

Peer Teaching Evaluation
University of British Columbia Okanagan
Department of Creative Studies

Denise Kenney, Term 2 2008/2009

Evaluators: Nancy Holmes (Head, Associate Professor, Creative Writing, Department of Creative Studies); Neil Cadger (Associate Professor, Interdisciplinary Performance, Department of Creative Studies)

Dates/ Classes of Evaluation: (Neil and Nancy) THTR 201, Monday Feb. 9, 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM; (Nancy) FILM 220, Friday Feb 27, 12:30 PM – 2 PM

Date of Report: March 30, 2009

Neil Cadger and Nancy Holmes met with Denise Kenney in early February to set up the peer evaluation schedule and to talk about areas Denise would like us to consider. Denise requested that we look at class participation (particularly at how she engages the quiet students), the structure of her sessions from lecture to exercises and her ability to balance and focus the content of the class when the material that should be covered is so huge. Neil has done a great deal of work with Denise already and has much experience he will incorporate in this report.

The THTR 201 class we reviewed was a body work class; the FILM 220 class was a lecture class. This variety provided us with the usual range of Denise's teaching assignments.

Observations:

Organization: Classroom management was effective. She corrected students' work verbally, kindly but firmly in THTR 201. Classes immediately came to order, particularly the THTR class. Time was attended to well.

Space and Equipment: She used the space available appropriately. In THTR class, she managed the cramped space in FIN 144 well and, when something didn't quite work, apologized and redid with minimum fuss. In FILM 220, she moved about the front of the class well. The use of technology and audio-visual resources in each class was strong. In the FILM class, the AV tools were well used, efficient, didn't over-dominate, minimum fuss—extremely well prepared film clips.

Communication and Body Language: Denise has an extremely clear and carrying voice. Her delivery was effective, clear, articulate, and she has no distracting mannerisms. In FILM 220, she had a sore throat and mentioned this to the class but her malady did not seem to affect the class presentation.

Interaction with Students: Denise gives the impression that she respects students, listens to students, and enjoys talking to them. Everyone in THTR was participating, and she encouraged each by name. In FILM 220, students made good comments which she would refer to in further discussion. She was

humorous (her comments about “lousy screen kisses” in FILM 220 were funny and well-received by the class.) In THTR 201 she welcomed student comments that verbalized what they were doing bodily (“like a speed skater”). In the same class, when the students referred to an earlier move they made, she responded immediately and took up the cue to build from this place of knowledge. In FILM 220, she showed enthusiasm about a student comment, though in this lecture class she was not quite as adept as in the studio class at taking the comment as a basis for building upon, but rather, drew her own conclusion about the comment instead of beginning from that place to further discussion. She was good at responding to questions with the comment “This is a good question” and then she addressed the questions. The impression in the THTR class was that everyone was enjoying themselves a great deal; in FILM they were more quiet. She did ask certain students to respond when she asked a question which seemed to draw out some of the quieter ones.

Content: Denise seems to know her material extremely well. In the FILM class she brought in some film theory though it wasn’t clear to the reviewer that the students had been assigned readings in theory. The textbook did not seem to be referred to in the lecture NH attended. The class content seemed current, with the remake of *Mr. Deeds* referred to and compared to the old version. In terms of theory, in the FILM 220 lecture she presented her thesis (individual vs. system) in a clearly theoretically based way though perhaps she didn’t do enough checking in to see if students understood/ believed the theory. Eventually, when she asked students to think about her theory of social connection in America, the students remained fixated on differences in plot and details between the two versions of the *Mr. Deeds* film. In some ways, Denise did not seem to get from them what she wanted—how optimism and hope may not be social commentary and how these qualities reinforce the conventions that the film is critiquing. The students did not seem to respond to this idea.

Teaching Strategy: The teaching was appropriately aimed at a first and second year level. In THTR 201 she used excellent metaphors for students (“chewy knees;” “imagine a pencil on the end of your nose drawing a straight line”) and good visualizations. She also drew clear connections between what the bodywork could be used for in the future (“this will be good for the masks”) so that the students could feel they were working towards specific goals. She also used lots of demonstration in THTR 201. In FILM 220, she provided examples of films she was talking about even if the students had supposedly seen them before. She “read” the clips with enthusiasm (Buster Keaton, for example). She also provided students with a sense of the bigger picture by frequently locating the films in their time and in film history, though it is difficult to know if students sometimes get cultural and historical references. In THTR 201, the exercises seem nicely connected and building on each other (NEIL would know better). In FILM 220, she integrated an exercise into the lecture though it was not used much outside of a few beginnings for class discussion.

Research: Denise’s back ground in filmmaking was quietly integrated into her teaching when she spoke of storyboards and some craft in FILM 220. These classes are both lower level classes so there is not a great deal of room for bringing a great deal of research into the classroom. However, her methodologies of practice-based research are clearly part of her pedagogy in THTR 201.

Recommendations and Conclusion:

Denise Kenney is an excellent teacher and we have no concerns about her performance in the classroom. She seems to be comfortable, able and approachable. She has many strengths. The areas that she asked

us to review indicate she is aware of the very few minor areas where she could develop her substantial abilities.

Denise asked us to look at 1) class participation (particularly at how she engages the quiet students), 2) the structure of her sessions from lecture to exercises and 3) her ability to balance and focus the content of the class when the material that should be covered is so huge.

- 1) There seemed to be no problem with participation in the THTR 201 class. In the FILM 220 class, the student exercise was a good strategy but it could have been put to better use. One reviewer would recommend having the thinking and writing assignment, but put the students in pairs or threes. Although group work is difficult with this sort of theatre-style classroom, sometimes having them come up with ideas together leads to more discussion. Also, if the instructor gets the students to spend 5 minutes doing some in-class writing, it might be useful to use more of the writing that gets done.
- 2) This relates to above. The exercise about the comic scene in FILM 220 was a good one but wonder if it could be used more effectively to add to the lecture. Perhaps they could have been reminded of a theoretical idea from the text book and try to apply that theory to their analysis.
- 3) Denise remains calm and unrushed even if there is a great deal of material to cover. By looking at the course outline, it seems that the structure of the course while comprehensive was manageable. I think the secret to this balance is to remember we are not teaching survey courses of Western Civilization and that small manageable bits are just as valuable as overarching huge sweeping scopes.

Other:

Course Outlines: We'd recommend using the format for UBC Okanagan Course Outlines for these for consistency. Also we'd recommend using the Faculty-approved language on plagiarism. FILM 220 needed the calendar description. The Course Outlines are clear and provide the necessary information to the students.

We like to commend Denise Kenney for her high quality teaching. She provides real service to her students and the program areas she supports (both Interdisciplinary Performance and Critical Studies.)