Description of classroom, classroom dynamics, student-student and student-instructor interactions:

You began class with a freewrite, asking students “what did you notice?” It was clear that this is a feature of class, as the students were prepared and one student asked a peer before class “what are you going to write about today?” You then reviewed the rules and expectations for their film viewings over the weekend before putting the students in a circle for class discussion.

You began the class discussion with a broad question of what they thought of the Oates short story. The class described it as “disjointed,” “weird,” and “hard to follow.” Because the class noted that the beginning did not seem to fit, your discussion started there. Your follow up struck a nice balance between broad and specific; moreover, during the discussion, you frequently drew out and qualified student responses. For example, when one student made a judgement about Connie from the Oates short story, you followed up with “What do we know about Connie? What details do you see in the text?” This forced the students to ground their claims in the larger text. You employed similar methods when discussing the newspaper article. A student noted that the author “was kind of mean” and you asked “can you point to this in the text?” This led to a productive discussion of the author’s language (particularly the term “dumpy”). You then moved to a comparison of the two texts, contrasting Connie from the Oates short story with the female victims from the article; to keep students text focused you asked them to look specifically at the adjectives used to describe Connie vs. the victims. After the class had sufficiently parsed these comparisons, you brought the discussion back to their initial critiques asking, “for those of you who felt that this was disjointed, how do you feel now?” This allowed the class to think about the ways in which what they initially saw as a flaw actually had an intentional purpose, and those early parts of the text that seemed not to fit were doing important interpretive work.

The discussion then transitioned into a discussion about the serial killer figure, particularly about the makeup the serial killer wears. One of the key things you wanted students to take from these descriptions was that the makeup acted as a mask. You managed to lead students to this conclusion by asking a series of small, building-block questions, attending to language of the text, etc. When students arrived where you hoped they would it was because they (with your guidance) did the labor to get there. You then asked students to directly compare the serial killer figures; this allowed you to broaden the discussion to the rhetorical work both texts were doing, and to build off of students’ own observations.
When the discussion moved into *Mindhunters*, you grounded that in visual analysis, giving students an opportunity to practice their film tools. Students jumped at the chance to do this and when they got stuck you asked specific questions (ex: “did you notice the camera angles?”) You also grounded *Mindhunters* in the historical context, noting that the dialogue in the scene was taken from actual interviews with Ed Kemper. One of the students mentioned he had googled Ed Kemper and had a particular image he wanted the class to see, you pulled up the Google results so that he could share this with the class. The image highlighted (visually) what the class had been discussing, and what the camera angles were working to show—the sheer size of Ed Kemper as a man. Moreover, this validated the student’s personal interest in the topic.

Finally, you broke the class into groups and had each group fill out a part of a large grid comparing the three texts they watched/read. You explicitly told the class to write the grid down, and noted how it would connect to their upcoming essay. This allowed the class to end with something concrete that they could take into their next assignment.

**Strengths:**

You excel at small group discussion. The discussion I saw was lively and student-driven. You managed to carefully guide students to the main topics that needed to be covered in a way that felt organic. During class discussion you frequently repeated, rephrased, and reframed student contributions. It emphasized that you were actively listening and you modeled synthesis for your students; this practice has clearly been impactful for your students because as class went on, they started making similar moves. In addition, you have an incredibly well-run classroom. Your students seem to have a strong sense of your expectations as well as what they need to be doing to meet those expectations. Finally, your ethos seems to resonate with this class. You employ a degree of dry dark humor that is perfect for a class on the grotesque, and that your class seemed to share. You showed a willingness to engage your students humor and observations. When you introduced the films, one student said “Oh, God” and you asked “Wait, who just said ‘Oh, God?’” This led to a brief discussion of the affective power of the film in question—your humor and genuine interest allowed you to connect with the student and build from the affective response. Finally, your ethos and affect draw students out; students feel comfortable testing ideas in your classroom. Lastly, your ethos and affect made moments of genuine interest incredibly rewarding; when you said “oh! Explain!” after a student made a comment, the class brightened because they recognized they had touched on something fruitful. Your enthusiastic praise is earned, and it’s clear that students are invested in earning it.

Thanks again for letting me observe such a fantastic class!

Elizabeth