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Report on Teaching Workshops

Workshop title: *Teaching Critical Writing for Anthropology* / hosted by Raluca Petre

Date: 31st of October

Location: the Journalism Office (room246), Campus, Ovidius University of Constanta

Description: The event was organized given the needs of the Department, together with the third year students in Journalism and with young faculty members that have been recruited from the corridors.

The idea was of teaching how to teach and the outcome was the desired one. The topic was on writing given the deficiencies that I noticed when I first assigned the students the task of reviewing academic articles. I came to realize that they are not familiar with basic elements of critical writing. The level of English of the students turned out to be quite excellent, what they seem to lack is the critical approach in writing.

I tried to properly organize the event. Gathering the students turned to be quite simple. At the same time, it did not seem exactly appealing to the fellow faculty. On the other hand, I did manage to attract some of the young members that shared their knowledge in writing with the students. There have been two faculty members from the Faculty of Letters and one from the History Department. From the part of the students, six representatives showed up, mainly the members of the Anthropology team.

We introduced our methods of improving critical writing and also became aware of the specificity of our styles of approaching writing and writing assignments. We also came to realize that this is due to the specificity of our fields, also of the different backgrounds. The ones that studies abroad have a different approach, more open to critical writing. We ended up by gossiping the old system and finding out ways of reshaping it.

The event was not a big one and I did not mobilize the seniors in the faculty. Nevertheless, we, the young faculty, came to know each other better and also became

aware of our style of teaching, sharing knowledge, assigning tasks and correcting papers. At the same time, the students benefited from the discussion that was an open one after all, being able to choose the elements that best fit their own knowledge and style of learning.

Workshop on Critical Thinking

The Romanian academic system does not traditionally stress the critical thinking dimension. Things are changing lately; anyhow the inertia is present and affects the students in the first place. Therefore, the students have problems in presenting their arguments in a balanced way, with articulated pros and cons. Hence, the necessity to organize a session on critical thinking became a priority.

At the beginning of the year 2004 I organized the session with students in their third year of studies (we do not have a fourth year yet) because in the year to come they will face their graduation exams. At the same time, they are encouraged to participate in student conferences, therefore training their writing and critical thinking skills is a must. Some of the students presented their proposals for the CEP student conference and we discussed their approach and the value critical thinking would add to their work. At the same time, the Journalism Department at 'Ovidius' University is going to organize by the beginning of May a communication session where the third year students will prepare works and present the topics of their final paper.

The special guest in the workshop was the German lecturer in our university, Johannes Lutz. I introduced some concepts and the ideological foundations of critical thinking and he was the one to talk from the perspective of a person educated in the spirit of critical thinking and that faces some difficulties with students that have a different view on the issue. The discussion turned out to be very vivid and interesting. The students asked a lot of questions and asked for exemplifications. They came to ask themselves about the validity of their present approach on academic works and they shared their doubts to us.

We encouraged them to think about the value of critical thinking for developing a fluent and logical argument.

Workshop on critical writing

The workshop on critical writing I organized within the Department of Journalism at 'Ovidius' University in Constanta was a natural follow-up of the workshop on critical thinking held at the beginning of the year. The event took place in the context of the 'Journalism Students Communication Session' event organized on the **3rd of May**, the 'Freedom of Press Day' by the Journalism Department.

The students have been exposed to both ideas on writing an academic paper and the writing for the press versus scholarly writing, respectively. All the students that had presentation on the 3rd of May event participated at the workshop and had to prepare their paper according to the critical writing norms. Thus, 12 students have been directly exposed to the critical writing workshop and they had the chance to present the ideas of their works for the 3rd of May, also to explain the way they envisage their topics in the critical writing framework.

At the same time, the number of participants that did not have a presentation in the 'Freedom of Press Day' was of more than 50 students, thus, indirectly, these too have become acquainted with the critical thinking ideology. The Dean of the Faculty of Letters took part in the event and expressed her positive views on critically approaching the topics in the event.