

Jean Prokott
CETL Final Project
27 April 2006

FEEDBACK ON STUDENT LEARNING AND RESPONSE TO TEACHING:

Earlier in the semester, I designed a response sheet for my ENG101 composition students based on the CETL meeting wherein we discussed evaluations of student feedback. I decided to use this class and this time in my teaching (4th semester of Composition) to accurately evaluate whether my students understand the purpose in the papers I have assigned.

First some background on the structure of my class. My students write 4 papers during the semester. Most of them are 3-5 page essays which all, in some way or another, lead up to the final research paper, which is 25% of their overall grade. I discuss how the essays intertwine with each other throughout the semester, and on each assignment sheet for the essay, I define purpose, audience, and objectives for the paper. For example, with the Critique essay, the first part of my assignment sheet read the following:

***CRITIQUE** A critique is a formalized, critical reading of a passage. . . . Your task in writing a critique is . . . determining what the author says, how well the points are made, what assumptions underlie the argument, what issues are overlooked, and what implications can be drawn from such an analysis. Critiques, positive or negative, should include a fair and accurate summary of the passage; they also should include a statement of your own assumptions.*

***AUDIENCE** College-educated adults whom have not seen the movie themselves, and are relying on your critique for an accurate summary and analysis of the information provided*

***DESCRIPTION** For this assignment you will be asked to critique the information in a documentary movie that we will watch in class. This assignment does not require outside research.*

I discouraged the students from looking back to the assignment sheet when filling these out, I assured them there were no *right or wrong* answers and that my purpose was to see how well they understood the assignment in their own terms.

I have done self-evaluations before, but not to this extent. I feel that this detail and the questions I have chosen benefit both me and the students.

On the third page of this handout, I have included the 10 question evaluation for my students' Critique assignment. With this evaluation sheet, I hoped to achieve the following:

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Understand how students interpret the assignment in their own "layman" words. (Questions 1 & 2)
- ✓ Have the students take the assignment "out of the classroom" and direct it toward real-world issues. (Q's 7, 8, & 9)
- ✓ Have the students reflect on their writing process (we focus on this throughout the entire semester) and then essentially determine whether said process was beneficial

- to this type of writing, or whether it needed to be restructured for the future. (Q's 3, 4, 5, 6 & 10)
- ✓ Allow students to discuss the positives and negatives of their work openly and specifically. (Q 5, 6 & 10)
 - ✓ Allow students to apply this work to the other material in Composition class, and understand how the assignments link together to produce a thick understanding of Composition once the class is over. (To reiterate this, in the class I always first summarize the previous paper and then discuss the objectives of even the next assignment, and draw comparisons and differences among all of the papers.) (Q's 7, 8, & 9)
 - ✓ Allow students to understand ENG101 curriculum in regards to other classes they will take at the University—since Composition is the only absolutely required class of them, I feel it is entirely important that they know—or at least can speculate as to why this class is required and *what they can take out of it when they are finished*. (Q's 7, 8, 9, & 10)

RESULTS

For the most part, I feel that my students responded positively to the questions that I asked of them. The majority of them took the time to respond fully to the questions—I gave them 10-15 minutes in class to answer them—but there were a few who only wrote short answers. In the future, I would require them to answer the questions in full sentences, or I could have them take the questions home, type them up and receive credit for a fuller response.

For the most part, it was interesting to see how much time my students had spent on their drafts and how *aware* they were of their own work. Their positives and concerns about the work were similar to comments I would end up writing on their final drafts. It seemed as though the evaluation of the information that they had retained was positive—I noticed that remarks I had made in class about the building of essays had stuck with them. I feel that is true because I not only included it in this evaluation, but also mentioned the purpose and objectives of my curriculum in class.

Most of my objectives appeared to be met. However, I feel that it could help earlier on in the drafts of the assignment to ask some of these questions; I could ask my students to fill out an evaluation during the middle of the assignment (perhaps when I see only rough drafts) because it would be more important to know they could describe the assignment in “layman’s” terms at *that* time, as well as understand their writing process (while they are “in” it) as well as understand the positives and negatives of their work. So, although objectives were met, this evaluation would be more beneficial to the *students* (yet remaining equally as helpful to me) if I split it up and did part of it earlier on in the paper. In addition, there may be ways to turn such an obvious evaluation into an assignment, into group work, pair share, creating lists, etc. (Note: I often ask students to send emails of questions at the beginning of a class period, but they are much less forward and directed. With specific Q & A, those questions could be fleshed out.)

As I said, I think the most important aspect of the evaluation in the classroom is to see that students understand your objectives as a teacher. What’s the point? Does it apply to other

areas of the class/college/greater world? I think it is always positive to share objectives with students—I feel as though they respond more openly to in-class work that otherwise would appear to be “busy work.” I found that this activity didn’t take too much class time, but was worthwhile for me as a teacher. I can never know fully whether it helped my students make connections or whether they weren’t really noting what it was they were writing down for me, but based on their responses I can know that they at least retained something from class. My explanations of what I expected from them appeared to be clear, and so did my lectures from class. Finally, I would like to note that I have found reiterating ideas in different forms seems to be the most effective for me: evaluation, lecture, group work—how can multiple means of teaching become thematic? In regards to this assignment, I have designed an essay for the last week of class—my students will have an essay form of evaluation that will reflect and draw examples from *all* of their essays thus far in the semester. It will act as a final exam.

STUDENT SELF-EVALUATION OF CRITIQUE PAPER

Please answer the following questions as completely as possible.

- 1) Describe the assignment.
- 2) Who is your audience for this written work (the general reader other than me or your peers that you had in mind)?
- 3) What is the writing process you used for this paper? Did you outline? How did you use your notes?
- 4) How many drafts have you made of this essay? How many hours do you think you’ve spent on it?
- 5) What are some concerns of this work?
- 6) What are some positives?
- 7) How would you compare your work on this essay to the summary?
- 8) The next paper we are working on is the explanatory synthesis. That paper involves using outside sources and integrating them into your paper. What have you learned from the critique that you can apply to that paper?
- 9) We discussed this in class—but why (or why not) do you think the critique is an important part of English 101 curriculum? How can it be used outside of class? Or for other classes?
- 10) Do you think this assignment helped you become a stronger writer? Why or why not?

