

TEACHING OBSERVATION FORM

PERSON OBSERVED: Christina Reppucci TITLE: Visiting Assistant Professor
OBSERVER 1: Matthew Gingo TITLE: Associate Professor
OBSERVER 2: Katherine Eskine TITLE: Assistant Professor
COURSE TITLE & NUMBER: Brain, Mind, and Behavior (PSY 225)
DATE & TIME OF OBSERVATION: 4/20/2022
CLASS SIZE (PRESENT/ENROLLED): 28/35
CLASS LENGTH: 80 Minutes
LENGTH OF OBSER: 80 Minutes

TOPIC AND CONTEXT OF CLASS:

Brain, Mind, and Behavior serves as Wheaton's introduction to neuroscience, is the centerpiece of the Biological Perspective in Psychology curriculum, and the entry point for our Neuroscience Program. The course introduces and describes the structure and function of the nervous system, with particular focus on the brain and the neural processes associated with various behaviors and cognitive functions. Christina has organized the course such that each week the class takes on a central topic – theory and research – in the field of neuroscience. On the day of our observation, Christina was teaching the second of two classes focused on the neurological functioning and antecedents of depressive and anxiety disorders. Given that this class was delivered in the twelfth week of the semester, the students were familiar with many of the underlying neural processes being discussed (e.g., presynaptic vesicle function; intrasynaptic reuptake inhibitors), and many were able to engage with the material in the sorts of rich and informed ways that indicate topic-level mastery. We found the pace of the class to be well-suited for the students and the material being covered, and were impressed by the degree to which students were able to support their answers with relevant concepts covered in prior class meetings (e.g., ionic depolarization; chemical binding of agonist and antagonists). Having situated this class toward the end of the semester, Christina was able to teach it at a high level, asking questions that required more analysis than description, and more explanation than recitation. We enjoyed listening to students applying a semester's worth of training in neuroscience to their discussion of affective disorders. Christina's approach, which involved posing application-based questions and elaborating on students' answers, lent substantially to our feeling that the course had successfully achieved the goal of introducing the students to neuroscientific inquiry and methods.

GENERAL STYLE OF PRESENTATION (lecture, discussion, mixed):

The class blended a highly interactive lecture with two short student presentations (9 and 11 minutes, respectively). Throughout the lecture, Christina was quite adept at soliciting student participation with her prediction- and explanation-based questions. Her slides were organized and animated in such a way that she could ask student to explain a graphic – for example, a brain scan (MRI), pattern of sleep waves, and histograms –

Christina also incorporated numerous graphics (both data and functional representations) in her lecture as entry points for students to engage in analysis by applying the central concepts of the reading/lecture. She used students' responses and assertions (occasionally repackaging off-the-mark answers) as ways to expand and further connect major points of consideration to prior coursework. Her ability to explain and her upbeat and approachable tone invited a high level of participation from her students. In short, her expertise in neuroscience was complimented and matched by her expertise in teaching.

3. Instructor's respect for students; encouragement of student participation; management of disagreements or alternative points of view:

It was clear to us from the outset that Christina had developed a good rapport with her class – they were largely attentive and respectful and responded to her questions without prodding. In turn, she was on time, on point, and organized. Christina engaged students with her questions and democratic lecturing style. Rather than “dumping” information on students, she elicited their questions, answers, and knowledge in a very interactive way. Although we noted that several students were distracted by their phones at points during the class, the majority of the class appeared to be tuned in and focused throughout the period. We found the structure/delivery of her Powerpoint slides and use of Slido polls, described above, to be clever and effective ways of monitoring student understandings, while at once engaging students who otherwise might not have participated fully. Christina was also quite willing to entertain tangential questions throughout the course of her lecture, but when too far afield, expertly redirected those questions to the subject at hand.

OVERALL EVALUATION:

We very much enjoyed our observation of Christina's class and found her teaching to be clear, organized, precise, and engaging. We were impressed by the multiple modalities she used to build on students existing knowledge while conveying complex new material. Our overarching view is that Christina delivered an excellent class, is a strong teacher-scholar, and that her students will be well-prepared for future coursework in neuroscience and psychology. Her highly curated slides, continuous interaction with students, and ability to unpack complex processes in a clear and concrete manner complimented each other well and made for a very strong class.

OBSERVER *Molly* Matt Gingo DATE 6/21/22

OBSERVER *Kathleen E. Eskin* DATE 8/8/2022

PERSON OBSERVED *Christina J. Reppucci* DATE 6/21/22