

FACULTY EVALUATIONS

To: Dámaris Otero-Torres

Liliana Sánchez

From: Karen Elizabeth Bishop

1 October 2014

Re: Classroom observation of Crystal Marull

I had the pleasure of visiting Crystal Marull's class, "Advanced Spanish Conversation and Contemporary Issues" (Spanish 313) on 23 September 2014. There were 10 students present for the course meeting of 1 hour and 20 minutes. Crystal shared her syllabus and lesson plans with me in advance of the class so that I was able to situate the lesson in the larger scope of the course. Crystal's class was well planned, inventive, and engaging.

Crystal arrived to class at least ten minutes early to set up, which meant that she was there to welcome students as they arrived. When I arrived, she was chatting easily with her students, and despite the physical limitations of the room (a large lecture hall for a ten-person conversation class), had already cultivated what appeared a very comfortable group setting. She began the class right on time at 3.55 p.m. by diving directly into the first of a series of discrete learning activities that she used to organize this first class of a new two-week unit on film. In this initial activity, "Pelipareja" she asked students to work in pairs to identify films by way of their plot description; this got students thinking and talking about film right off the bat. The students remained engaged for the duration of the exercise, which lasted a good fifteen minutes. Crystal then brought the groups back together as a class and reviewed and debated their selections with them for ten minutes with the aide of power point slides she had prepared. She then transitioned to the next exercise, in which she asked the class to write a brief synopsis of the short film they had seen as homework, Argentine director Martín Piroyansky's 2010 *No me ama*. She kept a tight watch on the clock, and three minutes later, invited volunteers to read their synopses to the rest of the class, which students were eager to do, and then the whole class to present their work to each other in pairs.

At the bottom of the hour, Crystal reviewed some basic filmic vocabulary on the board with the class; the students were forthcoming and compiled a very useful list of terms that they will surely use in the coming weeks as they discuss their viewing of Icíar Bollaín's 2010 feature-length film *También la lluvia*; this was a great way to see what terms the students already knew and to ask them to compile their own collective knowledge. After just a couple minutes, Crystal moved on to a review of Argentine slang selected from the short film, giving students the opportunity to work with some difficult phrases by hearing them spoken in short audio clips she had culled from the film and then imagining their meaning by way of contextualization and, finally, offering up equivalent idioms in English. At 4.45 p.m., Crystal opened up the class to a larger conversation on the vicissitudes of love, asking students to come up with expressions in Spanish that convey love. The biggest challenge to this exercise was that it at times became a kind of guessing game. I think that it might have been more instructive to preface the exercise by asking students to think about the different kinds of love

they have in their lives and how they express that love, so that when they had to produce discrete terms, they could contextualize and explain them better. After five minutes or so, Crystal gave the students five minutes to read a review of the film on their own and then brought the class back together to discuss the critique. This produced a very rich conversation on both the film and on love in general; students were very eager to contribute to the discussion and made some important connections between the short film and their own lives. Given how successful this conversation was, I wonder if it wouldn't have served the class better to have opened the day with this discussion and to have afforded it a little more time. Crystal did a great job of moderating the conversation, of turning students' observations into more complex questions. For example, she very smartly asked the class how the film would have been different had the protagonists had smartphones at their disposition, which led to some particularly astute and relevant insight from the students. But she cut this conversation short to assign a written assignment on the difference between words and gestures in expressing love, and then asked students to finish at home what they didn't finish in class. Crystal ended the class by informing students of the upcoming Latino Short Film Festival hosted by NYU, providing them with a link to more information about the event and offering up extra credit to those students who attended the event.

From the very first moments of this class, Crystal exhibited all the signs of an experienced instructor. She commands a room naturally and easily, is poised and confident, and has a great rapport with her students. She knew the material she covered intimately, had prepared an exceptionally technologically savvy power point presentation to accompany her lesson, and cultivated a tone in the class that allowed students to feel comfortable taking linguistic risks. The lesson plans that she provided me the day before her class revealed Crystal to be a supremely organized and thoughtful instructor. She situated the day's lesson well, included goals for understanding and an instructional objective, as well as a detailed and timed outline of the day's activities, their criteria for evaluation, and student motivation for completing each exercise. This superior preparation allowed Crystal to be attentive to her students and to move seamlessly between activities.

I had the opportunity to meet with Crystal the day after her class and offer up some very well-received suggestions for how to improve on this already successful class. I encouraged Crystal to provide an introduction or framework to the new unit, the class day, and to the discrete activities she used throughout the lesson. I think this would allow students to better contextualize what they're learning and to make connections between various exercises. I also encouraged her to afford more time to open-ended conversations in the classroom. She proved herself very adept at facilitating these kind of discussions, but they constituted a small part of this particular day's lesson plans. I think giving students more opportunities to try out the discrete linguistic structures they're acquiring will allow them to more completely make the transition from intermediate-level language learners to more advanced Spanish-speakers. I also let Crystal know that I thought she should move more swiftly through the discrete exercises she asked students to engage in; they tended to run a little long, and while the students did remain engaged throughout – which is only a credit to the instructor – I think they will excel more quickly by being asked to produce oral language in more spontaneous and complex contexts. This is to say, Crystal excels in designing original and inventive linguistic activities; but I'd like to see her make the transition to putting the content of those activities to more fluid and open-ended use. Not unrelatedly, I suggested that as the semester progresses and her students become more advanced, she offer less information by way of power point to ensure that the students don't become reliant on visual prompts to produce

language in a spontaneous setting. This is certainly something the class can work up to; for now, Crystal's command and use of technology in the classroom was both skilled and fitting.

In sum, I was indeed impressed by the class that Crystal offered. She is a poised, engaging, and flexible instructor of language, comes to the classroom exceptionally well prepared, and works hard to create a welcoming and receptive classroom environment. She exhibited all the signs of a talented instructor and I have every confidence that she, much to her students' and our department's benefit, will only continue to excel in the classroom.

Respectfully submitted,



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Crystal Marull



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October 10th, 2015

To Whom it May Concern

Re: Crystal Marull- Letter of recommendation
Excellence in Teaching

I am delighted to write this letter of recommendation in support of Crystal Marull in my capacity as Spanish Language Coordinator of the 100 level. I met Crystal during the fall of 2012 when she began to teach as a graduate teaching assistant. She impressed me since the beginning because of her professionalism, dedication and preparation. In my experience, rarely you find all these qualities in a person in a very short time. She made my work as a coordinator very easy because she followed procedures, demonstrated to be very knowledgeable, was a highly responsible and detailed-oriented person. I have worked with a variety of instructors, from the very experienced to new graduate students, and I know that she takes her job seriously.

Because of these qualities, Crystal was assigned to teach during her first semester as a TA a fourth semester language course that it is normally assigned to a more experienced Rutgers TA. I observed her excellent class on October 23rd, 2012. The design, organization, preparation, instructor's role, and progression of the class were flawless. She made sure to give me access not only to her lesson plan but also to all materials handed out in class beforehand. Not only was the lesson well organized but so were the handouts for students. The presentation of the material and the combination between content, void spaces, and visual input were impeccable. The PowerPoint presentation created for this class was put together very carefully with examples and production activities as well.

During her class, Crystal beautifully incorporated teaching techniques into her lesson that were discussed in the graduate methods course and during orientation week. I was extremely impressed with her experience as an instructor and her command of the material. She created a class environment that was very conducive to language learning because it was stress-free and the sequence of the material was presented, from input (examples and recognition activities) to output (language production). The sequence of activities designed for this class contributed not only to this kind of environment but also to build up students' confidence. Her lesson combined samples and activities from the textbook with the use of *realia* in original ones. Moreover, most of her lesson was based on her own original materials, which were very good. Students were engaged and motivated the entire lesson.

She announced the course objectives at the beginning of her class by projecting the content of the lesson on the blackboard as part of a PowerPoint presentation. Her first activity provided a common ground and activated the basic structures to be used in class. This activity was completed individually and a discussion followed. Her second activity focused on interpersonal communication and it was a controlled activity that worked accuracy. I might add that this kind of activity is extremely important to have at this level. A very short review of grammar and another controlled grammar activity followed. Once the instructor did three content checks she moved into more open activities using *realia* ("*El otro lado de la cama*" video) to address interpretative communication. She followed a PDP framework (pre-viewing, while-viewing and post-viewing) used when dealing with interpretative communication. The last part of the lesson was devoted to the post viewing activity. She concluded the class by reviewing all objectives for the lesson.

Crystal has also shown administrative skills inside and outside the classroom. As a TA she is always prepared to complete all administrative tasks on time. She is always the first one to send grade reports and materials, she arrives on time to all meetings between coordinator and instructors, and always follows up with all administrative procedures. It is Crystal's dedication that makes her an

excellent all around instructor. She also uses her midterm evaluations to make adjustments and to respond better to her students' needs. She is constantly evaluating her teaching performance and how her students are reacting to her instruction methods. This is evidenced in her students' comments about her excellence and how wonderful of an instructor she is inside and outside of the classroom.

Since Crystal has also demonstrated leadership, and due to an excellent class observation, she had the opportunity to teach online courses for the Spanish and Portuguese Department when they were available for the first time to graduate students in summer 12, during the spring semester 14, and summer of 15. Only a selected group of excellent instructors had this opportunity. Those instructors selected were involved in the developing of materials for the online track. Crystal's Spanish 101 page for her online course is carefully constructed and goes beyond any other TA's page. Her page is excellent and it has the appearance of been created by a full-time instructor. Crystal's performance as a TA has been outstanding.

I must say I am extremely satisfied with her performance, dedication and professionalism. She is an excellent colleague, who is generous with her ideas. Crystal's contributions have always been well thought out, innovative, and on time. Crystal is serious, but has a good sense of humor. She is demanding, but compassionate and students respond to that. She has demonstrated a passion for learning new things and incorporates them into her teaching. I am impressed by her organization skills and hard work. I give Crystal my highest recommendation for teaching.

Cordially,



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