

James Treat

Teaching Observations
1991 - 2002

University of Oklahoma

Carolyn Morgan, Associate Professor of Sociology and Associate Dean of the Honors College
Karen Sheriff LeVan, Lecturer in Honors and Director of the Writing Assistant Program
Eleanor F. Weinel, Associate Professor of Architecture
Pat Gilman, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Department Chair
Clara Sue Kidwell, Professor of History and Director of the Native American Studies Program

University of New Mexico

Jean Civikly-Powell, Professor of Communication and Journalism and Director of the Teaching Assistant Resource Center
Ruth Salvaggio, Professor of American Studies
Susan Deese-Roberts, Associate Professor of General Library and Director of Education Programs and Services
A. Gabriel Meléndez, Associate Professor of American Studies
Patricia C. Smith, Professor of English
Louis Owens, Professor of English
Ruth Salvaggio, Professor of American Studies
M. Jane Young, Associate Professor of American Studies and Regents' Lecturer

University of California at Santa Cruz

Ann M. Lane, Lecturer in American Studies and Coordinator of Advising

University of California at Berkeley

Jean Molesky-Poz, Lecturer in Native American Studies

Class Observation

Honors 2973, Perspectives on the American Experience: New World Religions
Instructor: James Treat, Assistant Professor of Honors
Observer: Carolyn Morgan, Associate Dean, Honors College
Date: September 27, 2002

This section of Hon 2973, New World Religions, is being taught for the first time this semester. The course is an interdisciplinary survey of indigenous and immigrant traditions that have made a home in America and of American traditions that have found their way to other lands. Course readings include primary texts and scholarly interpretations. Class lectures and discussions are supplemented by guest speakers and audiovisual presentations. Students have the opportunity to deepen their appreciation for American religious diversity and to develop their critical skills for use in academic, professional, and personal settings. Course grades are assigned according to a contract grading system.

James began the class by writing key concepts of the lecture on the board. He then asked the students to turn in their writing assignments and explained that he would e-mail them if there were problems with their topic statements.

The topic for the day was Buddhism. The topic the week before was Jainism, and James began by asking students to compare the two belief systems. I was impressed with the discussion that followed. The students were eager to respond and James called on each student by name. It appeared that all 50 students were in attendance. Even the students on the back row were willing to raise their hand in response to discussion questions.

James did a good job of combining his lecture on the assigned reading with notes from a handout. He challenged the students to try to understand both Jainism and Buddhism from outside their own perspective. He also referred to a past guest speaker's lecture as an aid to understanding the four noble truths of Buddhism.

I found the lecture/discussion to be very enlightening as this is a topic about which I know very little. The lecture was well organized, the questions were well framed, and the students seemed engaged in the subject matter.

At the end of period, James asked for any questions students might have with regard to Buddhism. He then spent some time talking about how to prepare for the midterm (practice) exam. His tips seemed very relevant for Freshmen as they take their first exam in the class.

Overall, I was impressed with the organization and quality of the lecture, the ensuing discussion, and the respect shown to the students.



THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

May 24, 2002

Steve Gillon, Dean
University of Oklahoma
Honors College
1300 Asp Avenue
Norman, OK 73069

Dear Dean Gillon,

I am writing on behalf of Dr. James Treat to discuss his involvement in the Honors Writing Assistant Program. Dr. Treat plays an integral role in the success of the writing program, and I am happy to discuss his contributions.

Dr. Treat has been a real asset in helping students realize the benefits of working with writing assistants. Students in his classes develop positive attitudes toward the program. In turn, his students tend to take advantage of and directly benefit from their work with assistants. Many students have a negative initial impression of the program, and Dr. Treat counters this attitude by helping students realize that feedback from peers concerning one's ability to communicate effectively is an important and even necessary aspect of successful scholarship. In program meetings (for which he has perfect attendance) and in his interactions with students, colleagues, and assistants, Dr. Treat focuses on helping others discuss and understand the difference between seeing an assistant as expert tutor versus as an experienced, fellow writer who facilitates the revision process.

Assessments of Dr. Treat reflected in student evaluations of writing assistants completed at the end of each semester also highlight Dr. Treat's active participation in the program. Two questions on the evaluation ask students to provide suggestions for how to incorporate assistants in future honors courses and offer any additional remarks. On one of this semester's evaluations a student in Dr. Treat's course remarked that assistants "are beneficial to the student and the teacher"—the first time a student has made such a remark about the program. The fact that a student can observe Dr. Treat learning alongside students demonstrates one of Dr. Treat's successes as a teacher: he creates a course structure that facilitates collaborative learning and individual development.

As importantly, Dr. Treat deserves credit for a specific remark students *do not* make about his course. A common suggestion is for assistants and professors to communicate better with one

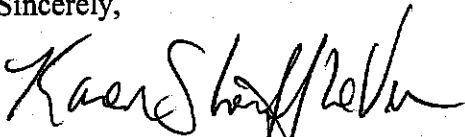
another about the aims of assignments and for professors and assistants to be familiar with one another's responses to student texts. These are suggestions that *do not* occur in evaluations of Dr. Treat's courses and assistants. Instead, students characterize his assistants as well informed and suggest that other courses incorporate assistants in the same manner as Dr. Treat's courses. Students as well as assistants benefit from Dr. Treat's commitment to effective communication, and this is an accomplishment that requires a significant amount of time and effort on his part.

Students in Dr. Treat's class tend to approach writing conferences as opportunities to practice speaking, writing, and thinking in clear and meaningful ways in large part because Dr. Treat conceives of his work with writing assistants in this way as well. Rather than introducing work with an assistant as a course requirement, he presents the assistant as an important part of the learning process offered in the course. He also demonstrates that he values his own relationship with the writing assistant. One way he does this is by meeting with assistants before each writing assignment to clarify its aims and again after each paper to discuss the strengths as well as weaknesses of students' papers.

Dr. Treat has invited me to these assistant-professor meetings as well. One of the things I appreciate most about Dr. Treat's work with students and assistants is that he shares with them how he plans to take advantage of the feedback loop offered by the writing assistant program and then opens himself up for additional feedback. Both assistants and students comment on how they appreciate Dr. Treat's interest in learning about the challenges and rewards of responding to his course material and assignments. Sometimes, for example, he uses their feedback to inform future writing assignments. Other times, he considers the strengths and weaknesses of student papers to modify his interactions with assistants. Dr. Treat has also spoken with me about the strengths and weaknesses of his students' papers to help inform my own work as the program's director, and I have found his feedback very useful. His goal always seems to be to increase student learning by facilitating more meaningful work between students and assistants.

Dr. Treat fosters an attitude toward analysis, writing, and teaching that helps students and assistants take advantage of the learning opportunities involved in student-assistant-professor interactions. By developing courses that facilitate the student-assistant-professor relationship and committing a great amount of time and effort to his communication with assistants Dr. Treat helps make the Writing Assistant Program a valuable learning experience for students. I offer my complete support Dr. Treat's work in the University of Oklahoma's Honors College.

Sincerely,



Karen Sheriff LeVan
Director, Honors Writing Assistant Program



The University of Oklahoma

COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE

10 May 2002

Dr. Steven M. Gillon, Dean
Honors College
University of Oklahoma
Cate Center 5
Norman, Oklahoma 73019

Dear Dean Gillon:

On March 12, 2002, I had the opportunity to observe Dr. James Treat's teaching in his course, HON 2973 Perspectives on the American Experience. I was favorably impressed by both the structure of the course and Dr. Treat's performance in the classroom.

The syllabus for the class was clear and straightforward and the readings selected for the course diverse in content and in point of view. In fact, I was sufficiently intrigued by the syllabus and discussion to acquire three of four texts (the fourth was out of stock) and have since read two of them. In the texts, the Native American Experience is viewed from Indian, male and female, perspectives and from a non-Indian male academic view.

I go into this detail in part because what impressed me significantly in Dr. Treat's classroom performance was his ability to lead the students through a close reading of the text and comparison of point of view with earlier works in the course. They seemed to move back and forth very comfortably under his guidance without his telling them where to go. He framed his questions clearly and the students responded freely. Dr. Treat was very helpful to the students in clarifying their understanding of content, point of view and differences in point of view. Once or twice, I thought he cut off discussion a little before it was concluded but this was clearly for the sake of covering the day's outline.

Having taught a Perspectives course myself, I am well aware of how difficult it can be to work with Freshman students and juggle content, ideas and techniques of reading and writing all at the same time. Dr. Treat seems to me to be an expert juggler making the work seem effortless for both himself and the students. They responded very comfortably to his teaching style and are, I suspect, learning far more than they even realize they are.

Sincerely,

Eleanor F. Weinel
Associate Professor of Architecture

QUESTIONS/FORMAT FOR PEER REVIEW

NAME: James Treat

CLASS TITLE & COURSE NUMBER: Honors 2973; Myth and Popular Culture

SEMESTER: Spring 2001

PEER REVIEWED BY: Pat Gilman

TYPE OF CLASS: Lecture, seminar, discussion section, lecture-discussion

SCORING:

- 5 = Exceptional/clearly superior
- 4 = Excellent/well above average
- 3 = Good/desirable contributions
- 2 = Meets acceptable standards
- 1 = inadequate

1. Clear presentation of concepts

⑤ 4 3 2 1

Remarks: No problem here. Dr. Treat's lecture portion of the class gave a fine outline of California history. He added nice touches like discussing the "racial" mix of the people moving northward with Father Serra.

2. Tied together significant information and major points

⑤ 4 3 2 1

Remarks: Lecture provided historical/social background for the work the students had just finished, and it gave material relevant to the more encompassing goals of the course.

3. Interaction with students/response to student questions

⑤ 4 3 2 1

Remarks: Students seemed comfortable responding to questions and addressing their oral assignment.

4. Use of audio-visual and/or teaching materials (casts, handouts, maps, slides, etc.)

⑤ 4 3 2 1

Remarks: Dr. Treat handed out two maps that helped the students visualize the homelands of California Indians and their density in the state.

5. Supplemental/support materials submitted (list):

5 ④ 3 2 1

Remarks:

Dr. Treat is a fine teacher. The students responded well to their oral part of the class.

Dr. Treat's lecture fit well with the reading, and it was useful and accurate. His lectures contained information and interpretation that were understandable and interesting at several levels - mine as well as other students.

The syllabus I received is just fine. I have made a few comments on it concerning parts that were unclear to me.

Dr. Treat presents a critical viewpoint within American Studies, and it is comforting that he is also such a good teacher.



The University of Oklahoma

NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES

December 18, 2000

To: Steve Gillon

From: Clara Sue Kidwell

Clara Sue

James Treat has asked me to write a brief peer evaluation of his teaching in Honors 2973, which I co-taught with him and Alan Velie this semester. I think James handled the mechanics of the class very well. With three writing assistants' schedules to coordinate, four major writing assignments, which involved rough drafts and final drafts, and two faculty colleagues to confer with, I would have found the logistics of the class daunting, but James kept everything running smoothly and made necessary adjustments when we received an unexpected day off after the Texas game.

His explanations of writing assignments were clear, considering that we presented very broad, conceptual questions for students to address, and he was good at engaging the students in discussion over the assignments. He also encouraged discussion among us as faculty. He was able to comment knowledgeably on points that Dr. Velie and I brought up in our respective presentations, although our interchanges became less frequent in the latter part of the semester when Dr. Velie led the students in a close textual reading of House Made of Dawn and Ceremony, two complex novels.

I enjoyed the experience of teaching with Dr. Treat. He related well to the students, kept the classroom atmosphere relaxed, and encouraged active student participation in the class. His lectures were well organized and substantive. I am very pleased that he is a member of the Honors College faculty.



The University of New Mexico

Department of Communication and Journalism
Communication & Journalism Bldg.
Room 235 West
Albuquerque, NM 87131-1171
(505) 277-5305

Vera Norwood, Chairperson
Department of American Studies
University of New Mexico

March 8, 1999

Dear Vera:

I first met James Treat several years ago, during the UNM New Faculty Orientation program, a program that puts great emphasis on the importance of teaching at UNM. Recently, James invited me to visit his AmSt 550 seminar on Tribal Narratives for the purpose of observing his classroom teaching. I was pleased to do so. I attended the class on March 1, 1999 (from 2:00-3:00 p.m.) and am happy to provide my observations and thoughts.

Prior to starting the class session, James provided an outline (on the board) of items for discussion, including the author's name and six themes. Seated at the table closest to the board and guided by notes, James talked about the life and writings of the author, and showed examples of books and journals relevant to his comments. Nine students were seated around the tables (Ort 313). The information and how it was described was clear, organized and presented in a well-paced manner. His vocal tone was engaging and he made eye contact with the students as he talked about the author's works.

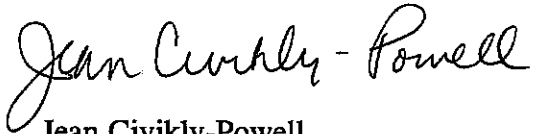
After about 35 minutes, James invited the students to join the discussion and offer their thoughts and impressions. Almost all the students participated during the time I observed. James recognized the students by name and made sure to come back to those wanting to offer additional comments. When relevant, James connected students' comments with the themes outlined on the board. I would describe this part of the class as a focused and spirited discussion.

Based on my observation, I would describe James' lecture-discussion approach as well suited to the content, the graduate level, and the students. Students were attentive and engaged in the discussion. I did not have any reservations about how James taught the class. It was well done.

I was pleased to visit the class, enjoyed seeing several students I have known through my own department and TARC (Teaching Assistant Resource Center), and commented that it had been a productive and constructive learning experience for me.

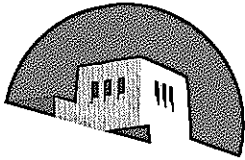
I hope this teaching review will serve the needs of the department. As I told James, I think it is valuable to establish a record of in-class teaching throughout the years, and not just in the semester prior to one's review for tenure and promotion. I commend James, you, and the department for your attention to the quality of teaching provided to your students.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Civikly-Powell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Jean Civikly-Powell
Professor, Communication and Journalism
Director, UNM Teaching Assistant Resource Center
Program Coordinator, UNM New Faculty Orientation

cc: James Treat



The University of New Mexico

Department of American Studies
Albuquerque, NM 87131-1176
Telephone (505) 277-3929
FAX (505) 277-1208

January 30, 1999

TO: Vera Norwood, Chair
American Studies

FROM: Ruth Salvaggio, Professor *RS*
American Studies

SUBJECT: Peer Teaching Evaluation of James Treat,
Assistant Professor, American Studies

As you know, James and I co-taught the American Studies Proseminar last fall semester, and so I wanted to write an official letter for James's file about his teaching. Let me begin by saying that the class turned out to be among the most intellectually stimulating graduate seminars in which I've participated. In part, I think, this is because James and I worked well together, taking on specific assignments and texts that reflected our scholarly fields. But James's specific contributions to the seminar were notable: he organized the readings into categories of history, culture, and narrative; he directed and sustained a high level of discussion throughout; he graded papers rigorously, generously, and always in timely fashion; and perhaps most important, he served as a model scholar who brought his own research into the seminar and linked it to the varied theoretical and methodological approaches employed in our readings.

Faculty who teach the Proseminar--the introductory graduate course required of all of our incoming graduate students each fall--need to be able both to lead informative discussions in our own fields of expertise and to sustain inquiry in numerous other areas of interdisciplinary cultural studies. In our seminar, James directed the discussions on Vine Deloria's God is Red (he had also just published a collection of essays by Deloria that he used to contextualize some volatile issues emerging from this book) and on Greg Sarris's Keeping Slug Woman Alive, widely recognized as one of the most important texts in Native American cultural studies. In both of these discussions--and believe me, these are remarkably different texts--James did an exemplary job of presenting, contextualizing, and questioning material from and about the texts. I myself took detailed notes from the information he provided about the formation of Native American Studies as a discipline and the different schools of thought that have shaped its development. Through James's careful and

knowledgeable approaches to these matters, students were able to understand polemical controversies in terms of changing intellectual traditions. I doubt that they could have obtained such perspectives--especially in their interdisciplinary dimensions--from anywhere else on campus. As I have said before, I think James plays a crucial role, in our department and in the university, in fostering such information and dialogue among students.


But just as important for our graduate students, James was able to sustain a high level of inquiry about related texts from varied fields. When we turned our attention to matters of postcolonialism (in Trinh Minh-ha), to gender (in Cynthia Enloe), to critical anthropology (in James Clifford), to history (in Patricia Limmerick)--to name only a few of the diverse texts we studied--James invariably generated thoughtful questions about theoretical assumptions, methodology, narrative and analytical styles of writing. Even when I found myself in productive disagreement with his arguments (which was rare), I can say that James's comments and questions always took us somewhere--to places in the text that urged closer and more complex reading, to ideas that variously confronted or confounded related ideas in different scholarship. The lively and intellectually stimulating discussion that characterized virtually every seminar meeting was in large part due to James's rigorous engagement with our texts.

Having already observed James's successful teaching at the undergraduate level, I can now add that he is just as if not more effective at the graduate level, where the sophistication that characterizes his research in Native American and Religious studies informs the kind of precise critical discussion that our graduate students need. The statistical ICES student evaluations that we received for the Proseminar--which were well above the department average--provide a good indication of how positively students responded to James's contributions to the class. On a more personal note, I can say that I found James a pleasure to teach with, and would gladly do it again.

**EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE**

January 12, 1999

TO: Vera Norwood, Chairperson, American Studies

FROM: Susan Deese-Roberts, Director

Education Programs and Services

RE: Class Observation
James Treat, Assistant Professor, American Studies

Attached to this memo is a class observation report for Dr. James Treat. I first worked with Dr. Treat when I participated in a library instruction session designed by Education Programs and Services for one of his classes. We learn a great deal about teaching approaches when we collaborate with faculty on library assignments and/or instruction sessions. I was impressed with the library-related assignment Dr. Treat created for his students. His understanding of the learning process and assessment of student needs was evident.

I enjoyed the experience of observing his Am St/NAS 252 class. Please let me know if you have any questions about the attached report.

Attachment

CLASS OBSERVATION

American Studies/Native American Studies 252.001

Instructor: James Treat, Assistant Professor

Observer: Susan Deese-Roberts, Associate Professor, General Library
Director, Education Programs and Services

Date: November 12, 1998

Content/Class Structure

Class content revolved around Internal Colonialism and Reservation Life. Students had been assigned four related readings and a response paper concerning the readings. Dr. Treat provided an overview of the class topic in relationship to previous classes. He also provided a "Key Terms" list on the blackboard for the students. After an opportunity for free-writing on images and impressions of Reservations and the opportunity to share images and impressions, students were divided into three small groups to determine the view(s) of the Reservation by Ghost Dancers, the Native American Church, and the Society of American Indians. Each group reported their findings and Dr. Treat added and clarified information as needed.

Classroom Environment

Dr. Treat has created a student-centered environment by showing respect for and by having high expectations of students. Students were respectful and involved; the same was true of Dr. Treat. Dr. Treat was not the sole source of information but rather he also served as a guide and expert source as students articulated their own understandings.

Teaching Style

Dr. Treat's modes of information delivery included short lectures, discussion, and structured small group activities and subsequent dialogue. In terms of critical thinking, higher order skills—interpretation, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation—were modeled and expected from students. There was little emphasis on lower levels such as recall. Use of the natural learning cycle was evidenced by (1) incorporating the students' direct experiences into the information content of the class, (2) creation of images and impressions, and (3) introduction and discussion of expert content. Both right and left brain activities were evident—for example, free-writing and analysis of reading assignments, respectively.

Dr. Treat assessed levels of participation (right-brain) as well as understanding of content (left-brain).

Class Observation

J. Treat

Page 2

Summary

Using three established characteristics of teacher effectiveness as criteria for assessment, it is easy to state that Dr. Treat is an effective teacher. First, he demonstrates respect for all students. He speaks with each student individually and personally. He elicits student input and allows time for reflection and formulation of thought without putting students on the spot. For example, when a student was not prepared to answer a question based upon the assignment, Dr. Treat asked another question that allowed the student to demonstrate the knowledge he did possess on the topic. The respect was mutual; student behavior was consistently supportive of class activities and Dr. Treat's role as teacher/facilitator.

Effective organization and presentation skills were apparent throughout the class period. Dr. Treat organized the class material and activities in ways that made objectives clear, used time wisely, and incorporated student and teacher presentations. The students were obviously familiar with a pattern of class organization that made their role in the classroom apparent. Making expectations clear was also one way in which Dr. Treat challenged students. He also provided specific feedback, encouraged independence of thought, demonstrated how to approach assignments, and made clear the standards for assessment.

Memorandum

DATE: April 17, 1998
TO: Vera Norwood, Chair, American Studies
FROM: A. Gabriel Meléndez, American Studies *AGM*
RE: Report on James Treat's Teaching

I visited James Treat's seminar on Religion and American Culture on March 31, 1998 and I am pleased to be able to report some very positive impressions regarding Prof. Treat's classroom style and methods. On the afternoon of my visit several students in the class presented summaries of articles from Hackett's, *Religion and American Culture: A Reader*. James began the session by making a couple of short announcements and then taking about 10 minutes to go over a selected bibliography he had prepared for his students on African American Religion. Importantly, in presenting the bibliography, James also took time to explain how he had arrived at his selections. In so doing, he modeled a research method and an approach to gathering information that moved from general to specific. His commentary on sources amounted to a review of the literature which opened onto questions about gaps in the available sources. As the discussion evolved students were able to ask questions and secure additional information from James regarding the current state of scholarship on African Americans and religion.

The bibliography segment of the seminar provide a nice passage way to the student presentations that followed. The first student presentation dealt specifically with the religious connotations of freedom day celebrations in African American tradition. Each of the four presentations were well organized and presented. James found appropriate opportunities to engage each student with follow-up comments. Other student chimed in classic seminar fashion. The discussion ranged from cautious questioning to lively interchange, and, throughout, James reined in the tangents while encouraging the development of critical analysis by returning to the text for clarification and re-orientation. Every student in the class was provided an opportunity to comment and question assumptions and it seems every student was rewarded with new ways of thinking and considering the information that was presented on this day.

All told, I found James to be an informative and relaxed instructor. The strong rapport he has established with his student was evident in the exchanges I observed. His manner is direct without being overbearing and his guidance of the class was clear and straightforward.

March 1, 1998

To: Vera Norwood, Chair, American Studies
From: Pat Smith, Professor of English
In re: Visiting James Treat's AmSt 252.001 class last semester

Dear Vera et. al.,

I wrote the following letter on April 15, 1998, and deep-sixed mailing it, even lost it on the computer, but have now recovered it. Everything it says is true and vividly recalled to me as I reread it. James Treat has a real gift for teaching and is a fine presence here. What follows is my original letter. Mea maxima culpa.

I attended James Treat's class in The Native American Experience [AmSt 252.001] on March 30, 1998. Beforehand, James sent me his syllabus and other materials pertaining to the class to be taught that day, which centered around the Native American experience on the Far West of what was to become the United States.

Let me begin by talking about the syllabus. It's well-organized, and sets forth clear and reasonable expectations. It equally clearly describes places where students can look to help if they need it, beginning with the teacher himself; and asks each student to take a mini-library course in research. It makes clear, finally, that he will entertain any reasonable request for absences made necessary by family and religious duties, and work with students to catch up.. If every teacher at UNM could insert such a sentence in their syllabus--and mean it--we would have a far lower Native American dropout rate here.

The syllabus works well to integrate historical, socio-political, and cultural materials. It's a brilliant stroke to use Bruchac's Returning the Gift anthology, as it gives students a look at very contemporary writers reflecting on the ongoing problems of their ancestors, as described in the main text by Hurtado and Iverson. It's also great to see how many guest speakers James invites into this class; I can't believe how few classes in Native American, Chaicano/a, and southwestern subjects take advantage of the wealth of our surroundings, but James Treat does.

The March 30th class itself I loved attending. I was very struck by how well James handled a class that was at once so small and so diverse. Maybe 10 people, Pueblos, Diné, assorted Anglos, a British citizen, ranging from the very young, the very academically inexperienced, to a class member who's already presented several academic papers. Each usual class is apparently a combination of a lecture by the teacher (concise, but yet informal and open to class questions and discussion); a round-robin reading of brief response papers by the members of the class applying to that week's reading, with generous and astute responses from the teacher; open discussion.

It is very evident that Professor Treat is firm about his expectations and standards, and at the same time shows great respect and care for his students. He takes care to try to bring everyone into the discussion. His wealth of knowledge about the particular histories of California tribal peoples was impressive. This class flew by.

cc: James Treat

Patricia C Smith



The University of New Mexico

Department of
English Language and Literature
Humanities Building 217
Albuquerque, NM 87131-1106
(505) 277-6347

September 20, 1997

Professor Vera Norwood
Chair, American Studies Department
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM 87131

Dear Vera:

On September 17, I visited Dr. James Treat's American Studies 550 course, "Theories and Methods in Native American Studies." I am writing to provide an evaluation based on that visit as part of Professor Treat's Third-Year Review.

I can begin by saying that I was deeply impressed by the significance and quality of this course from every perspective, so much so that I found myself wishing that my own graduate students in Native American literature could be required to take this course. James's syllabus is very well thought out and clearly structured. The methodology requires that all students participate fully in the class both as discussion participants and respondents and as formal presenters of "collateral texts"--that is, each student is required to present to the class orally a synopsis of and response to a text related to but not required on the syllabus. In observing three such presentations, I felt that they were quite valuable for both the presenter and the class as a whole.

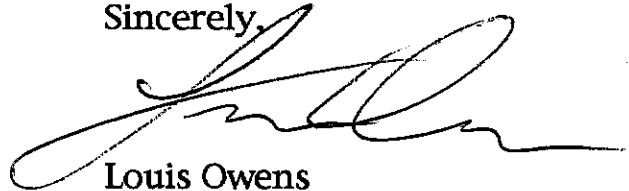
In conjunction with the syllabus, James provided cogent and very helpful printed handouts explaining methods and purposes in "Collateral Text Reviews and Presentations" as well as "Evaluating Secondary Sources." In short, this is a superbly structured and planned course, one designed for best academic results.

James's approach to the course is an effective combination of formality and informality. He did an excellent job of introducing

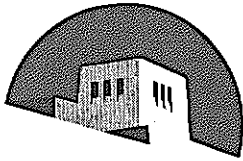
primary texts and highlighting difficult, challenging, problematic, or particularly valuable moments in the text under discussion, and he guided students toward careful readings. At the same time, he successfully encouraged students to be involved in discussion.

My overall impression is that this is a course incorporating and demanding intellectual rigor, one that will go a long way toward preparing students to comprehend the extraordinary complexity of Native American Studies. As I stated above, I felt this to be a course from which every student in every aspect of Native American Studies would benefit, one I would like to have my graduate students experience before we begin the study of Native American literature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louis Owens', written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Louis Owens
Professor of English
University of New Mexico



The University of New Mexico

Department of American Studies
Albuquerque, NM 87131-1176
(505) 277-3929

October 15, 1997

TO: Vera Norwood, Chair,
American Studies Department

FROM: Ruth Salvaggio, American Studies *RS*

SUBJECT: Report on James Treat's Teaching

I visited James's undergraduate class, "Native Americans and Christianity," this past September 30th, and am pleased to report my very positive assessment of his teaching. The discussion this day centered on the section of his syllabus devoted to "Historical Relations," and in particular on William Apess, a member of both the Pequot tribe and Methodist church, whose writings circulated in the early 19th century.

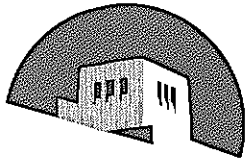
My first impression, on reading through James's detailed syllabus and contextual material that he distributes to the class, was that the topic itself was fascinating. Those of us in American Studies often talk about various modes of mestiza and postcolonial experience; James here teaches it directly through close readings of a religious writer who embodied the tensions of being both Native and Christian. Throughout the class, James keeps the discussion on an engaging but also intellectually demanding level. He recognizes and productively problematizes matters of identity, notably ethnic and religious affiliation, in such a way that students are urged to understand the complexity of cultural experience. He effectively distinguishes between methodological approaches used by Religious Studies, Native American Studies, and varied Cultural Studies scholars. He reads texts closely, often out loud in class, to invite and support matters of interpretation. He frames questions for opening discussion: "What does it mean for Apess to be Native/Pequot?" "What does it mean for him to be Christian/Methodist?" "Is Pequot a race, an ethnicity, a nationality?" And he works through these kinds of questions in an attempt to resist what he calls "simplistic generalizations" about what we may consider Western, or Christian, or Native, in order to grasp how specific people often defy easy categorization.

I also found myself impressed with James's teaching methods. He provides his students with abundant contextual information, both in handouts and in his opening remarks. But he does not let this given information in any way hamper an open discussion. I noted, for instance, that students in this class--a large number

of them Native American students--had obviously read the material carefully, were listening attentively, and were willingly contributing to the discussion. They take notes, they nod along to James's remarks. Some of them resisted James's arguments that Native and Christian experiences are often hybridized, in which case James would ask questions which urged them to reconsider the positions they initially espoused. ("How is a Christian conversion experience like a vision?" Are Christian practices inherently western?") He leads such inquiry with care and respect. I noticed that he knows all of his students by their first names (and it was a fairly large class).

In terms of our own programmatic emphasis in Southwest Studies and matters of Race, Class, and Ethnicity, I can hardly imagine our hiring a more informative, engaging, and effective teacher than James. Issues in these fields are often hotly debated and politically charged. James makes his students work hard to gain the fullest historical and cultural understanding of this material so that they can engage these heady issues.

James and I plan to meet to have a more casual discussion of our teaching methods, especially since we are both engaged in studying authors and texts that complicate matters of identity, even as we insist on the pedagogical imperative of locating such identities--ethnic and gendered--in their diverse historical and cultural contexts. Perhaps the best one can say of a peer evaluation is that we can learn from observing each other teach, which is clearly what happened to me when I observed this class.



The University of New Mexico

Department of American Studies
Albuquerque, NM 87131-1176
(505) 277-3929

17 May 1996

To Whom it May Concern:

For evaluative purposes, on Thursday, April 4, 1996, I sat in on James Treat's class, "Indigenous Worldviews in Native American Studies" (Am. St. 350.001). Prior to the class, James had provided me with a wealth of written materials that he used in the class. These included: 1) a very clear syllabus that outlined course readings, requirements, grading criteria, and background on how to do a research paper; 2) a more detailed reading schedule with an abundance of related resources and a series of key questions that the students had developed; 3) a very clear "assignments" packet, that included directions for writing an intellectual autobiography, research paper, midterm essay, annotated bibliography and group presentation; 4) a delineation of course objectives and key questions, including definitions of world view and experiential learning, a mid-term evaluation form, and background information on each student. I think this sort of information gave students, from the beginning of the class and throughout the semester, a very clear sense of what the course would be about and what they were required to do. My undergraduate students are always asking for "more grounding" and James's materials have given me an idea of how to do that in an approachable, non-threatening way.

Twenty students came to class that day; James said it was usually a little larger. When we walked into the room, the chairs were already arranged in a circle (the students do this when they come in), creating an open and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. Many of the students were Native American (I gathered this from various sorts of comments they made during the class discussion). Those who weren't Native American participated enthusiastically in formal and informal discussions and were not ostracized in any manner. The entire class seemed to get along well with one another and with James, whom they clearly respected, but could also laugh with (James describes this as "Indian humor"). James talked easily with the early students while waiting for the late arrivals. He quite obviously knew everyone's name and introduced me in a manner that made my presence "okay." The hour and fifteen minute class was broken up into various activities (an excellent strategy for keeping students interested) and James showed great rapport with the students at each "stage" of the class; he was in control of the class at all times, but this "control" had more to do with following a prescribed agenda, leading the students through certain steps, than with being domineering or rigid.

I was surprised that the class began with a report from the "T-shirt Committee." The students were clearly excited about this and got quite animated about colors, designs, etc. I heard them say that the T-shirt would contain one student's prize-winning art work and the words, "Treat's Tribe: Warriors, Saints, and Geniuses" (taken from a sample cover page for their annotated bibliography that James had provided for the class). Clearly, they had taken up the joke and run with it. They also wanted to include the course number somewhere on the shirt. I can't remember ever having a class that so inspired me that I wanted a T-shirt to remind me about it. I think this is one indication of how highly the students think of James and the rapport they have established with one another; due, in part, to his excellent teaching skills.

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This particular class session focused on readings the class had done from works by Beth Brant (Writing as Witness: Essay and Talk) and Paula Gunn Allen (The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Texts). James asked the students to begin with a ten-minute "free-write"; they were to pick one question on the list of key questions they had helped compile earlier in the semester for this set of readings and answer that question. Then James asked the class to get out their reading journals (another excellent idea) and he gave a brief talk that synthesized prior classes and put this one in that holistic context. He mentioned that all of the authors are speaking to the same issues, but there are significant differences and similarities to discuss. This is the only sort of "lecturing" that James did during the class but it had more the feeling of a preamble to the student's commentary than a lecture in and of itself. He clearly wanted the students to go "beyond a surface reading of the text" to a discussion of writing techniques and methods. He asked excellent questions to generate discussion, but then let the students get caught up in the discussion on their own; occasionally James would enter the discussion and help students clarify their points, but always in a manner that urged the class to keep talking, and also to keep the discussion moving forward, rather than degenerating into rambling. For instance, he would say something like, "let's try to think about this in a more systematic way," or ask questions such as "Where is the author getting the information that she is writing about? What broad claims does she make about Indian society? What is the nature of this kind of writing? What is her purpose?" These questions seemed to spur the students to think critically and to back up their arguments by referencing the assigned readings; it also enabled them to see the authors in dialogue with one another. James has the ability to interest his students in what he is saying and what other class members are saying -- a kind of magical spark that seems to be generated by the best teachers. Occasionally I would look around the room and notice that everyone was engaged in the discussion, and indeed, seemed to be riveted by what James and others were saying. James would encourage this involvement by responding to one student's query with "that's a good question, what do others think?", or making a statement such as "I'm not asking because I know the answer, I'm curious about what you think." These sorts of remarks served to make James a part of the discussion and lessened the distance between the class and "the teacher."

Although I have always thought this a rather odd area of concern in the Humanities, James made very good use of the blackboard (in a room that had 3 of them!). From what he was doing, I could see the value of the endeavor. He used the board primarily to draw diagrams -- 3-dimensional visualizations that very clearly contrasted the writing styles of the two authors being discussed. He similarly used such "displays" in some of his introductory syllabus material; such diagrams served to provide an alternative manner in which to see and understand the point that was being made.

The last 15 minutes of the class were given over to group discussions of presentations that were scheduled for the near future. I stayed with one group because I was so fascinated with their topic. They were each researching the background of a Native American woman intellectual (I gathered that they each chose this topic and James helped them settle on an individual about whom sufficient material has been written so that this could be the base of a class presentation). The group I was with were all female and clearly interested in the research they were doing -- they had one another's phone numbers and were going to have a sort of "telethon" over the weekend because they lived too far apart to get together in person. I was very impressed with their clear enthusiasm for their project.

M. Jane Young's comments on James Treat's teaching

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When there was a time conflict concerning presentations (two groups wanted to present on the same day, but neither had a pressing reason for doing so), James took a coin from his pocket and had them call "heads or tails." This, I think is a fine illustration of James's easygoing approach and what I've heard him call "hands off teaching." When there was a decision that the class could make on their own, James encouraged them to do so, or provided a decision-making mechanism, like tossing a coin. I tend to see this as an illustration as well that not all things are "set in stone," and some consequences are simply "the luck of the draw."

At some point in the class, James referred to the books and films that made up part of the class assignments as "constructions of reality." I found this a very important and refreshing means of conveying the possibility of multiple realities and interpretations of these realities to undergraduates who often assume that "the answer" is somewhere in the book, if they could just decode it. I imagine that James would say that there are many answers and not all of them are written down.

In sum, James is a dynamic teacher who has the ability to establish a highly unusual rapport with his students. He does this, not by giving them answers or telling them what to do (beyond the usual requirements), but by helping them learn to find out for themselves. I had the sense that the students were discovering how to learn in his class and that James was an integral part of that process. He encouraged everyone to participate and responded with patience and understanding. The overall tone of the students' commentary was responsive and well-reasoned and James challenged them always to think about what goes on beyond the surface of a variety of representations of identity. The collegiality of the classroom was wonderful and I learned a great deal by being present in only one class.

Sincerely,



M. Jane Young

Associate Professor and Regent's Lecturer

xc: Vera Norwood, Chair, Department of American Studies (to be filed in James's file for promotion after Professor Norwood has read it)
James Treat, Assistant Professor, Dept. of American Studies (personal copy)



OAKES COLLEGE

SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA 95064

November 1, 1996

To Whom It May Concern:

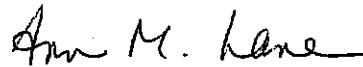
James Treat, my former colleague in American Studies at UCSC, has asked that I comment on the quality of his advising and lecturing. I am pleased to do so.

As Coordinator of Advising for the program, I had occasion to assign advisees to James as well as to assess their satisfaction with him. Students not only were happy with his careful attention to their academic planning, his insistence on their challenging themselves with difficult courses, and his follow through on their questions, but I too was impressed by the serious manner with which he took his advising duties and his frequent consultation with me about the situations of particular students. Since he specialized in Native American topics, it was not surprising that American Indian students and Native American pathway students wished to work closely with him. Because of his high standards and approachability, however, a wide diversity of students sought his mentorship on thesis and field study work.

I had the opportunity to observe James' lecturing abilities in front of 150 students when I invited him to guest lecture in my Introduction to American Studies. He willingly accepted and designed a talk that both addressed the issues I needed explored in that session and linked them with the readings students were to do for the next session. In addition to offering a talk that fit well into the course, James took care to pitch his lecture at the appropriate level for the class, leaving plenty of room for questions from and exchanges with the students in order to make sure of their comprehension. Had James not left UCSC, we would have co-taught this course the next year.

Perhaps the impact of James' teaching and advising is best captured in the incident of an excellent student of his who had graduated and moved back to her home state. Unexpectedly bereft of an assigned teaching assistant, James asked the AS graduate if she would consider delaying her post-graduate plans to return to Santa Cruz to be his teaching assistant for one quarter. I think that her immediate return and dedicated commitment to her students says a great deal about the quality of James' work at UCSC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann M. Lane".

Ann M. Lane
Lecturer and Coordinator
of Advising
American Studies

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

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NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES
3415 DWINELLE HALL

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720

To whom it may concern:

November 15, 1991

James Treat has been a teaching assistant with me in the Native American Reading and Composition course for the past year. During this time, I have have come to know Mr. Treat as an exceptional person and dedicated educator.

Mr. Treat draws from a solid historical/cultural/theological preparation in American Indian studies. As Native American literature presents a worldview which intrigues, yet puzzles most non-Indian students, James provides students with valuable tools for interpreting traditional or contemporary Indian literature. Well-grounded and versatile, he can sketch out and develop the social and historical contexts of the literature: traditional worldviews, history of Indian Affairs, religious practices and contemporary Indian life.

James approaches learning as a process of interaction between persons. In this paradigm, learning is a mutual responsibility and influence, a relational power leading to collaboration among students and instructor. James is particularly attentive to developing teaching strategies to engage students of various backgrounds in the literature. In providing this learning context, students discover the limitations and potentialities of their own worldviews and a respect for others' perceptions. As an articulate writer, James encourages students in developing their own writing voices, providing revision strategies, and carefully assessed papers; he meets with each student during regularly scheduled individual conferences.

James' real passion is teaching Native American studies. It is evident in his enthusiastic and humorous stories, carefully prepared class presentations, and consistent commitment to the students. One of his greatest contributions is the way he connects us all with the contemporary Indian community whether through inviting Indian guest lecturers, providing resources for research or updating us on Indian community activities. Indian students are affirmed in their histories and identities; many non-Indian students encounter for the first time Native American persons of various backgrounds. In fact, James applied for and received several grants from the Office of Educational Development, enabling Indian writers, community workers, and war veterans to speak to the students. He developed resources as the California Indian Research Bibliography and the Native American Event Calendar so students could directly engage with both recorded materials and reservation/urban Indian communities during the course.

I highly recommend James Treat as an educator. He is an outstanding candidate! Observant, honest and perceptive, always offering multifaceted perspectives on a single issue, and open to explore new pedagogies and issues, James brings many important qualities to the classroom and learning process. He would contribute greatly to your department, not the least being his Indian humor which balances troubled or serious moments into a wholeness.

Sincerely,


Jean Molesky-Poz