

My Assistant Teaching Experience
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An Honors Project (ID 499)

by

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their first encounter with radio production equipment. I'll have to admit that I'm looking forward to getting started. This will give me an opportunity to see what I'm capable of in regards to teaching. Mrs. Carlson has suggested that we find a time when we can meet and review the production boards together. This sounds like a great idea. Mrs. Carlson will know that I have an understanding of the equipment and I'll know it too.

9/10

Mrs. Carlson and I went through the Ampro board together today. She demonstrated all of the operation procedures to me in the manner I will need to present them to the students in our first lab on Thursday. I feel confident about this first lab because all of the procedures we covered are pretty much routine for me. My production experience from advanced audio production should help me a lot in this respect. However, in talking with Mrs. Carlson, I have become aware of one important element I may be overlooking as I prepare for the first lab. This element is the level of experience most of the people will bring with them to the lab. Mrs. Carlson has stressed that many of the students won't have any production experience at all. She has told me to remember the first time I was exposed to radio production equipment. Her advice to me is to keep my presentation as simple as possible and to allow several individuals to actually do the procedures I will be demonstrating. Hopefully, my demonstration of the equipment and how to use it will be basic enough for everyone to understand. I know I understand it, but if I can't

explain it in a manner that they will understand, I won't be doing my job.

9/11

Today, I spent a little bit of time on the McMartin board. It is the other production board available for use by T-COM students. In working with this board I have discovered that I like the Ampro board and am more comfortable working on it. Mrs. Carlson had asked me to decide which board I wanted to demonstrate to my half of the class tomorrow.

9/12

Well, this is the day of our first lab period. I feel excited and pretty nervous at this point. I went to bed last night as calm as ever. In fact, this morning is the first time I've been nervous at all. Right now I'm telling myself that its good to be nervous before I start. Hopefully, once I get started I'll be all right. I guess the major reason I'm worked up over this lab today is because it'll be the first chance I'll have to see if I'm any good at teaching. If not, I may have to change my future plans. I really want to do well today.

Unfortunately, my nervousness stayed with me throughout the lab period today. I never let it build to the point of breaking my presentation, but it was there. I am not sure how obvious my nervousness was, at least, not with the first group. I tried to make it work for me by repeating myself often and asking if they understood everything I was explaining. Luckily, I did not make

any mistakes when I went through their first assignment which is a DJ show. I got my cart done on the first try and put the rest of the show together without any breaks. In fact, other than my nervousness, I am pleased with the job I did with the first group. I answered all of their questions and got through the basics without any major disasters.

However, this was not the case with the second group. I started out with the same level of nervousness but soon discovered a situation that would add to that level. I had failed to take into account that the second group would have already gone through the procedures of radio board operation with Mrs. Carlson in the other room. I quickly discovered that they already knew just about everything that I was going to tell them. Fortunately, I was able to explain the basic differences in the radio boards without any mistakes. However, my luck didn't hold out when I went through the DJ assignment. I started off by making a mistake while recording my cart. This in itself wasn't so bad. I simply used it as an example of what they would do if they had to start over. The only bad part was that it probably made me a little more nervous and forced me to rush a little bit more than I should have. The end result was an even more embarrassing mistake. I explained how to use the remote controls for the reel-to-reel tape machines. I told them how to put the machine in pause and then hit the record and play buttons at the same time for recording. I explained how this would enable them to just release the pause button when they were ready to record

their radio project. I then proceeded to go through the project until I played my cart with no result. I quickly discovered that I had left the volume down. I told them that this was a problem that would cause them to stop recording if it occurred during the production of their projects. At almost the same instant, I realized that I had failed to release the reel-to-reel tape machine from pause. Not only had I made the mistake with the cart volume but I hadn't even been recording the project in the first place. I am not sure how they took this blunder of mine. Sure, it was entertaining and everyone laughed which was fine, but I guess I am worried about the damage I may have done to my credibility. I really want to do a good job as an assistant teacher. If I can't teach well here, I may not be able to anywhere else. Of course, I'm not about to give up because of one bad experience. After all, I did do an acceptable job with the first group. I guess I'm just realizing that I may have been a little over-confident starting out. My next problem may involve building enough confidence to get over my nervousness.

9/19

Today I will have my second meeting with the lab class. This lab will be a lot different from last week's. Instead of a large group, I will be teaching each student how to edit audio tape one-on-one. I think this will be a lot easier for me. As you recall, last week I was a little nervous. I am hoping that most of that nervousness was a result of being in front of a large group of people and having the responsibility of teaching them something without screwing it up. This week it won't be a

large group and I am not nearly as worried about making mistakes. In the first place, I have had a lot of audio tape editing experience from working with sound in the Theatre Department. Perhaps more importantly, I have realized why I was putting so much pressure on myself last week. Through my experiences this quarter I intend to determine whether or not to pursue a career in teaching. Therefore, doing a good job is of major importance to me. I have convinced myself that doing a good job here will mean that I'll be a success as a teacher in the future. Unfortunately, I also have a bad tendency for considering the reverse of that statement. I guess I'm afraid that if I don't do well here I won't do well in the future either. I need to keep reminding myself that this is truly a learning experience for me. I need to learn from my mistakes as well as my triumphs.

Luckily, during this quarter I'll get more than one chance to learn from the radio section. After next week, Mrs. Carlson's half of the class will move on to the film section while the other half will join us for the radio section. Once again, I will have the opportunity to demonstrate how to operate the Ampro radio production board. This time I hope I can avoid all of the nervousness I encountered during my demonstration last time. It should be a lot easier for me since I will be doing the same thing I have already done. Therefore, I should be a little more comfortable. In addition, I believe that the opportunities I have had to assist some of the students with their projects, during these first three weeks, will also prove to be a source of

don't doubt my ability to judge a good edit, I'm just a little leary of taking the responsibility for assigning a grade to a fellow student. I guess I'm just afraid they will all be borderline edits.

As it turned out, the grading wasn't that bad. Mrs. Carlson had a clear cut grading system set up. I just reviewed my notes and the tape each student worked on. In fact, I only feel bad about two grades I gave out. Those of course, were the low ones. I had two people who made their edits in the middle of words. Needless to say, they didn't sound good, I tried to justify giving them a better grade but their work wouldn't have reflected it. I'd be happy if everyone could have done a perfect job. Unfortunately, that isn't a very realistic possibility as I am slowly discovering.

9/26

For today's lab, I will only be required to run the tape recorder and make comments as we listen to the finished DJ shows in class. I can't think of too many problems that could arise from this assignment - certainly nothing to get nervous over. However, Mrs. Carlson has told me that she expects verbal evaluation from me on the tapes as we listen to them in class. I don't think that this will be too difficult of an assignment. She has said she will be pointing out the good things and mentioning some of the mistakes without being too critical. I think I should be able to do the same. I'll also be proctoring their first exam. Again, this won't be difficult. This kind of

break is nice, it gives me a chance to relax before we start over again next week with a new group of students. Right now, I'm looking forward to that time. It will be my second chance to explain the Ampro board. Hopefully, I can do it with a little less nervousness this time.

Well, lab was extremely smooth today. I played a few of the DJ show tapes and had no trouble making comments on their content. In fact, I felt quite comfortable in front of everybody today. I can attribute most of that feeling to the fact that I wasn't responsible for most of what was going on. Sure, I played the tapes, but Mrs. Carlson was in charge. That made me feel a lot better. Of course, the fact that I am a little more familiar with people's faces and names also helped. In a way, it's too bad that I won't be able to try my hand at teaching again in front of these people. Knowing them a little better could be a great help to me.

By the way, I took the same exam that everyone else was taking. I got an 88 out of 100. I would have been happier with at least a 90, but I guess I can say that I remembered most of the material without studying. This should be a source of confidence.

9/27

The test grades are posted. Unfortunately, some of the people didn't do well. As a matter of fact, five flunked and five received a "D". I'll have to admit that I find those grades

to be a little surprising. I guess I expected everyone to do really well on the exam. Mrs. Carlson, on the other hand, wasn't as surprised by the results. She said that she would have been happier if there had been more A's (there were only 3), but that this distribution basically followed a Bell curve. Some will always do well and others won't be as successful, but the majority fall somewhere in the middle. The test scores are a good reflection of this principle.

10/2

It is time for another radio lab. I've spent about an hour and a half today practicing the DJ show I'll use as a part of my demonstration. Once again, I'm a little nervous, but I am also feeling more confident. My trial run-throughs have all gone pretty well. I keep telling myself that I know how to do this and can do it pretty well. I also can look back at the lab three weeks ago and realize that I did get through it. Basically, it comes down to my knowing that I can do it and now just doing it without being too nervous. I really feel excited about this lab. It will be my second chance at teaching in front of a group.

I made it through without getting nervous. I feel great! I made sure I was calm before I went into the room to start. I think the practice time I put in this morning helped a great deal. I felt confident that I would do everything and do it right. I think keeping my confidence level high was the key to avoiding any nervousness. Throughout my presentation

I kept reminding myself of the fact that I was just reviewing everything that I already knew how to do and had just done successfully a few hours ago. I felt great. I just hope I didn't come across as an upstart know-it-all. After all, I am only a teaching assistant. On the other hand, it is extremely important to me to do well. Today I felt good about what I accomplished. The only negative part of my experience in lab would have to be the lack of enthusiasm I encountered from my students. They really didn't appear to be that interested in what I was teaching. Perhaps they already felt comfortable with the equipment. Or, it could be that they aren't very concerned with the assignment at this point. Whatever the case, I hope I didn't encourage this attitude with my confident presentation.

10/7

Today I will be teaching half of the class how to manually edit audio tape. Mrs. Carlson will be teaching the other half. In addition, I will be evaluating each of my students based on how well they perform the process. Because of a conflict with the other 201 section, Mrs. Carlson and I will be forced to break our regular 2 hour lab time on Wednesday into 2 one-hour sessions today and tomorrow. This is of no particular consequence to me other than teaching on two consecutive days. I suppose this might give me a little bit of an idea what it's like to teach on a regular basis. On the other hand, I will be teaching the same thing on each day. Actually, this would be an advantage if I were still nervous about being in front of the students.

However, I believe I overcame my nervousness last week. In fact, between demonstrating editing or demonstrating the radio production board I'm probably more comfortable with editing. Therefore, I would expect today to go fairly well.

Well today's lab certainly turned out to be one that I'll remember for quite a while. I had expected it to go fairly well. I hope it did for everyone else, but I personally had a rotten time. Maybe I wasn't in a great mood to begin with, but I know I would have enjoyed the lab a lot more if one student in particular hadn't been there. I started off by going through the editing procedure in front of the entire group as I have in the past. Everything went pretty well. In fact, I thought I might be in for a good day because I had one student who really appeared to understand the procedure completely. I was rather encouraged because of the positive feedback he was giving me. After I completed my demonstration, I asked the first person in the group to go through the procedure I had outlined and complete an edit for me. This of course is where I evaluate them on their ability to edit. Basically, I just sit back and watch. I'd answer questions if they asked, but for the most part they are on their own. Unfortunately, the guy who had understood everything took it upon himself to coach the person doing the editing. I let the first few comments go, thinking that he wouldn't continue. After he did, I politely suggested that he should let the person do it without his help. Evidently, I hadn't made

myself clear because he persisted. This situation presented me with a problem. I was determined to get this guy to stop his coaching without making it obvious to everyone else that I wasn't pleased with him. Somehow, telling him to "shut up" flat out didn't seem to be appropriate. Although in looking back that's what I would have loved to have done. Finally, after a couple of suggestions, punctuated by eye contact, that he should cut the coaching he complied. At this point I probably could have overlooked everything without giving it another thought. Unfortunately, this guy had to find another way to draw my attention and disapproval. Mrs. Carlson stopped by to see how I was progressing. I stepped out in the hall in order to talk with her and not disturb the person editing. When I returned I found the very same guy, who had just finished making a commotion, up to his old tricks. This time he was playing with the microphone channel on the board. By itself this was out of line, but when you couple it with the fact that he was also cutting off the monitor of the person editing with his exploits it becomes downright rude. I didn't lose my temper or even yell at him but there is no way I can overlook his know-it-all attitude and rude behavior. I talked with Mrs. Carlson and she reminded me that we will be evaluating each student at the end of the quarter based on attitude and competence. She advised me to remember this guy at that time.

10/8

This will be the second day in a row that I will be teaching

a number of students how to manually edit audio tape. I will be extremely happy if today is not nearly as eventful as yesterday. Actually, I can't imagine anything like that happening again in the near future. My expectations for today are just to get through without any problems. I would also like to enjoy the editing session, if that is possible.

Well, I got what I had hoped I would get. The editing session went smoothly with no major problems. I'll have to admit that I feel much better today at this time than I did yesterday. I guess the only drawback I can think of is that I don't have much to write about this time. I am encouraged by the fact that I haven't had any problems with nervousness lately.

Mrs. Carlson has told me that she will have the first group of radio projects graded by tomorrow. She said that she would like for me to listen to them and read her comments.

10/9

I am making an entry today not as a result of any direct contact I have had with the students in the 201 class, but as a result of my feelings after listening to their graded projects and reading the comments Mrs. Carlson made concerning these projects. From time to time, the people I have talked with concerning my plans of pursuing a teaching career have advised me that I probably would need a little practical experience before I could get a job. Well, after today for the first time I am inclined to take that advice a little more seriously. I have no

doubt that I could handle all of the technical aspects of teaching radio and television at this point. However, after I read Mrs. Carlson's comments, which were for the most part based on opinions she has developed from her years of experience in radio, I can see how my lack of practical experience could be a real handicap to me. At this point, I am not sure what this realization will mean to me in terms of my future plans. However, I do recognize that it will merit some serious thought. In looking at the grades, I was surprised to discover very few "A's". I feel that if I had been grading the projects I probably would have given them higher marks. However, when I examine my reasons for that statement I am once again reminded of how much a factor experience would play in my grading. I would be forced to concentrate on evaluating the students more on technical construction rather than technique. Mrs. Carlson, on the other hand, because of her experience in radio can evaluate them on both aspects. In a sense, without practical experience, I probably couldn't make valid value judgements on technique. Mrs. Carlson's judgements are valid because she can base them on her practical experience.

10/13

I got a call from Mrs. Carlson this afternoon. She informed me that she gave birth to a baby boy last night. This is great news not only from her standpoint but from mine as well. I will have the opportunity to oversee the 201 class for the first two days of the week. I am rather excited about this opportunity.

First off, it has come at a good time. The class will be completing an "Each One Teach One" assignment during the first two days. In this assignment they are each assigned a term from their reading to research and report on in class. Basically, they will be doing all of the teaching. I will have the responsibility of taking roll, keeping order and filling in anything they might leave out. I will also keep them up to date on what will be coming up. Mrs. Carlson has provided me with a sheet detailing everything I will need to go over. I do not foresee any problems. I will spend my office hours tomorrow reviewing all of the terms to be covered during the day. Hopefully, everything will go well. In fact, the only dilemma I face is whether or not to wear a tie.

10/14

Class went pretty well today. I told everyone that Mrs. Carlson had her baby and that I would be supervising class today and tomorrow. Luckily, I didn't get any negative reactions. I then outlined what they would be doing for the rest of the week and took roll. From this point, we moved on to the assignment for the day. Half of the class had been assigned a term that they were supposed to research and then report on in front of everyone. Basically, my role was to make sure that everything ran smoothly, which it did. I was also on the lookout for any errors that might need correcting. As it turned out, I didn't find anything on which to comment. I am pretty sure that this is because everyone covered their topic accurately. Yet, I do think I would feel better if I had made a few comments. I guess I feel

that way because I am supposed to be the teacher right now. On the other hand, the assignment is for them to do the teaching. I should remind myself that I am really only responsible for keeping order. Under that criterion I believe I did a good job.

10/15

Today, I hope to maintain the same level of order we had yesterday. They will be completing the second half of the "Each One Teach One" assignment. I will be happy if everyone shows up and treats the assignment seriously. I was blessed with that scenario yesterday.

I was pleased with the class today. There were only two people who did not show up. I find that to be very encouraging. I probably would have been depressed if only half of the class had bothered to come. Today's attendance shows that they are interested and concerned with their grades even when they are faced with a pinch hitter. Carrying this analogy a little further, I made my first appearance at the plate in a win or lose situation. Just before class I discovered that Dr. DeVoe, the professor who has taken over Mrs. Carlson's advanced audio production class, had extended the deadline on the projects his new students had been working on. Those projects were due today, which is the same day the 201 students were supposed to turn in their projects. I had been hearing complaints from the students about not being able to get production board time before the deadline. Therefore, after talking with Dr. Richardson, I

decided to extend the 201 radio project deadline until Friday at 5:00 p.m. I told the class that they would lose a letter grade if they didn't meet this deadline. My only uncertainty in this action is Mrs. Carlson's reaction. I wanted to call and consult with her before I did anything. However, when I talked with Dr. Richardson, he advised me that Mrs. Carlson would probably appreciate her privacy at this point. Time will tell if I made a hit or struck out with my decision.

10/18

All but one of the 201 students turned their DJ projects in by the 5:00 p.m. deadline. I was happy to have that many students turning them in on time.

My last official act as the sole instructor of Mrs. Carlson's section of the 201 class will be Monday when I will give them the radio test. I will have to get it graded at the computer center and then post the scores. After Monday, Dr. Richardson will be teaching both sections. I will become his assistant teacher for the television production unit which will last for the rest of the quarter. I will have to admit that I'll miss not being in charge of the class. However, I realize that I would be unable to continue in that position without a lot of hard work. The responsibilities of preparing a lecture would be a little more than I could handle with my other classes and work. In that respect, it was very fortunate for me that Mrs. Carlson had her baby when she did. It gave me the opportunity to be in charge of the class at a time when the responsibilities were not

beyond what I could handle at this point. I have enjoyed this opportunity.

10/21

My major responsibility for today was to give the 201 class the test over the radio section. I picked the exam up at Mrs. Carlson's when I dropped off the radio projects on Friday. Mrs. Carlson will evaluate and grade all of the projects during the next few weeks. I had to get the exam copied in the TCOM office and pick up some answer sheets. After that, I only had to make sure that the room to be used for the test was unlocked. The exam itself went really well. I had a few people ask me about a couple of the questions. Luckily their inquiries were easy to answer. I was happy with the overall outcome of the day.

10/23

Today I will be going to the first television lab with Dr. Richardson. In talking with him earlier today, he told me that he would probably lecture during the first half of the period and then give the class an opportunity to get some hands on experience with the television studio equipment. Dr. Richardson said that he will have me help in presenting and demonstrating this equipment before the students actually circulate and use it themselves. I don't anticipate any difficulties in carrying out this task. I have had plenty of volunteer experience at WIPB Channel 49 working with television equipment. Therefore, I should be well prepared for the lab class today.

The lab today went really well. I was comfortable with the demonstration I gave to the students on the proper way to operate a television camera. In fact, I really wasn't nervous at all. I think my total lack of nervousness can be attributed to a combination of two factors. First off, I am very familiar with the proper way to use a television camera because of my volunteer work at WIPB. This fact allowed me to have a great deal of confidence in myself and what I was saying. Secondly, by this time in the quarter I have become familiar with a majority of the people in the class. I believe that it is my familiarity with several individuals in the class that is helping me to feel comfortable in front of the group as a whole. These two factors have helped me to feel confident and secure in what I am doing.

After the relative ease in which I got through the television lab, I thought it would be appropriate at this time to write a little more concerning my feelings about teaching. In my last journal entry I wrote about the confidence I had in myself during my demonstration of camera techniques. After this experience, I think I have developed a better understanding of where my nervousness was coming from during my radio demonstrations. I don't think I was lacking in confidence as far as my ability to use the radio equipment. However, I can see quite clearly that I didn't have an abundance of confidence in my ability to actually demonstrate and present the equipment to a group of people. I think that this realization of my lack of confidence was made

more difficult because of my present experience in theatre. I guess I expected to be at ease in front of the class because of my past acting classes. I realize now that I failed to take into account the fact that I've never really been in a true teaching situation. I think I can attribute a lot of my nervousness to the uncertainty of doing something of great importance to me for the first time. This has become apparent to me after I considered the experiences I have had following this first lab encounter. I believe that my level of nervousness declined as a result of my increasing confidence in my ability to teach a group of people. At this point, I feel pretty good about my most current experience in the television lab. I would like to attribute my lack of nervousness to a total confidence in myself. However, I may not be able to honestly make this conclusion until I have an opportunity to try my hand at teaching again in front of a new group of students. I think that the familiarity I have developed with many of the students in the class is also a helpful factor. I guess I won't know how important a factor familiarity is until I teach again in front of people I don't know. Hopefully, I will be able to teach without a great deal of nervousness by remembering what I have been able to achieve this quarter. Based on my experiences I should be able to approach this encounter with a high level of confidence.

10/30

Today in the lab, the class will be divided into five groups of five to six people. Each group will have to produce a five

minute television program as their project for the television section of the 201 class. They will be given most of the 2 hour lab period to meet in their groups and organize themselves. I will be there to circulate and answer questions. I will also try to make suggestions when I can.

Lab today was really easy. I went around offering advice when I thought it was necessary. Hopefully, my advice will be of some use to the students. In addition to giving advice, Dr. Richardson has requested that I make myself available to meet with the TV groups for practice sessions in the black and white television studio. I imagine that this will give me several opportunities to work with smaller groups of students for longer periods of time. I won't necessarily have to do a lot of teaching, but it should afford me a good opportunity to gain more experience in working with groups of students.

11/6

This was the last lab meeting I will have with the 201 class. Next week, they will be producing and taping their shows. I'll be there for the taping, but I'll only be evaluating. At this point, my practice sessions, which is what the lab period today consisted of, have been mixed. Some of the groups are really organized and appear to be well on the way to a good television production. On the other hand, there are a few groups who seem to be lacking in direction and planning. I have attempted to help them out by making suggestions, but once next

week comes, they will be completely on their own.

11/13

Today, I watched several of the groups do their final television productions. Overall, they did a pretty good job. Of course, equipment limitations kept any of the productions from being really outstanding. This makes evaluating them a little tough. I tried to make general comments about the effectiveness of each person in carrying out his/her responsibilities in the television production. I made specific comments whenever I saw things that were particularly good or bad during the productions. So ends the last of my journal entries.

Now that the Fall Quarter has ended, it is time for me to reflect on my experiences and, as I have stated, early attempt to make some conclusion in regard to my future plans. In looking back, I'll have to admit that I am surprised by some of my personal discoveries during the quarter. Before my first meeting with the class I felt fairly confident in my abilities. I was quite amazed when I realized that my pre-teaching confidence had turned into a bad case of nervousness during my first lab session. At that point, I'll admit I wasn't too sure if this project was going to be a very pleasant or rewarding experience for me. Luckily, I was able to settle down and become more comfortable with the class. I believe I have already written about the factors that caused and alleviated my nervousness earlier in my journal. However, now it is appropriate for me to

start making some conclusions as a result of those experiences. My first conclusion is that teaching isn't as easy as I had expected it to be. I began to realize this especially after my first lab session and even throughout the rest of the quarter. I am thankful for the opportunity I had to oversee class for a couple of days completely by myself, but I realize that I might have had a difficult time if Mrs. Carlson hadn't had everything planned out. I'm not selling myself short. I was able to overcome my nervousness and could probably handle giving a lecture with enough preparation. However, that preparation involves some time and work. In my case, it would mean a lot of time and hard work, particularly since I lack practical experience in the broadcast industry. This last statement represents another conclusion that I am making as a result of this project. I had been skeptical of this fact before my project. However, after seeing situations in which a teacher is forced to make judgements based on opinion, I now believe it would be desirable to make those judgements based on opinions formed from practical experience gained through working in the broadcasting industry. Therefore, at this point it appears to be clear that I should not pursue a career in teaching until after I have been able to gain some practical experience in the broadcasting industry.