

Student Recommendation Letters

The following are three recommendation letters that I have received from past students in support of my application to the Truly Innovative Teaching Award at the Teaching Academy /New Mexico State University (NMSU). In their letters, my students talked about my project of filmmaking as pedagogy for social change that I implemented in the first-year writing course, ENG 111: Rhetoric and Composition. In 2015, the Teaching Academy awarded me their most prestigious award; the Truly Innovative Teaching award, for my efforts in implementing filmmaking as pedagogy across the curriculum at NMSU, making me the first and only Teaching Assistant (TA) to have received it so far.

Student Letter 1

Dear Teaching Academy,

At the start of the Fall 2014 semester a class of diverse Engineering Freshmen walked into Kefya Diab's English 111 class. Among them was myself and it was evident that no one knew each other, so we sat in uncomfortable silence. Then Miss Diab walked in with an extremely high enthusiasm and this was the beginning of what I believed to be the most joyful and important class anyone of us would take in our college time. The ways in which Miss Diab taught were truly electrifying. I recall our first day, she got us together and had us write about how we see ourselves as writers. I started thinking that I lacked passion in my writing and I can imagine that's how most of us felt, being an engineer doesn't exactly entail being a good writer. Boy were we wrong and it was Miss Diab who showed us why. She showed us that being an engineer was more than just that, she taught us how to open up and to be more comfortable. She did this by getting everyone involved during conversations, even though I'll admit there were times I didn't want to speak; sometimes I just wouldn't know the subject matter. However; that never got us off the hook because Miss Diab had a way of connecting the subject to a story of her own and after she would have us tell a story that went along. This was memorable to me because not only did it start to loosen up the class but we all started to gain a better understanding of what Miss Diab was trying to teach us and I will take that lesson on with me because I truly believe it will help with any subject.

Miss Diab also always had us interacting with one another. She had us get into groups and create a promotional video; this project served many different functions to the class. It first taught us how to work together to achieve a goal. Secondly these videos are what we got to write about for our rhetorical analysis; I thought this was a great innovation because we had access to the sources of the videos which greatly improved our work on those rhetorical analyses. At the time we just saw it as fun interaction and help with projects and it was making the class even more enjoyable until soon as least for me it was the only class I looked forward to going to. At the end of the semester we realized everything Miss Diab was teaching us went beyond our English class and was honestly going to be more valuable to our engineering futures than any engineering class could be. She taught us how to socialize enthusiastically, how to work with people effectively to achieve a purpose, and most importantly, how to be passionate in what we do, with everything that we do. Miss Diab is a teacher I will look back on and credit success to her and I will never be able to thank her enough.

Regards,

Troy Lawton

800574920

tlawton8@nmsu.edu

Student Letter 2

To: The Teaching Academy Advisory Board/ New Mexico State University

Re: Letter of Support/ The Truly Innovative Teaching Award

Dear Teaching Academy Board Member,

I would like to support my past professor, Ms. Kefaya Diab, in her application to receive the Truly Innovative Teaching Award (2015). This previous semester (fall 2014) I was enrolled in her Rhetoric and Composition class, where I gained skills that will be helpful to me throughout my academic career. Specifically, the most challenging, entertaining, and useful project we were assigned was Ms. Diab's filmmaking project.

The project Ms. Diab requested of us was to work in groups to create a 60 second rhetorical film. Upon hearing of this assignment, I was filled with excitement, but also apprehension, as this sounded like a very daunting task. As a class of engineering students, Ms. Diab tailored the assignment to our interests, requiring that our films be related to engineering topics. One additional requirement, was the inclusion of interviews in our film. This project offered a new medium for rhetoric that most of the class had never tried before, or even thought of. Because filmmaking was a new experience for many of us, it was a challenging, but also extremely fun project. Its uniqueness made me and my peers much more interested and excited about learning about and creating rhetorical artifacts.

The topic of my group's film was why students should become engineers. To convince our audience of this, we chose to interview several engineering department heads and highlight their careers throughout our video. Along with being innovative, challenging, and fun, this project gave me confidence to interview and speak with professors: a skill that will benefit me through both my academic career and the rest of my life. Obtaining the skill and confidence to preform interviews is, I believe, the most important skill I gained from this project. However, my favorite aspect of the project was learning more about filmmaking. Though it is not an essential skill, I am excited to use what I have learned about filmmaking in future academic projects or for fun.

Thank you for your time, and please consider Kefaya Diab's filmmaking project when choosing a winner for this award.

Sincerely,

Sophia Bailey

sobailey@nmsu.edu

(575)520-8670

Student Letter 3**To: The Teaching Academy Advisory Board/ New Mexico State University****Re: Letter of Support/ The Truly Innovative Teaching Award**

Dear Sir or Madam,

As a past student of Ms. Kefaya Diab, I'd like to support her application to receive the Truly Innovative Teaching Award (2015) for her filmmaking project in the Rhetoric & Composition class that she taught in fall 2014. I feel that Ms. Diab's innovation in having her students make videos to better understand rhetorical analysis has made a big impact on our learning in and enjoyment of the class. When we were given this project, we were placed into teams of 3-4 people and were encouraged to brainstorm topics in the field of engineering that we wanted to persuade people on. After topics had been chosen, it was necessary to think about the audience for our videos and the sources we would use to obtain information. One source of information we used was an interview we conducted with a knowledgeable person in our subject area. This was my favorite part of the project, because it allowed me to learn more about different aspects of engineering. In class, we spent some time examining the ways that factors such as music and camera angles made in our messages. The areas of logos, pathos, and ethos were the main areas focused on. With information compiled and filming tactics planned, we produced our videos.

After each video had been made, individuals chose a video made by a different team on which to write a rhetorical analysis. These analyses were based on the information given in the video as well as the ways that other aspects of the video appealed to the target audience.

Teamwork played a very important role in the project. Working in groups allowed for collaboration and delegation of the work that needed to be done. At the end, we gave grades to our teammates based on their participation and contribution to the final product. This allowed for reflection on how well the team worked together and on how work was split up and completed.

Through this project, I have become much more aware of the place that rhetoric has in the world, that it is not only present in literature, but also in commercials and even in day to day speech. This knowledge will be useful for the rest of my life as I participate in rhetorical situations in literature, speech and in other mediums such as film. Through this project, Ms. Diab has empowered her students to participate in rhetorical communication outside of just writing.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my knowledge; if you have any questions, you are welcome to contact me by phone at (303) 819-3042 or email at hmj2000@nmsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Hannah Johnson