Classroom Observations

GTA Teaching Seminar
13 September 2006
Basic Procedure

- Set up logistics, discuss goals of both people for the observation.
- Observe class, taking careful notes.
- Meet afterwards to discuss the experience.
Ask Ahead of Time

- Logistics: room, time, etc.
- What is the topic of the lesson?
- What does the instructor hope to accomplish?
- Is there anything the instructor thinks deserves special attention from the observer?
Mechanics of an Observation

- Show up to class as early as is reasonable.
- Be ready to take good notes!
- Your notes should be an objective record of what happens in class. You should be able to re-create the class from your notes.
Things to Note

- Are students providing informal feedback as they arrive to class?
- Where are the students sitting?
- How many students arrive on time? How many students (total) show up?
- When does the instructor arrive?
Class Transcript

- Keep track of what happens in class, noting the time.
- Does the instructor introduce a new topic? Do an example? Prove a theorem?
- What mode of instruction is being used?
Modes of Instruction

• **Lecture:** Instructor talks, students listen

• **Question and Answer:** Instructor asks questions, students answer them

• **Discussion:** Student-to-student communication, facilitated by instructor

• **Directed Practice:** Students work problems at their desks
What Else to Note?

- Seating arrangement: Who sits where?
- Where does the instructor stand? Does the instructor stay still or move around during class?
- Who talks?
- What type of feedback is given? Received?
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Chalkboard

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What Else to Note?

• Practical issues: Can you read the board? Hear the instructor?

• What were students doing: Paying attention? Sending text messages?

• Were there any classroom routines in place?
General Comments

• What was good about the class?
• How did the instruction compare to the instructor’s stated goals?
• Constructive feedback.
Debriefing Meeting

- Go over the transcript / notes: Was this what the instructor planned to have happen?
- How well did the lesson meet its objectives?
- Nuts and bolts issues
- General comments: start with positive