


# I C TEACHING : ONE WEEK OF TEACHING VISITS

## Center for Faculty Excellence

The I C  TEACHING : ONE WEEK OF TEACHING VISITS program is intended to be an occasion to support pedagogical community at Ithaca College, and to encourage intentionality and reflection on teaching choices and contexts. These observations are *not* intended as critiques of instructors, nor are they meant to be a way for faculty to gather feedback about their performance. Instead, these classroom observations provide an opportunity for real-world observations and to self-reflect about the pedagogical choices we make as instructors. Observers can ask themselves, “*What did I realize about my own teaching by watching someone else? How did the observation affirm what I do or open a new door to something I want to change?*” Teaching, rather than class content, should be the focus of the observation. Review the following guidelines to make the most of your visit for you and your host. Below you will find:

STEP ONE: BEING A GUEST IN THE CLASSROOM

STEP TWO: OBSERVING FOR MEANING

STEP THREE: SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

### STEP ONE: BEING A GUEST IN THE CLASSROOM

#### VISITOR GUIDELINES. PLEASE BE SURE TO:

- \*Arrive 5 minutes early for the class so as to be as unobtrusive as possible.
  - \*Introduce yourself to the instructor and thank them for opening their classroom to the community.
  - \*Sit in the back so as to not disrupt the classroom seating or conversation.
  - \*Turn off or mute all cell phones and laptops.
  - \*Do not participate in the classroom discussion unless directed to do so by the instructor.
- Many instructors choose to explain briefly the observers’ presence, but this is not required. If the instructor asks you to leave the room for any reason, please do so.

### STEP TWO: OBSERVING TO SELF-REFLECT (Consider 2 or 3 relevant questions.)

#### WHAT TO CONSIDER: LAYERS OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

##### Observe the classroom environment

- \*What is the mood before class begins? During class? The end of class?
- \*How is the classroom arranged and how does this influence teaching and learning?
- \*What identities might the instructor and students share or not have in common? How might these affect classroom interactions?
- \*What kind of rapport exists between teacher and student or between students?

##### Observe the instructor’s techniques

- \*How does the instructor use verbal and non-verbal communication?
- \*How is the class organized and paced? How does this affect student engagement?
- \*What types of questions does the instructor ask, and when?
- \*What skills of presentation/lecture, discussion, or other activities are used?
- \*How does the instructor use classroom media? (boards, slides, video, music, etc.)
- \*How does the instructor motivate students, and how do they respond?

##### Observe the student’s learning behaviors

- \*How are students engaged? (active or passive listening, speaking, writing, note-taking, etc.)
- \*Map the conversation patterns. Who holds the “conversational ball?” Is it student-to-student, student-to-faculty, etc.?
- \*What is the affective dimension to the room? (curious, reflective, elevated, etc.)
- \*What kinds of assessment are occurring? (discussion prompts, writing, reflection on process, quizzes, exams, etc.)

### STEP THREE: SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

While you and the host may or may not have time to talk after the visit, consider the following guide for such an opportunity.

#### *Sample questions for self-reflection*

- What did I learn about my own teaching by watching someone else?
- How did the observation affirm what I currently do- or open a new door to something I want to change?

#### *Sample questions for visitors to ask host...*

- **Reflective questions** such as, "One of the teaching struggles I face is [dealing with different levels of preparation]. How do you deal with this problem?"
- **Philosophical questions** such as, "How has your teaching changed over time?"
- **Pragmatic questions** such as, "How do you prepare before each session?" or "What are some of the choices you made as you prepared for today's class?"

#### *Sample questions for host to ask visitors...*

- **Reflective questions** such as, "One of the ways I try to [foster an inclusive classroom] is \_\_\_\_\_. What do you do?"
- **Philosophical questions** such as, "Who or what has been the greatest influence on your teaching?"
- **Pragmatic question** such as, "What kinds of technologies do you find effective in teaching?"