

COJO Peer Teaching Evaluation – John Keston, spring 2016

Writing/Designing for the Web, Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016

Intellectual Substance: *Briefly describe the substance of the class. To what extent was the material presented intellectually challenging? Did it stimulate critical thinking?*

From the perspective of someone without a Web background, the topics were challenging. While it is difficult for me to assess the students' working knowledge and the lecture's challenge relative to that knowledge, the class period certainly had a substantive feel.

The class began with a session on Professor John Keston's expectations for the first milestone in what appears to be an ongoing portfolio project. The expectations included sketches and color selections for next class. While doing a demo on a color wheel, he also reminded students of what they had already learned in an earlier class about cropping photos. For me, that demonstrated a sense of continuity.

The lecture then shifted to what Keston described as the second technical exercise (presumably of the semester), which would be due the following week. Students were asked to create a profile page of their first computer gaming system. He made clear this was practice for the larger portfolio project. For me, that demonstrated a sense of context and purpose.

The lecture then turned to a brief discussion of Office365's OneDrive. According to my notes, the purpose of this was to show students how to back up ongoing class work. That seemed quite helpful for the various class projects.

Keston's lecture then closed with a discussion of CSS Reset and CSS Normalize. The latter, which, as I understand it, helps create documents with greater cross-browser efficiency, included an on-screen coding discussion.

Certainly, Keston's decision to create some linkage between some of the topics forced students to think critically about applications.

Professional Substance: *If the class was a skills course, briefly describe the substance of the class. To what extent was the material presented appropriate and challenging given the skills expected in the field?*

Again, from the eye of someone without Web design skills, the material certainly seemed appropriate for a student pursuing a career that will require such knowledge.

In particular, I point to the discussion about CSS Normalize. Keston noted that understanding how to use that will allow students to create content that has the same look regardless of the browser (e.g., Safari, Firefox or Chrome). For someone who values using the Web without interruption, that seemed quite important to me.

Mode of Presentation: *To what extent was the mode of presentation appropriate to the kind of material presented? Was it clear and effective? To what extent did it call for the active engagement of students? Was the professor engaged and interested in the material?*

Keston used a variety of classroom tools, including the instructor computer/Web, overhead and the classroom blackboard, to support his discussion.

When discussing the ongoing portfolio project, he drew sample layouts on the board. In that same topical portion of the lecture, he showed how to use color.adobe on the overhead. His final demonstration during the portfolio section included a lesson in cropping. I particularly liked his recent demo photo, which was of a flock of crows in a tree at sunset. Cool and current!

When he turned to the technical exercise, students had no excuse for not understanding. The list of requirements was clearly spelled out.

When discussing CSS Normalize, Keston showed the coding on the overhead.

From my standpoint, he used the tools at his disposal to provide clarity. That seemed effective to me.

My notes show that Keston asked students if they had any questions in at least three of the four class topics. I may have missed the question opportunity in the fourth area. Silence greeted Keston a couple times, but he did not seem phased by that. He allowed ample time for students to respond. It seemed like a quiet group; that could be a result of the time of day – immediately after lunch.

I have no doubt that Keston is interested in the material. Some of this is from my personal interaction through TommieMedia. However, I sensed that same interest in his class presentation.

Class Structure: *How well was the class organized? Were the goals clear? How flexible and helpful with questions was the instructor? Did the students feel free to ask questions?*

From my perspective, Keston covered a lot of ground. The goals in each area were clear to me. In the portfolio discussion, he was trying to help the students meet the upcoming deadline. He made clear the technical project had a larger purpose linked to the portfolio. His OneDrive discussion offered students a way to manage their work. Finally, his CSS discussion seemed applicable to all kinds of Web work.

Keston did acknowledge between the OneDrive and CSS discussions that the lecture was not in an easy order. I appreciated his honesty. Given my lack of technical knowledge, I hesitate to offer a suggestion in rearranging content, but it seems to me that the OneDrive discussion could be earlier in the semester. Given all the Web work, it sounds like such space is crucial to all class projects. That said – and on a personal note – I am aware that

the OneDrive introduction on campus is occurring in stages. Perhaps the tool just became available to Keston's students.

Earlier, I touched on the question/answer climate in class. I think Keston offered opportunities. For the most part, students were quiet.

I should add that the lecture filled the first 50 minutes of this Tuesday/Thursday class. Keston then went around to meet with students – presumably about class work. From what I saw, he was enthusiastic.

Strengths Exhibited in the Teaching of Class:

Professor John Keston clearly has the technical expertise necessary for this class. His lecture pacing seemed about right. He offered students a chance to stop and ask questions. Keston also seemed interested in giving students the ability to create things that work. From a personal standpoint, that's something this world needs.

Areas of Concern, If Any:

I do think that the choppiness of the lecture is something that can/should be addressed. Keston clearly knew it was an issue because he acknowledged it. I'm certain he can fix that.

Given that Keston covered four major topical areas (as I observed), perhaps he should make certain that he is building transitional bridges between topics. Understand, I heard linkage at different points; I'm just suggesting that he could improve the transitions.

I do not have an explanation for the quiet class. Perhaps, Keston should seek ways to increase student involvement in the lecture. I understand that when students are learning new technology, questions may be sparse, but some interactivity would help the lecture. Perhaps they understood the topic and didn't need to ask questions. It could also be the "haze" that occurs after lunch.

I think these issues can be solved.

Overall Evaluation: *Based on a classroom observation and in comparison with other examples of teaching, in your experience, how would you evaluate the teaching of the class?*

Given the technical nature of this class and my lack of related knowledge, I still found the lecture to be interesting and engaging. I learned some things. In fact, Keston allowed me to ask a question about OneDrive, which has just been applied to my laptop.

I think Keston's biggest strengths are his knowledge and enthusiasm for the topic. I would encourage him to continue to capitalize on those.

I am glad that Professor John Keston is part of the Department of Communication & Journalism.