

College of the Arts  
School of Theater+Film

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Dear Prof. Hermann,

It was such a pleasure to visit your course, FILM 360: Portfolio and Professional Development, to conduct a classroom teaching observation on May 11, 2017, in accordance with the School of Theater + Film's promotion and tenure guidelines. The materials you have submitted to me, including the attached syllabus and letter introducing the goals you have for the class, yourself, and your students, each present your course as an organized, scholarly exploration of the challenges beginning filmmakers have in developing their brand and marketing themselves within their community. I am struck by how thorough your course design is, including the fact that it is **a course** with a clear disciplinary focus, a clearly explicated series of assignments, and includes assigned readings and quizzes that ensure students have mechanisms by which to gauge their progress and understanding in the class.

Your class plan for the day was smoothly organized. You began by returning previous, completed reading questions followed by a well-timed reading quiz to front the day's topic in connection with the assigned homework. It is clear that you have an easy rapport with the class and that they respect you and see you as a potential mentor. Your attention to individual need was also noticeable, particularly as you spoke directly with one student about resources you'd recently posted to D2L that you thought he would find helpful. By giving the students something to work on at the beginning of class in the form of the reading quiz, you allowed them time to gather their thoughts about the day's topic while you were also able to organize your presentation, as well as check-in with various students about the day's reading. Your use of the projected quiz and subsequent quick discussion about it invited the class into low-stakes participation. It became clear throughout the class that you use this approach to build student confidence as you ask them to answer questions and introduce topics of concern stemming from the day's topic and homework that each may individually have. I noted that every student participated during class and each comment pulled from the day's topic and remained focused on the issues of the course. This was facilitated by how you moved from the day's focus on freelance versus staff positions, as presented in the assigned reading and emphasized in the quiz, by using a simple, informative PowerPoint slideshow that clearly organized the main ideas you wanted the students to take from the assignment. Your use of this material while also actively referring to previous classes, guest speakers, and topics connected the day's issues with the class as a whole, creating the sense that freelance v. staff positions wasn't solely the day's topic but an integral part of the overall course. Creating such transparent scope is difficult to do in practice, yet you did it with apparent ease. In fact, it was impressive how at times you would summarize a student's question or comment to shift the conversation to a new topic or a nuance within the topic under discussion. This also allows students a life-line, so to speak, to follow the discussion and to see connections under your guidance that they may have missed.

It's clear from my visit that you are a gifted instructor who has honed her skills and is confident in your classroom work; we are lucky to have you teaching as an assistant professor in our film production program.

Sincerely,

Amy Borden, PhD  
Associate Professor of Film Studies  
School of Theater + Film