

12 December 2012

Class observation of Advanced Lecturer Romain Chareyron
9 November 2012
French 326 Introduction to French Literature, 9:00-9:50 MWF

I observed the class of Romain Chareyron at the request of Prof. Caroline Jewers, Chair of Department, as part of our policy of annual peer observations of lecturers in the Department of French and Italian.

Romain began class on time. Seven students were present. The lesson for the day concerned film and stage adaptations of the extreme contemporary French play, *Le dieu du carnage* by Yasmina Reza, which the students had just finished reading. Available to the students on Blackboard, and used extensively on screen during this class, was a well-organized and well-conceived set of documents : « Vocabulaire du théâtre », « Qu'est-ce que le théâtre ? », questions about structures, themes, and characters in the play. Romain used these PowerPoint documents/handouts, especially one entitled « De l'écrit à l'écran », which dealt with themes including « l'espace », « la violence », « le corps », « les genres », to guide the students through discussion of key points of comparison between the published play and the film/stage versions of it, the latter being present with numerous color illustrations and some video film clips which the students discussed and commented upon. The titles for the PowerPoint were complete and appropriately challenging full sentences, not just one- or two-word bullet points. Romain used these devices to organize and pace the class excellently from beginning to end. I was very impressed by the research, thought, and foresight he had put into the preparation of the class, and how smoothly everything went. The discussion was not dominated by the electronics ; Romain made seamless transitions from screen to question-and-answer and discussion. He had chosen a variety of contrasting décors from three stage adaptations, and the students had a chance to understand the latitude of interpretation that directors have in the mise en scène of literary plays. This was a very appropriate and lively follow-up to the reading of the play itself for our introductory course on French literature : which adaptation seemed « la plus fidèle » to the original play and why, etc. His choice of pictures and documents got good reactions from the students, the scenes were provocative, humoristic, and effective class props.

Romain, as one would expect, offers an excellent model of French to the students ; his accent is very clear, he doesn't slow down but his pace of speech is just fine for this level, it makes the students work a bit but does not lose them at all. He has a very pleasant classroom presence and manner, he is animated and clearly enjoys being in class interacting with the students, all of whom were very much at ease

with him, even when he was correcting their language, which he did regularly and in helpful, respectful ways throughout the class. The students spoke in complete sentences during the question-and-answer session as he verified how well they had prepared the questionnaire 'De l'écrit à l'écran' for class. My two suggestions would be that, first, Romain make sure to call more frequently on all students. Four students spoke a lot, the three others less so. This is common in my experience of French 326 and usually comes from weaker or less advanced students' lack of confidence in their ability to speak correctly, especially the ones who have not spent much time in France. Secondly, some of the PowerPoint images could have been used more effectively, letting the students (especially the less confident ones) describe literally the décor they were seeing on screen, and then afterwards moving the class discussion to the more evaluative questions about adaptation, fidelity to the play, and so forth. Overall, though, this class was excellent and a model which our beginning doctoral lecturers would benefit from observing : well planned and prepared ; well conducted, paced, and animated, finishing the lesson plan effectively in the fifty-minute period ; and clearly an excellent class atmosphere of encouragement and learning about language and literature.

Romain finished with a projection of six posters for the production of *Le dieu du carnage*. The students came out of this particular class session with a great sense of live theater, and how a play becomes a mise en scène and a film production in contemporary French and Francophone cultural settings. The very fine handouts for the course are attached to this peer observation, as is the syllabus, which is topnotch and has appropriate policies and detail about assignments, grading.

This was an excellent rendition of French 326. The students are lucky to have such a conscientious, effective, and lively teacher.

Sincerely
Van Kelly
Assoc. Prof.

