

# 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?



# Chalkboard

T

1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25,  
27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 38, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 51,  
53, 55, 57, 59, 61, 63, 65, 67, 69, 71, 73, 76, 79

	66	4, 64, 68	18, 34, 52, 54, 56	14, 32, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50
		24, 28	8, 11, 58, 70	9, 12, 26, 37, 40
2		30	36, 39, 74, 78	16, 60, 62, 75, 77
	6		72	20, 22

# Chalkboard

T

1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 14, 17, 19, 21, 25, 27,  
 29, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 46, 48, 51, 53, 57,  
 59, 61, 63, 65, 67, 70, 72, 75, 77, 79

	22, 24	2	12, 15	10, 13, 16
20, 23	30, 56	76, 78	4, 6	55, 64, 66
18	26	36, 38	8, 69, 71, 73	68, 74
28, 31	32	52	42, 54	62
34	44, 49	40	45, 47, 50	58, 60

# 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