

March 6, 2023

Dear Shirin,

It is with a smile on my face that I sit down to review Douglas Holtz's D2L pages for his Spring, 2023 course: WRIT 331-51, Writing in your Major: Focus on College of Nursing and Health.

Doug and I have worked together at Metro for decades. We initially met, I think 1997, as faculty tutors in the Center for Academic Excellence. Something I've always admired about Doug is his ability to listen intently to students, and to challenge them to love writing. I offer this bit of history because when Doug asked me if I would review his D2L pages, I knew to selfishly welcome the challenge because I always learn from Doug.

After gaining access to Doug's D2L pages and reviewing content, I found answers to the five following questions (and ratings 1-5 in red): rating scale 1-5 (5=excellent):

1. Is this a student-centered course?	5
2. Is there an emphasis on the process of learning?	5
3. Is there course flexibility and variety?	4
4. Is there a use representative content?	3.5
5. Are there open lines of communication?	5

To answer the first question, I closely reviewed his course syllabus, and also the first eight weeks of his D2L materials to determine if this appeared to be a student-centered course. Throughout the syllabus and the D2L announcements/materials Doug offers consistent reminders to students of his availability, encouraging students to visit during regular office hours. Doug specifically addresses the importance of questions, sending a clear message that no question is irrelevant.

The D2L design of this course is easily accessible. One of the things I was looking for was equity in design, and I noticed the template Doug uses is similar to an equity-focused template made available to educators by Duke University. Expectations for the course are clearly stated.

Focusing on question 2, (Is there an emphasis on the process of learning?) it is clear to me Doug focuses on a common-sense chronological approach to academic writing. Having students start the course with a reflective essay focusing on an influential person in their life, with few restrictions (due week three), leaves room for community building, a key component in setting the tone for the 15-week semester. As assignments progress, the ante's upped. Doug moves from a reflective essay into a critical essay to include references in APA 7th edition style. Because this is a nursing-focused WRIT 331, Doug knows firsthand by working with nursing students as a faculty tutor that APA must be anally accurate according to nursing faculty requirements.

Other assignments such as the lit review, learning to conduct an interview, reference quizzes, journal entries, participation in weekly online discussions are key components for the process of writing a research paper totaling 8-12 pages.

Focusing on question 3, (Is there course flexibility and variety?) I would say there is a limited amount of flexibility in the schedule stating, “No late assignments will be accepted!!!” However Doug does provide a reasonable explanation as to why this deserves three exclamation marks. Writing is a process!!! APA reference lists improve over the 15-week course while students are researching topics for their lit reviews, which then leads students into developing an equitable survey/interviewing process. Having these assignments in place on strict due dates makes sense. You do mention that “under extreme circumstances...” there are exceptions to assignment deadlines. There is some flexibility offered for extra credit assignments. The variety of assignments are important for content building with the end result being a well-researched paper. One observation I would like to include here is the authentic encouragement Doug provides his students about embracing the writing process. He encourages students to “have fun.” He also reminds them that the writing process is recursive, in spite of the chronological delivery.

Focusing on question 4, (Is there a use of representative content?) I feel as though I don’t have enough information to evaluate this. The required reading for the course: *Real Texts: Reading and Writing Across the Discipline* by Ward and Vander(2012) is conveniently offered to the students on e-reserve, which is a great way for our students to save money, but my question to Doug: is this reading material that represents our students? I don’t know how long you’ve used this text, but this might be one area I would encourage re-view.

Focusing on question 5, (Are there open lines of communication?) Doug encourages his students to work with him. He’s able to do this through various accommodating measures. My history working with Doug represents his dedication to students, and his dedication to writing scholarship. My thoughts regarding Doug’s pedagogy/teaching/personal development in 2023 supports/endorses a very positive rating, with a recommendation on re-viewing question 4. Thank you for this opportunity to contribute my critique of Doug Holtz’s 2023 PDR. I believe Metro’s students who learn from Doug learn a lot, just like I did.

Respectfully,

Suzanne Nielsen
Associate Professor
Writing, Literature, and Language

Holtz, Douglas A

To:

• Nielsen, Suzanne R
Mon 3/6/2023 3:35 PM

Suzanne, I would just like to thank you for your quick and professional turn-around finishing this memo. Now I know whey I admire you and look to you as my mentor. Your remarks are just what I was looking for. I liked the way you organized the memo and got specific about pros & cons. Perfect! While I don't know the Dean very well, I think this is exactly what she wants (Evidence of teaching effectiveness), and this is a good way to reflect on what real professionals think about one aspect of my teaching.

If you could sign the memo, scan it and email it back to me, I will include it in the many documents I need to get to the Dean.

Thank you so very much,
Duggy