

IDEA REFLECTION Karen Gergely

Although my IOTA forms have been fairly strong and somewhat consistent throughout my time here at Graceland, I will acknowledge that standardized teaching evaluations can present an inaccurate measurement of classroom assessment, as they tend to give preference to instructors who are more popular, lenient or fit certain profiles. I have found regular in-class assessments more helpful in gauging the climate of the class during the semester and beneficial when steering the method in which I offer information throughout the course.

When administering IOTA's, I always ask my students to be honest in their evaluation of the course and tell me what truthfully worked well and what was justifiably not effective. I ask them to offer pointed suggestions of how assignments and classroom experiences can work better and let them know that they are helping to steer the future of the course.

I believe in taking pedagogical risks to avoid stagnation and promote new ideas, just as I ask my students to take risks in their work for the same reasons. I let my students know before we take the risk together and ask them to help me evaluate throughout the process. Sometimes these risks are widely successful, and other times I/we admit defeat. I value trust and honesty in the classroom among all participants and find students to be genuinely excited to embark on new journeys and equally forgiving when these risks do not go as planned. My IOTA's reflect the outcomes of these risks in varying degrees and I appreciate the honest, anonymous constructive feedback.

The following are a sample of evaluations that reflect my character and teaching effectiveness:

“What to keep” comments:

- Being such an amazing professor! She also creates such a great space to work in, there are boundaries, but we are still free to learn to become artists and have fun while learning. I love listening to music and us getting the freedom to chat with one another as we work. I was also struggling mentally, and this was affecting my work but she kept pushing me and encouraging me and I ultimately ended up doing much better. She never gave up or got frustrated with me. She worked with me one on one when I really needed that extra help and helped me succeed. I can't thank her enough.
- Being a great role model to students and being kind. Great demos, that helped me understand the content
- Holding individual discussions with all classmates
- Karen is a great teacher, she is very helpful and make everyone feel comfortable, she helps every student and guides every single one in the right path and give great advice. I just think that she should keep being the way she is because she is great.

General comments:

- I think that this class was brilliant and very well done, it was extremely informative and hands on I think continue with the open talks and the assignments really helped students learn how to understand art.
- I am a history nerd and being able to learn about the history of art was something that I didn't think I was going to enjoy, but I actually ended up loving it. I also love how Karen uses icebreakers before class to get everyone involved. I think that this is a very clever idea because in this class we talk to one another a lot and this is a way to shake the nerves. I also think Karen should keep jamming out to music at the beginning of class. I enjoy this very much and it makes me feel like the classroom is a safe place where we are able to express ourselves!
- The roleplaying is fun, engaging and is actually teaching me instead of just sitting and watching a slideshow every day. The slideshows you do are helpful and fun and I like learning about the different pieces and time periods. It's also helpful to do recaps of the lessons the next class because it helps the information stick in my brain."
- This course was my favorite! They should continue the body in place project. The journal seemed like a big task, and I think that I have pushed myself to be more creative.
- I really liked all of the projects that we did. I genuinely cannot think of a single thing that I disliked and the projects that we did this semester really pushed me to get out of my comfort zone and I am a better artist because of it. You should keep doing the parade. That was fun.

Largely my IOTA's have confirmed that the classroom studio is a safe and bold space. In addition to guiding students through rigorous academic content, I want students to feel seen and heard, I want them to feel as if they can be themselves and that the matter as individuals and part of a larger community. Although comments like "Karen Gergely is perfect," are totally silly, and a little flattering, I do think they come from a place where students feel like I care about them and who they are as individuals. I consider that a win.

I've used some of the comments from my IOTAs to make substantive changes in my approach to teaching. For example, I've learned to be more direct in my assignment writing and expectations of students when giving assignments after receiving several comments asking me to do so, and I have implemented the consistent use of rubrics for major projects to give students a clearer more concise understanding of these expectations. I've also significantly altered, and at times eliminated, entire assignments based on feedback and lengthened assignments that students noted were too rushed. I really value constructive feedback and hope I can continue to refine my teaching process as a result.

As many classes are new due to the restructure, feedback has been really helpful when planning assignments and seeing what works. I ask students throughout the semester, and again at the end, about what assignments we should keep, and which ones need a change/refresh. Students are honest and I take all of this into account. A big change that I made last semester that was not noted on my IOTA reflections was in my late work policy. I implemented 2 flex days for students

to turn in small assignments late throughout the semester, and other than that, aside from the first two weeks when students are adding and dropping, I won't accept late work unless notification comes from the Dean of Students. So far, this change has been good. I remind students regularly of this policy and I think it has brought a bigger sense of fairness among students. We set deadlines so we can stay on the same page and have class discussions. Since this change, I am getting fewer late assignments and there is a shared space of accountability and fairness in the classroom studio.

I think we as instructors are fallible, and that there are semesters when we take on too much service or scholarship (or both) while carrying an overload, added administrative duties, or dealing with a family crisis. Likewise, I believe that there are semesters that are golden when classes are aligned with each other in every possible way. We live for those classes or semesters, and because teaching is such a deep-seated passion, feel every heartbreak of the difficult times so deeply. My IOTA reflect these golden times, and have assisted in growth, when growth was needed.