

December 20, 2007

I attended the Thursday November 29, 2007 8am section of Soc 101 taught by Antwan Jones. Antwan first announced his office hours for exam week and conducted other quick housekeeping business. Then, with a short Power Point presentation he introduced a new book that had been assigned for the next two weeks, *The Culture of Fear* by Barry Glassner. Antwan tended to read from the slides, which is one of the problems with using Power Point, but as the class progressed he did contribute additional material and examples not on the slides. After the introductory presentation, he had some students, for extra credit, use a creative pedagogical tool that he termed the "fishbowl" technique. Following individual student reports, which varied significantly in quality, three different groups of students presented a discussion among themselves, in front of the class (hence the "fishbowl"), of a chapter from Glassner's book to the class. The first three chapters were presented during this class session, and after each presentation, Antwan offered a summary of the important points. This was a creative way to involve the class in the questions raised by Glassner. Generally, it was quite successful. Students paid attention, partly because individual student participation credit was given for a correct answer to one question posed during one of the presentations. I assume that Antwan had asked a particular student to pose this "two minute response" question.

Specifically, I was very impressed with the respect the class as a whole showed Antwan. I have visited other graduate-student-taught sections of Soc 101 where the students in the back played on their cell phones or read the newspaper throughout the class. There was only one instance of newspaper-reading (which I remarked on to the particular student, much to her embarrassment); all of the students seemed intent on the short beginning lecture of Antwan's and then on the student presentations themselves.

Antwan managed the class well, was organized, and evidenced his own interest in the material. I would caution him to slow down and consciously repeat himself in his lectures, even though he is reading and highlighting what is in his Power Point presentation. Less use of Power Point might help catalyze student involvement in the class. There was never any response when Antwan asked for questions, which to his credit, he did regularly. Antwan is a fine teacher and will become an excellent one when he feels more comfortable away from his slides.

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