During class** – I started off with going through the writing guide I made for them. I had them doing group work/discussion for the templates from Chapter 1. This was so hard! Hardly anyone was speaking and it was like pulling teeth just to get them to participate. This was the most intimidating part of class. Students didn't start actually discussing until I went around to every table, asking them where they had seen these templates before (i.e. what classes? what sort of texts?). After this I went over the last part of the writing guide, which was about summarizing and responding to what *they* say. It was here that I gave the example of someone arguing, "Gonzaga is awesome." From there, I gave this person a name (Dr. S) and asked the students some reasons why someone would think Gonzaga is awesome. Then, I asked them to rebuttal this: why would Gonzaga NOT be awesome? This really got them going. After we had done this, I gave an example on how to summarize what *they* (Dr. S) says, including all of the reasons why Dr. S thinks GU is awesome. Then, I gave them an example of how to respond (why GU is a good school, but not the best). They loved this! I had told them at the beginning of class that we would be making teams and they would be accruing points towards winning a prize over the next couple of weeks. In their teams, I had them construct a small argument, much like an intro to an argument (like the example I used on the writing guide). They worked on this for about 10 minutes or so. After their time was up, I put each team's argument on the doc cam and I highlighted transitions, sequence of the argument (summary and response), their thesis, and some good vocabulary. They all did wonderfully! I was actually really impressed because they all had been struggling with this. It was amazing to hear them working together to write the argument and toss ideas back and forth. At the end of class, we made team names and I assigned them their homework – go over meditations again, and continue working on the argument individually to add points to their team.

**Take away** - I learned that I have to get the students really interacting with each other. Incentive seems to work really well. I'm going to develop the "gaming" system and how points will work. Gotta get em goin!

**Response Cards** – according to their response cards, most students are more comfortable finding and producing *they say* in an argument. On a scale of 0-5, those who circled 5 for **finding**, four circled 4 and two circled 5 for **producing**. Those who circled 4 for **finding**, three circled 3 and one circled 4 for **producing**. This is interesting, but it shows that their understanding is better. I think that those who circled 3 for producing are just not confident in their ability, but I think they are quite capable of doing so. Because of this, I will do the activity I created for this class on Tuesday to give them extra practice. It also seems that students want to know more about *so what* and *who cares*. This is good, because I believe it will follow naturally in the progression of building up to the argument essay. Lastly, the students are good with the pace of the class ☺

#### **Reflection 4**

Tuesday, October 7, 2014

Today was the first TED Team Video viewing. But before we got to the video, Marilyn gave a vocabulary quiz and took care of some class business. What should have taken only 10-15 minutes ended up taking about 30 minutes. The video was 20 minutes and, since the students were not quite willing to be very vocal, the comprehension questions took another 20 minutes. By the time it was all said and done, I only had 10 minutes until class was over. Ah! I put in so much time and effort into making this activity, and then I couldn't even do it. I know we must plan for the unplanned, which is fine. I assigned it for homework, but the point was about

making it fun and having them do it in class so they would have less work to do outside of class. In the grand scheme of things, I know it's not really a big deal, but it's frustrating when you plan for things and it just doesn't happen – the perils of a teacher.

**Before class** – Showed Marilyn the lesson I had prepared for Thursday. She discussed with me about having a reading guide for the students today so they may be more prepared and understand the text better before Thursday. I also created and printed the response cards for tonight, along with the article and comments.

**During class** – see above. Also, students grumbled about the homework, saying it was too much to have all due by Thursday. Here's the homework:

- Write a SHORT summary about the video (**5-6 sentences**) 10 minutes
- Write an argument for the article given in class (**no less than 1 page, no more than 2 pages, double spaced**) 1 hour
- Read *Meditations* with the Reading Guide, posted on BB - you don't need to write anything, just read it with the questions! 45 minutes

If they do not have their argument done by class time on Thursday, I will let them email it to me that night.

**Take away** – Timing will always be an issue.

**Response Cards** – There were only 8 students in class tonight. Of the 8, 3 had read the text twice, while everyone else had only read it once. Some of them seem, at the very least, mildly interested in the ideas Descartes poses. It seems the most difficult thing for students is being able to clearly connect all of the ideas. Vocabulary is a big issue, so this will also be important to address.

## Reflection 5

Thursday, October 9, 2014

Today was not the greatest class. We had the TED Team 1 discussion, which the students were not prepared for. But before I go any further, here's what happened in class:

- Marilyn spoke with the class for a few minutes, and then gave the floor to Team 1.
- Discussion took up about 30-40 minutes of class...perhaps 45 minutes...
- Marilyn spoke with the class again about the TED Project and gave some other notes/class business
- I spoke with the class for a few minutes, then used the last 10 minutes to go over the beginning of the text and activity with them that I had planned for class. I did not give them a journal task, but rather went through it with them as a class. Response cards were not administered due to the activity planned not being done.
- Homework assigned: Decoding Meditations

So...I am pretty frustrated with how things are going. Time management is pretty much null. I put in hours preparing for class and then for the entire week, actually, pretty much since the second class I started teaching with Marilyn, I haven't been able to make it to any of the activities I have worked on. Since we run out of time, I end up having to assign it as homework. I wish I had more control of what was going on. If I was able to do this the way I had intended, the students would have more class time to work on things, less homework to do, and they would have a greater understanding of the text (*Meditations*) and more than likely wouldn't be dreading

it as much. Decoding Meditations has been the first homework assignment I have given them since I introduced them to the text, and they already grumble! All they have had to do is read it, not even write. But I can't even get them to talk about it or do any comprehensive activities with them because we run out of time! Gracious...Marilyn has been helpful. She has reminded me that I need to get them active, which is especially important for an evening class. She has given me some helpful hints and I'm glad she is there to give me feedback when I need it.

Here is what I envision the class being:

I understand that they are international students and they have a hard enough time with the language barrier, but they deserve to be, and should be, challenged. Just because English is not their first language, these are the kind of materials they will come in contact with in their other classes, and perhaps not philosophy or ethics per say, but the challenge that comes with material like this will be the same. They are completely capable of digesting such material. I know this is a bridge course. I am not looking to turn this into a philosophy class or any other subject area class by any means, but, as a bridge course, I believe it is our responsibility to prepare them for what they will experience in the rest of their classes. To me, this means giving them a *taste* of what they will have to work with. I have no expectations of giving a lot of homework, or asking much from them. I am more than willing and expect to scaffold material for them. This class is supposed to be a safe environment for them to ask questions, learn things that will help them in their college career, and, while putting forth effort in this class as well, a place where they don't have to work too hard. This class is not another burden, but a supplement to what they already have – a tool in their tool box to help them accomplish their projects. That is what I see this class as. I know I can do this; I just need the chance to prove it.

**Response Cards** – none.

**Preparation for next class** – grade argument papers, finish PowerPoint for Med. Comp. game and post to BB.

## **Reflection 6**

Tuesday, October 14, 2014

Tonight's class was AWESOME! I had the entire class period so I was able to get a lot done. To start of the class, I began with going over the Not Worth Teaching argument assignment. I used Chinatsu's paper, which was a really great example. I then broke them into their teams, explained the rules of the game, and we began! We got all the way to the end of the dream argument, just before starting God's existence. It was perfect. Student participation and energy was very high. Patricks and Joao answered a majority of the questions, taking the lead in our competition. Chinatsu and Mattheus answered the least, but Mattheus started participating more. Nan, Dani, Rito, and Abdu were also a bit quiet during the game, but Rito and Dani stood out the most. I was so happy to actually see Dani participating! She always looks so sad most of the time, or simply unengaged. Joao also gave a phenomenal summary of the dreaming argument, which blew me away. Yes! I'm finally starting to feel like I'm doing something right.

The interest and learning occurring with the students finally seems to be showing. It has taken us a while to finally get to working with Meditations, and I believe the time in between giving them the text and actually getting to it, is the culprit for their angst, or resistance toward the text. I have been feeling like all the work I have been doing was worthless and not actually helping, but their argument assignment says otherwise. They were wonderful! About half the class ended up getting 10/10 on their assignment. The rest received 9.5, 9, 8, and 6. A good

majority of them did well and included just about all of the parts required (see assignments), but also left out using the comments for evidence or they say. I'm so relieved to finally see some progress in the class.

**Response Cards** – The game was a huge success, and everyone circled a 4 out of 5 on feeling comfortable with Meditations, all except one. One person circled a 1 because they were not sure what to actually do with the text (see 10/14 response cards). Another indicated that they would like to know where the I Say and They Say is, specifically, in the text.

**Next Class** – Marilyn suggested that I give a quiz to make sure tonight's progress was not all-for-not. She also suggested that I look at different ways to get them to take notes. It was my intent to have them take notes while we were going through the powerpoint/game, but I got so caught up in everything that I didn't think to remind them about taking notes until about half way through class. I will think of a short quiz and see what other activity I can come up with for them to do to find the I Say and They Say in the text, or to at least work more with the text.

### **Reflection 7**

Thursday, October 16, 2014

Tonight was another successful class ☺ I had imagined this class proving to be a bit of a challenge because the last section in the text, on God's existence, was difficult for me to pull apart myself, which led me to believe it would be difficult to explain to the class. However, the students' understanding of the text was quite good. In the PowerPoint I broke the section up into chunks of sentences to pull apart. I made little notes on the slides and walked them through it. I asked them questions as I walked them through it and made sure they asked me questions if they did not understand, but they did not have many questions for me. Abdu and another student were not certain about the idea of imperfection and how it applied, so I went back over and drew a diagram – a timeline of cause and effect, if you will. The pictures of the Starry Night also seemed to help as well with the concept. After going through the PowerPoint, I introduced the question of Descartes' method to the students: "Is there any problem with doubting any of Descartes' arguments? Could this affect himself or others around him?" We talked about it for maybe 2 minutes and then I asked them to write for 5 minutes. Many of the students seemed lost and were very confused about what I was asking and were not sure what to write. Some of them didn't even write anything. It wasn't until we had a discussion about the topic and I introduced the essay prompt that they began to understand what I was asking and to get some ideas. From this experience, I think it would be better to have the discussion first next time, *then* have them write for 5 minutes to get them thinking about what they would want to write. Their homework is to work on an outline for their essay and have it ready to bring to class on Tuesday.

**Response Cards** – There were no response cards. I could not think of anything to ask before class and Marilyn did not think it would be bad to miss a week of response cards. Now that the class is over, I would like to know how the students felt about the last section – how well did they understand it? Was there too much teacher-talking time? Should there have been more student-activity time? Was there a better way for me to teach that section?

### **Reflection 8**

Tuesday, October 21, 2014

Yay for successes! I am proud to say that tonight was another success; not without its own challenges, but a success nonetheless. Here's what we did:

- TED Team 2 Video Viewing
- Essay Outlines
  - Check-in
  - Class Discussion
    - Ideas for essay
    - Outline Your Thoughts - example with Relationships/Society
    - Small scale – large scale
- HW: Rough Draft by Thursday, October 23

**Personal Teaching** – before class I was scrambling a little. I knew I wanted to work on outlines, but I wasn't sure in what order. It wasn't until I had spoken with Marilyn that I decided that it would be better to have a discussion and check-in with the students to see where they are in the process, then to have them work more on their outlines. Overall, I felt pretty comfortable. I wish there was more time for me to go around and help each student individually, but I also know that some of them are having some trouble tracking their thoughts still. Because of this, I'm glad I stayed at the front of the class and wrote their ideas on the board and began with one of them as an example. If we had more time, we could have actually gone through a more detailed process and more questions could have been answered, but I think tonight's class was a good start, or progression.

What I plan to do for next class is think of some examples for each of the reasons/arguments they gave in class on Tuesday. This way, I will be more knowledgeable and when they ask me questions, I can help them with the thought process. I don't want to just hand it to them because I don't want to put any predisposed ideas in their minds. I want them to write what they actually think, but even if they do end up taking the ideas that I come up with, I think the most important part of all is how they piece it together in their paper. That's where the real gold will be and that's what really matters – *how they express themselves*.

**Response Cards** - a quote from a student in response to question 1: "Outlining our thoughts helped me organize my thoughts! A plus!" – this kind of stuff makes me feel like I'm doing something right ☺

Question 2 – 6 = perfect pace 2 = let's move on 2 = could slow down

Question 3 – 4 = ...will be a ROUGH draft 3 = ...might need some help 3 = ...don't know where to go

Question 4 – 3 = citing 4 = organization 2 = editing 2 = transitions 2 = outlining 1 = drafting

### **\*Things to Focus on = Outlining, Organization, & Editing**

#### **Reflection 9**

Thursday, October 23, 2014

Tonight's class was a little strange. We had everyone in the computer lab tonight, but it was a last minute decision, so it took a while to get everyone down there. Also, while Rito and Dani gave their discussion on their TED video, I gave feedback to everyone's rough drafts/outlines. Not everyone brought a draft, so I had to look at their outlines. I also spent way too much time looking for Abdullah, who ended up not coming to class. So here's the agenda:

- Rito and Dani's Discussion



- Me: Giving fb on rough drafts/outlines
- Pass back / finish giving fb to rest of papers
- HW: Full Rough Draft by Tuesday for Peer Review

Most of the students had really great starts and I was very pleased with most of them. What I found to be most common with all of their papers was missing “They Say” for most of their arguments, or only having two arguments instead of three. One student in particular had begun writing her essay like a research paper, which was interesting and discouraging at the same time. I hope she doesn’t get too far off...

Time was short this class period, so no response cards.

### **Reflection 10**

Tuesday, October 28, 2014

Tonight was Peer Review!! I was very excited to do this and I think it was a success 😊 Ideally, I wanted to have students do 3-10 minute rotations, but it didn’t work out that way. Since it took students so long to get downstairs to the lab in the first place, I figured we would at least try for two rotations with 10 minutes each. I explained the peer review sheet to them, and then Marilyn set the timer for 10 minutes. Before beginning the review, I asked students to move two seats to the left.

### **Successes of Peer Review**

- Students were able to follow directions, no confusion about what to do
- Students were able to see what they did well in their papers and what was missing or lacking in their papers
- Gave students the opportunity to see others’ work

### **Complications/Areas of Improvement**

- In total, the Peer Review took about 25 minutes. This needs to be scaffolded in the future – what to look for, how to do it, what to expect, etc. – start off with 20 minutes, then 15 minutes, then 10 minutes to get more rotations.
- Some students had a hard time coming up with 3 things they liked and 3 specific comments for improvement

**\*Note\*** I met with Marilyn before this class and went over the Peer Review sheet with her and made some adjustments to the questions asked. I think they really helped and made it more to the point. I think I have a good idea and direction for what I want to do most of the time, but I am glad Marilyn is available to help me in times of uncertainty and give me direction, especially since she has so much experience, whereas I am just beginning.

Homework for this class was to read Chapter 8 in TSIS. I would like to do an activity with this chapter, but time will not allow for me to do anything with it, unless Marilyn decides to come up with something. One thing that has really been weighing on me is the lack of recycling. This is something I want to endorse and promote heavily in my own classroom, but I feel since

this is not my class and we are essentially flying by the seat of our pants (if that's how the saying goes), we don't have enough time to make sure we incorporate activities that pull past information, or if we think about it, it ends up being an afterthought...I did incorporate some recycling of the building analogy during the Meditations game, which helped a little, I think, but there needs to be more of this. For my practicum, I will be sure to incorporate this in the curriculum.

### **Reflection 11**

Thursday, October 30, 2014

Tonight's class was strictly a work-day. I spent Wednesday night and all day Thursday grading the students' rough drafts that I collected from Tuesday's class. The feedback I gave them was quite detailed – maybe a little too detailed. However, I feel, especially for their first paper, that they need and deserve this much detail in their feedback. The first paper I graded took the longest to look at. Her paper was all over the place and she was writing her paper as if it were a research paper, which took it in a completely opposite direction. I was also trying to figure out what kind of system I would use to give my feedback, so needless to say, the first few took me a while. In total, there were 8 papers to grade, and the last three received the least amount of detailed feedback due to dwindling time. However, their feedback was geared more towards grammatical errors and micro feedback, rather than structure and macro feedback, which, in my opinion, is much better than macro feedback which indicates a larger problem with the paper. Commonalities I noticed in the papers:

- Lack of They Say
- Lack of detail – need to expand on examples
- Grammar: word choice/order, verb tense, vocabulary, prepositions
- Strong statements
- Good examples, but need to go deeper – a bit surface level
- Good use of transitions
- See individual papers for rest of comments

Since I was grading papers until class, I did not actually grade them. I decided to focus on giving feedback, therefore I need to go back over them and give grades to the rough drafts.

Homework: Final draft with Outside Peer Review Signature

**No Response Cards**

### **Reflection 12**

Tuesday, November 4, 2014

I did not do anything for tonight's class. I typed up a quick assignment for a reflection paper to do as homework to reflect on their essay and the assignment itself, but now I am thinking if it would have been better to wait until after they received their papers back to have them write the reflection paper. I think I will have a better idea after I receive their papers on Thursday (the reflection papers). I need to make copies of their essays so both Marilyn and I have copies of them and can grade them over the weekend and compare our scores. I also need to finish revising the rubric. I don't particularly care for rubrics. I would much rather use a checklist. I suppose I thought a rubric would have been best when I was taking Course Design,

but now that I am actually using one I HATE IT! The formatting, the wording, the points, all of it! I would much rather just go down a list after reading their paper and say, “check, check, check...no, not quite...check, check...” then add up the points and done. So easy! Well, here goes nothing...

## Needs Assessment

Attached to these reflections are my notes from the needs assessment Marilyn administered to the students. From the needs assessment, I was able to glean the following:

- Students want to
  - Have discussions
  - Play language learning games
  - Improve grammar more
  - Increase vocabulary
  - Watch videos and write
  - Write essays
  - Respond to articles, quotes, etc.
- Students want to
  - Work together
  - Look at/discuss arguments
  - Use material that makes them think
- Needs expressed by the students entailed:
  - Writing fluently
    - Timed Journal Responses
  - Vocabulary
    - Identifying vocab from readings/videos/media
  - Grammar
    - My ideas for this
      - In-class peer reviews
      - Bring in assignments from other classes
        - Work together in pairs/groups showing problem areas in papers/assignments and work through them as a class

I also looked up all of their majors, which are math, psychology, business, and mechanical engineering, and every major must fulfill the requirements of the common core, with the exception of mechanical engineering. Mechanical engineering only requires English lit, philosophy, and religion. With this in mind, I think it would still be beneficial to give assignments in different content areas that cover those covered in the common core. Therefore, I propose for future consideration, that the class be broken into four content-specific units comprising of humanities, philosophy, lab science/data, and research.

Looking back at my own needs assessment, I realized I need to include asking what students' major is. Duh! How did I not think of that before? It's so important, especially for this class. I still believe finding out what students already know is quite beneficial. In this needs assessment,

there was not a section that helped identify what students already had knowledge of, or what they thought they knew, or how they felt about it. For example, in my needs assessment, I included a section that listed seven different writing elements and then asked students to circle if they *knew*, *think* they knew, or *didn't know* how to use each element. After all this time I have spent working with the UNIV 109 students, I would like to also include a section that asks students how they feel about organization, clarity, structure, vocabulary, etc. Reading the students papers and giving them feedback has shown me that organization and structure of a paper are not only important, but something that students are struggling with in this class. Had I known this from the beginning, I would have created activities and lesson plans that included more emphasis on these elements of the writing process. It wasn't until we were in the midst of everything that I realized how big of an issue it was. I had made outlines and given them tools on paper, but that wasn't enough. They needed us to go through the process with them and visually show them how to construct their thoughts and put them on paper. However, time did not allow for that... Time did not allow for a lot of things, but this is why we reflect, yes? Yes—to learn from mistakes and successes and press on with changes and modifications.

I also realized that there are some questions I had in my needs assessment from before that I can definitely cut out, like, “I do **not** like written exams (in-class or take-home essays)” as an “agree/disagree” statement. Teaching and observing in this class, there aren't any tests, so I don't find it relevant, and when I plan to put together my curriculum, I don't plan on including any tests. Perhaps some quizzes on the material, but not tests. Teaching in this class has shown me how time can really be taken away from you as a teacher in the classroom under any type of circumstance, good or bad. Because of this, I now know why it is so important to be direct and to the point in class. It is ok to have fun and not stick to the schedule because life happens, plans hardly ever turn out like you want them to, and we must be flexible, but for the sake of time itself, whenever possible, it is always best to be direct and to stay on task. **DO NOT DRAG YOUR FEET! If you have something to say, just say it!** I find that it not only saves time, but it keeps the class on track, you get more done, and students actually appreciate the clarity, as well. This is also the reason why I want to make my needs assessment more direct. I want to ask questions that give me personal insight on the learning styles of each of my students, but I also don't want to waste their time, or mine, by asking information that is not immediately pertinent.

The old and recently revised versions of my needs assessment are attached to this reflection.

## Pacing and TED assignments

The pacing of this class has been very slow. In all honesty, I believe a large portion of our pacing issue can be attributed to the TED Talks, TED Writes assignments. These assignments take up at least half the class almost every time. Each video is an average of 18 minutes, give or take, followed by the discussions that take place the following class, which is another 20-40 minutes, depending on how prepared or engaged the team and the class are. There were four teams. Let's calculate this:

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 4 \times 18 = 72 \text{ minutes of video time} & 4 \times 35 = 140 \text{ minutes of discussion (average)} & \\
 1 \text{ hour } 12 \text{ minutes} & + & 2 \text{ hours } 20 \text{ minutes} = 3 \text{ hours } 32 \text{ minutes}
 \end{array}$$

Class is from 6:10pm to 7:25pm, totaling 1 hour and 15 minutes. The amount of time the TED assignments have taken from class amounts to about three and a half hours. This means that nearly three *full* classes had been taken away from the class time. I know Marilyn came up with the assignments and I can see how they would be fun and useful in an ESL class or perhaps another undergraduate class, but I don't think they are geared toward what students need to get out of this class. There was very little writing even involved in these assignments and it seemed more like an opportunity for students to just sit in class and enjoy a video on an interesting topic than to apply that interesting topic to developing good writing skills.

If the TED assignments were not there I think we would have been able to pace the class better. Despite the class moving slowly, it felt like we were racing through the material because we didn't have enough time to go through everything and we needed to move along. The whole experience with *Meditations* was a prime example of this, which I will expand on in a later section. There were many times I wanted to take more time to explain the process we were going through with the students and work with them visually, giving them more hands-on activities with their paper and the reading in class, but we just didn't have the time for it. Yet, at the same time, we couldn't move forward because they were not progressing at a pace for us to move on at certain points. Therefore, we ended up pushing deadlines out more and more due to not enough time in class, falling behind on work, or time being eaten by the TED assignments.

This whole process felt like a huge experiment, which is exactly what it was. We were clunking our way through the class trying to figure things out. God bless those students! They have been so patient, and I'm sure they have been frustrated on more than one occasion. The course was not very organized either. This was probably the most frustrated part for me. I pride myself in my organizational skills. I do not tend to work well in situations where there is not organization. I can and do work well under pressure, and I am good at thinking on my feet, but unorganized planning does not suit me well. Due to the personal matters I have been dealing with, I was not always at my best, but for the most part, I think I did fairly well keeping my portion of the class organized. I don't know what is going on in Marilyn's life, and it is not my place. I intend no disrespect with these comments and I am trying to say this as carefully as I possibly can. I have appreciated all of her help and she has given me some great advice and helped me think of strategies and teaching in a different way throughout my experience teaching with her, and I am so grateful for that. However, what causes me to pause is the lack of organization I saw from her during my experience with her. It just felt like she was ok with planning everything at the last minute and did not take much care or time when grading or putting together lessons. I may completely be wrong and it is simply the load she carries with three classes and whatever may be happening in her personal life. I would just find myself planning most of the classes and whenever she would need to put something together it would be a few hours or an hour before class. I may be completely out of my element here, and if so, I sincerely apologize. I am not accusing anyone of anything – it was simply an observation I had and am reflecting on personally, now. I am admitting that I don't understand her position and I could be completely wrong and I am simply confused by her behavior.

That being said, I have learned a lot from this experience. In the future, I want to not only plan ahead, but also keep my students informed. We never handed the students an updated course outline, but that was probably a good idea since it kept changing all the time. I also would

like to make sure I go through a *complete* process of scaffolding with the students regarding the material we are using in the class. One more comment about the TED assignments. The last video shown was about learning another language. The video was not only interesting, but was relevant to *everyone* in the class. The discussion was the most interesting it has ever been, and all of the students had something to contribute to the conversation. It really got me thinking about how course material must be relevant to the students. It was such a success and amazing to see the students engaged as much as they were and to hear their experiences. They were relating to each other and talking about how each of them had learned English and what that experience was like. Wow! It was so powerful. I really enjoyed that class. Although I do not want to use the TED assignments in my own curriculum, I do think it would be a good idea to use the video the last TED team used as a beginning assignment – an icebreaker or something. It would be a great way for the students to get to know each other and get them excited about writing about it. Yeah! Oh, I am so very excited for this ☺

## Philosophy Unit

In this section, I will only briefly describe a few aspects of the lessons I learned from this experience – largely dealing with the issue of scaffolding. Individual reflections for each class during this unit and student evaluations give more detail about this subject, which is the reasoning for my brevity.

The experiences and lessons I gained from this unit are numerous. The text I chose to use for this unit is *Meditations on First Philosophy* by Rene Descartes. While I knew this would be a challenging text for them, I did not expect or intend the unit to take as long as it did. As I have mentioned earlier, there were certain contingencies that influenced the amount of time Marilyn and I were able to spend on each part of the unit. However, from trial and error, I feel as though I have a better grasp on *how* to scaffold material more efficiently. One of the first lessons I gave in the class was about how to construct an argument. I thought this would be necessary to go over since students would be writing an argumentative essay and would need to recognize the arguments presented in the text. The process I went through with lessons and assignments are reflected in the *Course Activities and Revisions* section under Appendix D. What I will focus on now are the insights I gained from the process.

In regards to scaffolding, I have to be able to explain each part of the process one at a time, and fully, to the students. The lack of time available to spend on each activity made me realize how important it is that students be given a full explanation of the work and *why* they are doing it, rather than explaining materials partially. I also realized that I hadn't thoroughly thought out how I was going to scaffold the material. I had the big picture for most of the activities, but what I seemed to be lacking were the incremental steps needed to achieve the main goal. I came up with activities as we went through the process. Some were received well by the students and ended up working very well, while others needed additional revision and thought put into them. For example, the *Decoding Meditations* assignment was something I made at the last minute. While it had good points, the questions were not ordered correctly on the worksheet and I wonder now how much this activity actually contributed to students understanding and development of the essay. For the direction of the essay, I think this activity was not directly

aligned with the writing task and I have given thought to possibly making this into a project/presentation instead of an essay, or to add more direction and intent to the questions/tasks involved in the worksheet. I also recognize that I was not aware of what the students needed in order to understand the text or the process for writing their paper. Again, I feel as though I had good ideas and knew where I needed them to be, but how to do this was left to trial and error.

Through the many experiences I gained from teaching in this class, I now have a better understanding of how to introduce materials to students step-by-step. For example, I need to ensure that every activity is aligned with and contributes to the lesson and course goals. As I mentioned previously, some of the materials and activities I made were not always directly correlated to the lesson's end-goal. Another adjustment I would like to make in the future involves creating more student-centered activities. Although student-centered teaching is a part of my teaching philosophy, I now realize that I was more focused on the text and getting students to understand the material, rather than creating activities and materials for them to *engage* with the text. The more I reflect on this point, I also recognize that I provided materials and activities in the form of *guides*, rather than giving students an opportunity to physically practice what they were learning. Students were given multiple opportunities to draft and edit their writing, which, according to the students, was very helpful, as well as the detailed feedback I gave them. However, I wish I had given them more opportunities to practice specific grammar points, writing styles, and introduced collocations with new vocabulary. Now that the semester is over, I will incorporate these lessons learned into my own future classroom.

In addition to learning from the struggles I experienced in this class, I have taken an interest in a fellow colleague's method for presenting information and the writing process to students. To do this, Martha Savage takes the six categories of action verbs from Bloom's Taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), and applies them in the classroom. In Martha's presentation at the 2014 Washington English as a Second or Other Language Conference (WAESOL), she discussed using levels, based on Bloom's Taxonomy, to formulate tasks and questions for her students (see Appendix E for details). After hearing her presentation and experiencing her using this method in a class that I have taken from her, I made my own analysis of the information and sought how I could use this method for UNIV 109. Although I was not able to use this method, or begin to, for the remaining duration of this class, I am keeping these ideas in mind as I develop my curriculum for my thesis project.

Further reflections regarding this unit are presented in the *Student Evaluations* section.

## Research Unit

During this unit I had more of a hands-off approach. I was sick for an entire week and I was experiencing different medical conditions for a few weeks, so my involvement was much less than during the last unit. Again, I chose the text and the essay prompt. I found the text to be much easier to read and understand than the last one. The text, *What Is Morality* by James Rachels, is also used in philosophy classes at Gonzaga, specifically in Ethics. Despite most students not taking Philosophy at the time, or even some not staying at Gonzaga, I chose it with

Gonzaga's mission statement in mind. As a Jesuit school, Gonzaga wants students to be well rounded and conscious of dilemmas and issues surrounding social justice. In keeping with these thoughts, I thought it would be good to have students look at ethical issues concerning their field of study. The idea was to make them aware of what is happening in their field and get them thinking about those who are influenced and affected within their major and what they think about such issues.

For this unit I altered the text to include guided reading questions, made the initial outline, and subsequent outlines, for the essay, led a discussion on the main points of the text, edited papers, and made appointments with students to help them with their paper. I like not being as involved in this unit. I was able to stand back and see what really happens when little scaffolding is done for the class. Although there wasn't much to go over for the text, no much time was actually spent going over the material with the students to help them fully understand the process for making an ethical decision and how it connected to the paper. It is my understanding that the essay was only given to the students with the outline that I had made and no further explanation was given. Unfortunately, I really needed to remove myself from the class and allow my body to rest, but I feel as though the class might have suffered as a result of me not being there. I think the extra information I would have been able to give them would have helped. I think Marilyn was never completely aware of what I had in mind for the assignment. There were many times when Marilyn and I had given students different comments and suggestions for their essay. Due to time dwindling, there was very little opportunity or any made to help students connect the dots.

By this point I was very frustrated with the class and began to not only physically, but mentally, remove myself from the class. I didn't think it should have been my responsibility to carry the class and assignments. I am very glad Marilyn gave me this opportunity to try out some of my materials, but I wish she had more involvement in guiding the use and development of my materials. My lessened involvement really showed in this unit. However, I could see what was missing and how it was affecting the students. As a result, I could also perceive what would be the most helpful and how the process should have been done.

More information about this unit is presented in the *Student Evaluations* section.

## **Student Evaluations**

On Thursday, December 11, 2014, I administered an evaluation to eight of the ten students. Below, I have synthesized the data from the student evaluations. After the data has been presented, I will discuss my analysis.

### **Page 1**

- Most answers received a 3 "Usually" or 4 "Always"
- Out of the ten questions provided, three received a 2 "Sometimes"
  - Number 3: The teacher makes the class interesting. (one student)
  - Number 7: The class objectives are clear and useful. (one student)
  - Number 9: I used the extra materials for this class. (two students)



**Page 2**

In the table below, I have put all scores and comments for each activity to represent the total of students who participated in the evaluation.

<b>Activity/Handout</b>	<b>Effectiveness</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Constructing an Argument PowerPoint (and notes)	Score: 4, 3, 4, 3, 4, 4, 3, 3	Easy to understand with visual image of construction
“They Say” Writing Guide	Score: 3, 3, 4, 3, 4, 4, 2, 4	Kinda complicated
Dr. S Group Activity – making an argument	Score: 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 4	Because of this activity, I started to learn how to summarize articles
Not Worth Teaching Activity	Score: 4, 3, 3, 3, 3, 4, 2, 3  Better as an in-class activity? Y / N	Yes; No-hw was ok; No; (no answer given); Yes; I did not find it helpful; (no answer given); yes
Meditations Reading Guide with Questions	Score: 4, 4, 4, 4, 3, 4, 2.5, 4	The reading was difficult to understand, so it was really good to have the guide; *It was hard to understand the reading, so these activities were very helpful. I could learn about Descartes’ idea using several ways, and it was fun and made it easy to understand (Comment applied to all <i>Meditations</i> activities)*; Great Job!
Review Quiz (questions on paper strips)	Score: 4, 3, 3, 2, 3, 3, 3, 3	
God’s Existence Dialogue	Score: 3, 3, 4, 2, 3, 3, 3, 4	It helped to me a lot to understand one of the most difficult part
Meditations Review Game/PowerPoint	Score: 3, 3, 4, 4, 3, 4, 3, 4	Really helpful!
Outline your Thoughts – Meditations Essay Handout	Score: 3, 4, 3, 4, 4, 4, 3, 4	It helped me organize my ideas and prepare for writing an essay
Example Essay Outline	Score: 4, 4, 4, 3, 4, 4, 3, 4	
Graphic Organizer Example	Score: 0, 3, 3, 3, 4, 2, 2, 4	I didn’t use it; Graphs don’t really help me
Ethics Essay Outline (original)	Score: 0, 4, 4, 3, 4, 4*!!, 3.5, 3	I didn’t understand, was confusing; very much help to write my own outline!!
Ethics Essay Outline	Score: 4, 4, 4,	

(Headings and Page Numbers)	4, 4, 4*!!, 4, 4	
Example Research Paper (citations)	Score: 3, 3, 4, 4, 3, 4*, 2, 2	It'd be helpful if we had more sources from web so we could have a better idea in how to cite web sources

### Page 3

This section is a summarized culmination of the comments students made for the two questions about *Meditations*:

- Step-by-step essay process (into then arguments then conclusion)
- Peer Review helpful, but more specific questions than 3 good points of the paper
- Activities were helpful
- Process was long but necessary
- Meeting with students as a requirement (like the second essay) would have been helpful
- Find a more contemporary text
- The reading guide was helpful; more examples next time
- Help with the first draft (improvement)

### Page 3-4

This section is a summarized culmination of the comments students made for the two questions about *What is Morality?*:

- Dividing the text into three parts was good for understanding
- Needed PowerPoint and reading guide like in *Meditations*
- Same process for *Meditations* should have been applied
- Essay Outline helpful, but needed earlier – would have helped with the first article outline and choosing a topic
- Outlines most helpful
- A reading guide would have been helpful
- Group activity to define each part (impartial facts strong feelings, etc.); should have spent more time understand Rachels' method
- “Think the quiz game that have questions regarding the text. They picked up the important ideas in the text and made us find them from the text while answering the quiz” – used to answer *Morality* question, but referred to *Meditations* activity.
- Provide list with words/concepts and explain them; step-by-step process for essay (same suggestion for *Meditations*)

### Page 4

In this section, I have summarized the comments students made about the most helpful deeds done by the teacher (me), and ways for the teacher to improve:

- Presentations and examples were helpful
- Do not do activities/assignments that are higher than students capability – challenging, but do not require five to six hours; more clear objectives and instructions
- Teacher helped students understand texts, asked if understood, made PowerPoints/quizzes to find/understand main idea of text

- Better communication (essay requirements – five to eight pages \*there was a typo on the sheet given to them by Marilyn. It should have said eight to ten pages\*)
- Essay corrections really helpful; always available for appointments
- Make essay subjects more interesting
- Mandatory meetings with students was helpful
- Be more strict – liked the relaxed atmosphere, but maybe others might need the strictness
- Always will to assist outside of class, gave many examples of what needed to be done
- Choose themes no related to philosophy
- Explained clearly and quickly; understood students questions “The teacher explained what we should do clearly and quickly. And she understands students’ questions well and answers clearly. Also, the tempo (speed?) of the class was adequate and her energetic attitude motivated me.”
- “She provides useful handouts and PowerPoints. She does not end the class unless we fully understand the lesson. She speaks clearly.”
- “She was well organized starting with demonstrating how the argument should look. Then giving examples and activities to apply what we learned so we could start our own argumentative essay.”
- Need to give variety of writing assignments
- More games!

### **Analysis and Discussion**

I have taken away a lot from these evaluations. When I began working with this class, I realized that the texts I had chosen for this class would be challenging for the students. However, due to commentary from other international students who found philosophy to be the most challenging subject, I thought the text would be a good experience for them. This is a subject all students will have to take if they plan to obtain a degree from Gonzaga, which encouraged me to include a philosophy section for this class. The text chosen, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, by Rene Descartes, is actually used in a philosophy class at Gonzaga. However, after reading the evaluations and reflecting on the process, I would concede to either choosing a different text or creating better scaffolding materials. I would also want to shorten the process and make it more organized. I have noticed the positive and negative impacts this process made on the students. The activities and examples were quite helpful for them, but the lack of involvement in their writing process did not serve them well. Many voiced they would have liked a more step-by-step process, working through each essay section, and to have had meetings with the professor(s). Although I offered to meet with them, the lacking requirement seems to be the culprit with this issue. Only three or four students actually made appointments with me then to go over their paper. I did give extensive and detailed comments on each student’s paper, but, comparing the two essay processes, a check-in with each student *during* the process would have been better.

Students also commented about a lack of clarity in the objectives for the class and assignments. I realize that I should have taken more time to explain *why* we were doing particular activities/assignments, their importance, and how they all connected and/or contributed to each other. I tried doing this with most of the assignments, but I know there are more areas where I could have done a better job of communicating these ideas. This comment would also be applied to the need for variety in writing assignments. Students should know what they are doing and *why* they are doing it so they don’t feel as if their time is being wasted or given busy work. Unfortunately, we did not implement a great deal of writing in this class. The only writing

assignments they every received were summaries, outlines, argumentative practice writing, and their essay drafts. From working previously with Melissa in this class, I was under the impression that we would have journals every class, or at least every other class. I really liked this aspect of the class and I think there is a lot that can be done with it, which is why I am choosing to include it in my own curriculum. However, for this class, it did not work out that way. I wish there had been more variety and I will be sure to stress this factor in my own curriculum.

I would like to point out that the comment about five to six hours of homework is a little skewed. I had spoken with several of the students and while some had experienced difficulty with the readings, which took them longer to get through, none of them spent five to six hours. Collectively, I don't think the class ever spent that much time on their homework unless they were working on their essays.

The comments about what was and would have been the most helpful for each text has shown me what students really need. As I have stated before, I know that steps are needed to help students achieve their end goal, but how to do that in the proper order was something I struggled with in the beginning. From teaching GECO and tutoring students, I excel in helping students understand what is being taught with metaphors, pictures, basic explanations, and the like. I don't feel like scaffolding is necessarily a weak area of mine due to the success I have had with helping students in the past. However, I think my stumbling block was the transfer from individual and small group scaffolding to large-scale scaffolding with a larger group. Most of my scaffolding experience has been catering to the needs of individuals and being able to spend intimate time with them. This intimate time allows me to only focus on that one or couple of students and gives me the ability to change my approach immediately based on their needs. In a larger classroom, it is much harder to use my intimate abilities because I have to generalize them in order to meet the needs of *everyone* who all have various needs. Another factor I feel that contributed to my struggles was time. Due to all of the assignments, class preparation, and coping with my personal life, I did not feel as though I had enough time to thoroughly think through my scaffolding process. The medical conditions I have experienced this semester made it very difficult to concentrate and prioritize. Had I actually been feeling up to par, I believe I would have done so much better in this area. My abilities from day to day were beyond my control at times, which my teaching, and the students' experience, suffered from. Since I was struggling so much, I wish I had more guidance from Marilyn. I felt like she was not very present for the class and did not have much feedback to give me. Most classes were formed by me, either from prior planning or giving ideas to Marilyn for a direction to move in. Despite the lack of instruction, I was able to learn a lot on my own and now have the tools to apply my newfound knowledge during my practicum and in my thesis project.

These evaluations and experiences have also taught me the importance of communication. For most of the semester, Marilyn and I were not on the same page. Students would get different answers from both of us regarding their assignments. As mentioned in the table above, students commented on the typo of five to eight pages for their essay requirement. I was not present when that handout was made. Marilyn had accidentally forgotten to change the page requirement while updating it. Seeing the reaction from the students and now reading it in the evaluations, I can see that clear communication is always helpful and necessary for students.

The feedback about the reading guides was very helpful as well. After introducing *Meditations*, I created a reading guide for the students. I now know I should have introduced it much earlier, but it was nice to see how helpful students found it to be and wished one had been

made for *Morality*. Actually, I did make one for the students, but Marilyn decided that she did not want to introduce it to them right away because she wanted to work on reading strategies with them. I was sick when she gave them the text, so I'm not sure if they even looked at it or got a chance to work with it. Comments about the *Meditations*' PowerPoint game were also encouraging. Before students could gain a point for answering the question, they had to find support for their response in the text. To see and hear how helpful that was for them makes me feel confident in my abilities and shows me that this may be a good activity to keep in my pocket for the future.

## Personal Benefit of Teaching and Course Reflections

These reflections that I have kept throughout the semester have been extremely beneficial. By reflecting on the process of co-teaching UNIV 109, I have been forced to look at my own teaching style and process. Through turning theory into practice, I have had to confront my struggles, but also recognize my strengths. The process of writing my experiences and feelings was cathartic and insightful. The response cards I had students fill out were helpful as well. After reading them I could come to specific conclusions about their progress, needs, and my own evaluation. The reflections have also helped me with the progress of developing my own curriculum. Taking my mental notes and putting them on paper ensures that I will have all of this qualitative and quantitative data available for future reference. I have learned much about myself and have grown personally and professionally. This semester has taught me so much about scaffolding and how to pay attention to students' needs. I now feel as though I could do it all over again with greater efficiency.

## Conclusion

Over the course of the semester, I have experienced many changes with the students' writing. The transformation all of them had was great to see and be a part of. Even their attitudes changed throughout the class. When I first began working with the students, hardly any of them smiled in class. About three or four weeks after I began assisting and teaching, everyone in the class was more energetic, came to class on time, and by golly they were smiling 😊 I know I had something to do with that. Influencing students beyond academics is what makes teaching worthwhile to me. Working with the students one-on-one also helped me see what kind of errors students are making in their writing – generally and culturally – how each student varies in their abilities, and what editing strategies are most effective for students. The feedback system I used on their papers the second time proved to be very helpful and effective (a sample of this may be found under Appendix E). Students came up to me and told me how much they liked it and even requested that I follow the same system when working with them on their next essay.

The lessons I have learned have impacted me greatly. I have discovered strengths (clear communication, availability, effective comments, effective course materials, encouraging and engaging students, flexibility in lesson plans, improving students writing skills) and weaknesses (introducing materials in the proper way and time, providing clear and distinct objectives for each assignment) in my teaching and have gained the proper tools through experience to modify and enhance my materials. I am also more aware of what students' needs are at this level and how to meet them. The student evaluations were very helpful, but I do not believe they were a

true reflection and evaluation of my abilities. There were many contingencies beyond my control that tainted my ability to properly scaffold materials for the class, much less exercise methods I have learned and see valuable. Still yet, despite the challenges I faced, I believe this was an overall wonderful experience due to the knowledge I have gained *from* all of the challenges. Thank you James, and the rest of the faculty, for allowing me to work with Marilyn and pilot my own material.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Needs Assessment**

**Appendix B: *Meditations* Materials**

**Appendix C: Research Materials**

**Appendix D: Course Activities and Revisions**

**Appendix E: Samples and Extra Materials**