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INTERLUDE: Read(Writ)ing Classrooms with Students I

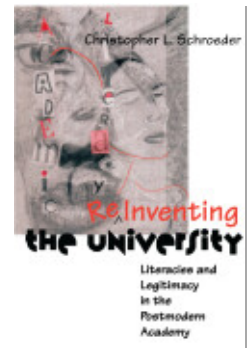
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Schroeder, Christopher.

Reinventing The University: Literacies and Legitimacy in the Postmodern Academy.

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Read(Writ)ing Classrooms with Students I

EXAM PAPER

Linda Moore
English 191A

Before entering Dr. Schroeder's English 101 class, I expected a traditional instruction on grammar and writing. However, I later learned that Dr. Schroeder uses a more modern way of teaching in which he instructs his students about different literacies and presents abstract ideas. He was very enthusiastic about the subjects presented in each class. Dr. Schroeder teaches the students about the Literacy of the Academy and compares and contrasts it to other literacies or themes. For example, in the class I attended, he and the students discussed how the Literacy of the Academy relates to the Literacy of Cyberspace or how we read and write emails. Dr. Schroeder has been teaching college students since 1992 and is currently writing a book. Therefore, he uses his experiences with his classes as the basis for material in his writing. He believes that being literate involves both reading and writing.

First, Dr. Schroeder told the class about the upcoming events and goals for the class. He was straightforward and organized in what he wanted to achieve which helped the students to focus on the class. Then, he gave them a question or an entrance slip designed to help students concentrate and make connections in writing. In the class I visited, the students were to describe the literacy of cyberspace and use the same language as that of an email. At first, they seemed confused as to what they were supposed to do, but then, Dr. Schroeder explained in more depth of what he wanted them to achieve in the activity. After completing the writing assignment the students went into their groups and discussed their thoughts about the topic. Later, Dr. Schroeder talked to each group and discussed their ideas about the literacy of cyberspace and how it relates to that of the Academy.

By using groups, Dr. Schroeder promotes collaborative learning since the students teach each other and provide new and different insights. In order to increase the productivity of the groups, a monitor watches the time and a secretary takes notes. While I viewed each group working, I saw that each

person is supposed to contribute something to the discussion. Groups play a major role in Dr. Schroeder's teaching methods and the students enjoy them since they were able to interact with one another and discuss their own opinions. In addition, each group takes a turn co-teaching a generative theme such as the Literacy of Cyberspace. Therefore, each student takes an active role in the instruction of the material. Besides groups, Dr. Schroeder uses other methods of teaching which include lecture, student presentations, and skits.

During the interview, Dr. Schroeder explained that his main goal in teaching the students. He aims to have their literacy goals met, whether it is writing or reading. Therefore, the students are able to decide what they want the focus of the class to be. I found this interesting since most instructors are not as flexible in their goals for teaching the students. In grading, Dr. Schroeder not only concentrates on the final product, but also on the progress that the students achieve in the class and in their efforts and investment in the process.

In helping one of Dr. Schroeder's students in the Writing Center, I would aid them in their ideas and use of the Literacy of the Academy. From observing his class, I have found that using grounds or evidence to make a claim in writing is important. Therefore, I would help the students to use supporting ideas in order to make sound and successful arguments. Dr. Schroeder also promotes using transitions to connect ideas and thoughts. Therefore, in helping one of his students, I would make sure the student followed the laws of the Academy and used support in making a claim or main idea. I would focus on an insightful thesis with proper grammar. Also, I would ask the student to bring his other papers so that I could check for progression and achievement since Dr. Schroeder puts emphasis on the investment of work in each of the student's tasks.

Observing Dr. Schroeder's class and interviewing him was a very worthwhile experience. Before doing so, I did not realize the variety of teaching methods that each instructor has. Therefore, it is important that to ask each student I help in the Writing Center about his or her own goals and those of the instructor. From the other students' presentations, I learned that other instructors may have different grading techniques and goals for the achievement of the students. For example, since Dr. — helped to develop the CLAST test, he instructs his students on how to pass it with the use of proper grammar and even passive voice in order to make the writing longer. If I was to help one of his students in the Writing Center, I would concentrate on grammar and not so much the ideas and evidence in the paper. Therefore, it is important to understand that each instructor has different ideas about a good paper. In the Writing Center, I will adapt my help to the goals of the student and the instructor.

EXAMINATION OF DR. SCHROEDER'S ENGLISH 191 CLASS

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ENG 191A

Upon entering Dr. Schroeder's class, I felt very confused. As a person who was not aware of his methods, the class experience was like being in a foreign country; I could hear words and topics, but I did not really understand what was being said. His class was not a normal English class where the teacher stands at the front of the classroom spouting ideas about grammar or thesis. In his class, he introduced the idea of "Literacy of the Academy." The first time I heard it used I was baffled. I passed ——— a note that said: "What is the Literacy of the Academy?!?!" After observing his classes and talking to him, though I gained a better understanding of what he was trying to teach.

Dr. Schroeder has very different ideas about how English should be taught and what effect language should have in all aspects of life. He follows the principal of Literacy of the Academy. The idea of the Academy is that if people are better at academic writing they will be better at reading, writing and speaking in all aspects of life. His students will be able to apply the concepts they have learned in the classroom not just to papers for school, but in letters, memos or any other type of writing they may encounter in their lifetime. The other goal Dr. Schroeder has is to help his students reach their own personal goals. If they want to be better at grammar, then he will focus on that area with them. If they want to work on certain types of writing, he will help them on that particular genre.

To achieve these goals, Dr. Schroeder has unique methods. He does not stand up and talk to the class for fifty minutes, three days a week. Although like any teacher, he uses lecture, but he also does skits, co-teaching and outside activities. In co-teaching, the students help him teach a genre. One of the most important teaching methods he uses is the group. In the classroom, the students are usually in groups for some period of time. He uses groups because he thinks discussion adds to the discourse of the world and by talking about their writings, his students will write more effectively. He also believes that language is a social action and talking about writing is necessary. The group seemed to be effective and the students really did do work. They were not just sitting around chatting about the day. In the group there is a secretary and a monitor who make sure the group stays focused on the task presented to them. I am personally do not like group work, but I think the groups were effective in this case.

Dr. Schroeder also has an interesting method of grading. Although he does grade in the traditional manner, such as the student writing papers and then

having him grade the paper, he also places an emphasis on another area. He is not only interested in the final product, but the process the student went through to achieve the final product. When he grades the paper, he looks at how the student worked. He looks at if they participated in class and asked questions. The progression is very important and he wants to see it in their work.

Dr. Schroeder is writing a book about teaching English. He uses his class as an experiment for his book. He uses many methods to help him figure out what concepts and ideas are effective. If something works or doesn't, that is fine. Everything is a learning experience.

Going in to the writing center and tutoring a student from Schroeder's class would be difficult without having this experience. I think that when we attend the writing center we should always ask the student if they know what the goal of the paper or the class is. For example, if I were helping one of Dr. Schroeder's students I would know that progression was important and that they each have personal goals. I think it would be important to tap into those specific areas. If I were tutoring one of Dr. ——'s students I would know that grammar and the CLAST were very important and so I think my approach would be different.

From observing the class, I noticed some of Dr. Schroeder's topics were a little unusual. From being in the classroom, I felt that the students were sometimes confused on the topics and many had to ask several questions many times and in different ways to make sure they completely understood. There is a possibility that as a tutor I would have no knowledge of the topic. I think talking to the student would be very beneficial. By explaining their ideas to me, hopefully they would realize new possibilities for their writing.

With his students I would also encourage my tutee to participate in class and ask questions. Knowing how he feels about the process of writing, participation could make a difference in the grade the student receives. I would also encourage them to be clear and concise and follow the rules of the Academy.

I think this experience was very effective and interesting. I think often times as students we get accustomed to one type of teaching style. We need to remember the students we will be helping will be coming from all types of teacher backgrounds. The methods we use for one student may or may not work with the next student. I know it is not possible to know how all the professors are here at ——, but I think with experience tutoring various students we will gain valuable knowledge. I think in order to be an effective tutor one really has to communicate and make sure he knows what the student and the teacher hope to accomplish in an English class.