

Classroom Observation: Adam Watkins

February 22, 2008, 1:30-2:20pm

Computer Lab/WTHR 214

Students Present: (forgot to count)

1:25— The previous instructor was still in the room (Cynthia Fortner) talking to Adam while he was trying to prepare for class.

1:34— Adam showed a short film. He asked for all eyes forward, and that he'd stop the film so they could talk about it. The film, *Rejected* by Don Hertzfeldt, claimed to be from the Family Learning Channel. What Adam was presenting to the class was that the film shorts were totally inappropriate for audience, and that was part of why they were so funny. He discussed ethos and their emotional reactions to the short as well as how music was being used.

Adam asked questions rapid-fire. He prompted students to at least fill in one-word answers. He would sometimes leave out the word in a sentence that he wanted them to fill in. *This is an example of...? The authors of cda call this a Were you scared by the guts coming out? No? Why not? What color was used? Yes, red. What emotional responses do you get from the color red? Stop? Yes. Danger? Yes, good. Passion and Love. Yes.* This generated some participation among the students that lead to a discussion of ethos in terms of visuals, thought, music, and color.

1:46— Adam had prepared his computer screen and had posters ready to pull up on the class screen. He began with "Uncle Sam Needs You," then to "Canada's New Army Needs Men Like You," then to a War Bonds poster with a shadow of a swastika nearly touching some children. After each poster, he prodded the students to analyze the visuals.

Adam then showed a contemporary poster--an iRaq/iPod poster with color juxtaposition (hot pink), then a *Juno* movie poster. By this time, the students were becoming more and more involved in the discussion of color, stance of subjects in the poster, fonts, and other elements of the poster (horizontal stripes accentuating the size of Juno's belly and how the poster made them think of the American flag).

Next, Adam pulled up a *Conan the Barbarian* movie poster that had a vertical arrangement. The class discussed the focal point, color, and more ethos. Then they compared the *Conan* poster to a *Star Wars* movie poster, and then to a *TRON* movie poster. The students were seeing that there were lots of similarities among the posters. Adam asked, "What is each of these posters trying to say?" A female student said, "That men are better." This

was the point Adam was trying to get to—how you analyze what the visuals are trying to say.

Next, Adam showed a *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* movie poster which had a totally different arrangement of figures. The *Conan*, *Star Wars*, and *TRON* posters had very similar subject arrangements. The *Harry Potter* poster was a kind of mosaic. Adam then contrasted that poster to a *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* poster—a very dark and uncluttered design. “Who’s the audience?” Adam asked. (The poster caption read *The Rebellion Begins*) He asked the students to notice the positioning of the subjects and what that could mean; what is the message being sent in this poster? At this point the students were doing a better and better job of analyzing the posters, and they began using more of the vocabulary from *cda*.

Last, a *Legally Blonde* movie poster. The pace of the class became faster with each poster. The students became more and more involved with the discussion. Adam didn’t give them a break. He kept firing questions their way—easy questions, really, but by the end of the class, students were offering very good analyses, using vocabulary from the textbook, and picking out some rather sophisticated themes within the posters.

2:20—Adam wrapped up quickly, gave the assignment for the next class, and asked, “Any questions?” He announced what would be due on Monday.

I lost track of time in this class. I tried to keep notes on what the students were saying and how they were reacting, but there was no time. The class was so fast-paced that I had no time to take in the class material, the your manner, AND the students’ reaction to you and the material. What I can say is that the students were *engaged*, alert, and active. I saw no snoozers, and all eyes seemed to be up front.