

YORK COLLEGE
The City University of New York

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION REPORT

Staff Member Dr. Selena T. Rodgers Observer Dr. Tania G. Levey

Rank Associate Professor Date of Observation 10/14/20 Length of Observation 2 ½ hours

Discipline Social Work Date filed with Division Head 10/21/20

Course No. & Title SCWK 470 Social Research Methods II

Classroom Activity Ethics and Politics

1. SUMMARY OF CLASS PERFORMANCE

| | Poor | Fair | Good | Excellent |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Knowledge of subject..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Organization of subject matter..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Ability to explain..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Encouragement to thinking..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Speaking ability..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Student participation..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Student discipline..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Atmosphere conducive to learning..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Attitude toward students: Bright students..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |
| Slow Students..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |

II. ANALYSIS OF LECTURE

I observed a fully synchronous online class taught by Dr. Selena T. Rodgers. Social Research Methods II (SCWK 470) is the second course in a two-semester methods sequence required for undergraduate Social Work majors. The class met on the video conferencing program Zoom. Though I am a Sociology professor, there is considerable overlap with this course and the Research Methods course I teach for Anthropology, Political Science, and Sociology. We use the same required textbook by Earl Babbie and cover many of the same topics, such as Research Ethics and Politics, the topic for the class I observed.

Dr. Rodgers opened class by randomly dividing students into two “wellness” breakout rooms, where they were to enter words that represented their emotional states. I was assigned to group two. Though ultimately Dr. Rodgers was not able to create a word cloud from their responses due to technological issues, the exercise was successful in that students took a moment to consider their emotional states and gave them the opportunity to interact with their classmates. When students were brought back to the main room, they were reminded of resources available to help with issues related to COVID-19. Dr. Rodgers is currently conducting a study on the impact of COVID-19 on the CUNY community and thus uniquely situated to provide these resources. Dr. Rodgers then reminded students that they are to pass various modules designed from the required reading but also aligned with Social Work Program requirements. Students felt comfortable enough to share that it took them many tries to pass modules on certain areas, such as plagiarism.

Dr. Rodgers went beyond the material covered in the Babbie textbook to use real-world experiments to illustrate abstract concepts including respect and informed consent. Before class, students watched a documentary called *Three Identical Strangers* that follows triplets who were separated at birth and studied as they grew up. I had not thought about using this to illustrate informed consent. Besides the Nuremberg Trials, Stanley Milgram Experiments, and the Tearoom Trade, Dr. Rodgers talked in depth about other breaches in ethics such as Cold War experiments in St. Louis, Project Nim, and Henrietta Lacks. Other topics of discussion included the Belmont Report, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, protected populations, and risk.

Throughout the class, Dr. Rodgers made connections between the material and students’ field placements and the Social Work profession, reminding students that research ethics has relevance for skills, field placement, and values. The relevance for research practice and research was shown through the National Association of Social Worker’s Code of Ethics and the Council on Social Work Education’s Nine Competencies. Through Zoom, Dr. Rodgers shared her screen and asked students to volunteer to read from PowerPoint slides. Dr. Rodgers always brought the discussion back to a guiding principle of Social Work: the right to self-determination. Dr. Rodgers connected their education to research, policy, and practice, reminding students of their ethical duty to move knowledge and practice forward. Given the difficulties students are going through, Dr. Rodgers instituted flexibility in due dates but also enforced final deadlines. The class concluded with students asking questions about the annotated bibliography assignment.

Dr. Rodgers clearly has considerable knowledge about the history of unethical studies and brought them to life by posting videos and working with the library to put more content online. Though Dr. Rodgers always stayed on the outline of the lesson, she adapted to questions and issues that interested students. For instance, experiments were often conducted on people of color, so she made connections to racism and lack of rights. To further illustrate ethics and politics in research, Dr. Rodgers shared personal research experiences, such as submitting a multi-campus project to multiple IRBs. Another experience involved Dr. Rodgers rejecting a possible participant due to the high possibility of risk. These experiences show the importance of having professors actively engaged in research, particularly those who teach lab and research methods courses.

I would describe Dr. Rodgers as extremely supportive of students during a difficult period in their lives (a pandemic) and under difficult teaching circumstances (fully online). Dr. Rodgers managed to create a warm and close feeling despite teaching a fully online course. It was apparent that students want to attend her class because even though it was a conversion day, attendance was high and one student even attended from her workplace. Students also wanted to go longer than the regular class time. Dr. Rodgers used the grid view so that she could see everyone's faces (only a few attended without video). Through her comments, it was apparent that she was looking at all their faces and noticing their level of engagement and understanding. In order to stay even more in touch with the class, something not easy to do on Zoom, Dr. Rodgers checked in with them often, not just to gauge if they understood the material but also to ask how they were feeling. She had excellent rapport with students. Dr. Rodgers is clearly liked and respected by her students despite having quite high academic standards.

Most of all, I want to talk about the relationship between Dr. Rodgers and her students, or, I should say, her "scholars." Just by using this term, "scholars," Dr. Rodgers shows a profound respect for students enrolled in her class. It is empowering for students to think of themselves as scholars. This reminded me of liberatory pedagogies of thinkers such as educator and writer Paulo Freire, who advocated for less distinction between teachers and students, or student-teachers and teacher-students. Even more than Paulo Freire, I felt Dr. Rodgers' teaching exemplified the philosophy of professor, writer, and activist bell hooks. In *Engaged Pedagogy: A Transgressive Education for Critical Consciousness* (1998), bell hooks draws from the work of Paulo Freire but adds a more holistic approach, one in which education not only enriches students' minds, but also their bodies and spirits. The breakout groups at the beginning of class, Dr. Rodgers' rapport with students, and the resources offered to students to aid them through the pandemic all show that Dr. Rodgers does not simply strive to teach content, but aims to enrich students emotionally as well as intellectually. It occurred to me as the class progressed that Dr. Rodgers illustrated the theme of the class itself, ethics, in the way she exhibited a deep respect for the scholars in her class. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to observe her class.

1. Strengths: Knowledge of material, encouragement to thinking, attitude toward students
2. Suggestions: None
3. Overall performance as a college faculty member in terms of the professional standards of your discipline
Poor Fair Good Excellent

I have received a copy of this report.

Dr. Selena T. Rodgers

Digitally signed by Dr. Selena T. Rodgers
Date: 2020.10.20 21:14:05 -04'00'

Signature of observed staff member



Signature of observer

YORK COLLEGE
The City University of New York

POST-OBSERVATION CONFERENCE MEMORANDUM

| | |
|--|---|
| Post-Observation Conference | Names of Department Representatives Present |
| Observation Date 10/14/20 | <i>Observer</i> |
| Course and Section SCWK 470 Section V | |
| Name of Observer: Dr. Tania Levey | <i>P&B member or other assigned by Chairman</i> |
| Date Observation Report Filed with Chairman 10/21/20 | |

Candidate's Name Dr. Selena T. Rodgers

Department Social Work

Date of Discussion 10/20/20

(Attach additional pages if necessary.)

I understand that my signature mean only that I have read this memorandum and that I may attach any comments I wish.

Signed

Associate Professor of Social Work and Founding Director, MSW Program at CUNY York College

Title



Dr. Selena T. Rodgers

Digitally signed by Dr. Selena T. Rodgers
Date: 2020.10.20 21:13:07 -04'00'

October 21, 2020

Staff Members Signature

Date