

## Student Course Comments

Benjamin Vogt

### **English 101 Writing From Literature**

His comments were helpful and made me go in and talk one on one to get more help. I liked that it wasn't too specific to leave more room open for MY writing.

He is highly opinionated but doesn't force it on us, he makes us see things in a different perspective.

He makes you WANT to write better. The books he chose made us think outside of what we know and overall pushed us to be better writers.

He is very motivational and is really good at connecting with his students. He WANTS to see us do well and that felt really nice to have. He was strict on things, but if you ever had a problem it was easy to explain yourself and be understood.

### **English 150 & 151 Freshman Composition**

I enjoyed that you were not afraid to risk anything in class and that made me feel more comfortable risking thoughts and ideas. You are also very interesting, down to earth, and easy to work with.

I can say that this class has truly changed my life and helped me deal with one of the hardest times of my life.

He has a way of getting us to dig deep into our own thoughts to produce a powerful essay.

He was very easy to get a hold of and willing (and wanting) to talk about our work.

I feel like you have made me a better writer in one semester than all four years of high school combined.

You weren't mean, you were honest and you helped us discover more about ourselves than just writing random papers that we wouldn't think twice about. I looked forward to your class and if I was an English major I would definitely take your classes.

The things that the students shared to the class were so personal and it took so much courage for them to actually share them. I was shocked when students cried, and I was surprised that the professor had the ability to continue to make them feel comfortable sharing their writing even

when it was so emotional for them that they actually shed tears reading them. I was truly impressed with the class and how much I learned not only about myself but also what the other students in the class taught me. I don't think I have had as good of a relationship with a professor in college as I have in this class. I really felt comfortable with him and also the rest of the students in my class because of the atmosphere that he created.

What I enjoyed about Dr. Vogt is the sarcasm and jokes and I believe they made your class so much more interesting and fun. I also liked the fact that we could be open in your class and take risks as you say without having to worry.

I enjoyed how the class was managed and how we were allowed to get to know people and the professor as well. He was super easy to talk to and to get along with. He was a goofball and he made the class fun, which in turn made everybody in class loosen up a little and feel comfortable.

**What one thing will you remember from this course, good or bad?**

Stressing out over my papers and actually having English homework when none of my other friends had to do anything for their English classes.

Describing the can of parmesan cheese.

He made me think constantly deeply, and in new ways. Also, he refused to let me settle for an "okay" paper.

At one point I waited a mere 7 minutes until I got an email response concerning a question on one of my essays.

**English 180  
Introduction to Literature**

The free-thinking unrestrained approach of your class was very intriguing. I found it the most interesting thing I've seen in a classroom to watch how the ideas flowed through the class collectively, gathering size and taking on new forms with every student's addition. The success of this method is found in the strength and variety of the texts and in the teacher's resolve to let it work....I remember you telling us one day that you hoped we would come up with something interesting from the latest reading, something new and more exciting than the things you had found. This comment embodies what makes you a good teacher in my eyes. You put the students on the same level as yourself. This helped everyone in the class not only become closer to you but to bond as a whole. The connection that was made between the class could be seen on the last day. You have to have something special for the students to say goodbye with the sincerity and somber tone they did....my only hope is that you will be as sarcastic, challenging, and open for as long as you teach.

I learned that there's even much more to books than I previously realized. I love that I can relate to everything. I love that you can learn so much from another's experience and words. I love that

I can create my own words and hopefully affect someone else's life like these authors have affected mine.... This class forced me to question, forced me to look into my own personal life and actually face it. It made me stop hiding in books, but turn to them for inspiration in my own life. It made me look at the bigger picture—how does this work affect the whole world kind of thing. If you would have told me that I'd be considering becoming a writer at the beginning of this course, I probably would have told you that there was no way. But now I'm actually thinking about it.

### **English 250 Introduction to Creative Writing**

**What new realizations as a writer (poetry, fiction, nonfiction) have you come to over the course of the term?**

I honestly came to the realization that all 3 genres we learned about were more connected than I thought. I thought it was a logical progression to move to poetry, to fiction, to creative nonfiction because each section, and the skills learned, was built on the other.

Imagery, imagery, imagery. I've also come to love two new styles of writing that I've never really given a chance to, poetry and creative nonfiction. And I think I emailed you more this semester than my parents.

I never really got into imagery before this class but I enjoy it so much more now. I also never thought poetry was very important, but now I see differently. You write poetry, fiction and nonfiction in similar ways as far as images and tightness goes, which is really cool.

How much my peers surprised me with the quality of their work, and how this motivated me to write better.

**How did the instructor challenge you in new ways? Or, how were you not challenged?**

Freaking blank verse. Enough said.

Challenged me to use active voice, present tense.

The course guidelines were strict and it kept me in line for the most part. I enjoyed the seriousness of the class as well as the not so serious parts of it.

### **English 302A Poets Since 1945**

In all my other classes I get this feeling that when the teacher says I can say whatever I want they mean I can say whatever they want me to say. In this classroom I felt like I could hold strong to my opinion even if it directly opposed the professor, or other classmates. Never was there a

wrong answer. I found that having a professor be on the same level as their students makes something that is stereotypically labeled difficult and elitist more acceptable and easier to tackle.

You actually treated us like college students. I can say that you are one of the two or three professors that I felt truly fostered academic creativity. Like I said earlier, you let the students drive the process of the class's progression and that gave us ownership of the class. Adding to this, it also seemed like you really wanted us to find that poet, poem, or even a line in a poem that would have an effect on us outside the classroom. You made it clear in the very first email you sent out to us late in the fall semester that you will get a lot out of your class if we put forth the effort. I believe that was a true statement because at the start of the semester I was determined to think that English 302A was going to be my least favorite class, but by the end of the semester it was my favorite. It is one of the great ironies in my academic career that this reversal occurred.

**What are the strengths of the teacher?**

He is very in tune to how the class is feeling about a certain subject. His passion comes out in the way he teaches, a definite plus. Lets discussion flow on their own amongst the students—makes it feel like it's "our" class.

His knowledge of the material, his personality, relates well with students and helps them to engage in discussion.

**How did the instructor challenge you, how were you challenged, or how were you not? These may or may not be directly related to poetry.**

I was challenged to think outside the box, something I wish there was more of in college.

He made me think and he wasn't an easy teacher to impress; that is what I liked about him. He was hard and demanding, but generally a nice guy.

I wasn't able to completely b.s. my way through the course like I often do in English classes.

**What one aspect of the course will you most likely remember? It can be anything.**

Ben's sarcasm and sense of humor. Kept me interested and made learning a lot easier.

Teaching / classroom—it is always nice to learn with a teacher, not just from them. Also, when you feel someone cares about you and the class you start to care more.

**English 303  
The Short Story**

The class immediately put me outside of my comfort zone. Ben required every class to be student driven. We were very encouraged to pose questions or thoughts we had about the reading

to one another. He also encouraged students to research authors and their corresponding text and constantly pushed his students to ask more of themselves. Most professors I have had to date (I am currently a junior) have taken their students by the hand and have done all the analytical work for them. Contrastingly, Ben threw us into the air and said fly!

Ben is unconventional. His methods are different and provocative. He entices students to think passionately. Rarely does he ever allow his own ideas to infect the opinions of his students; instead, he allows them to flourish at their own pace. Ben doesn't want to help students—he teaches students to defend themselves in their own capacity by posing difficult questions and introducing novel ways to understand mind-blowing concepts. His classes are a philosophy—they cannot be taught, they have to be experienced.

### **English 353 Advanced Poetry Writing Workshop**

The comments in workshop were helpful, one on one times with you were particularly helpful, and your expecting much from me was perhaps the most helpful so that I was pushed to grow instead of just gliding by like I have with previous writing classes. As I try to include in emails: Thanks, again, so much for taking the time to work with me as I stumbled through all this. “Isn't that what professors are supposed to do?” Yes. But how many professors are actually professors?

One of the better creative writing courses that I have taken. In workshop we quickly developed a good rapport, which is key. At times the workshop lacked focus, I think this may have been a function of the three hour class period. I would've liked to have taken more time to bullshit about poems with you, as you seemed really receptive to that. My failure in that regard is my own, and I'm not sure if I know of a way that you could make yourself more available to the students. I think the workshop was strong, though. This was the best thing about the class. The main thing I got out of this class was a desire to write more, which is awesome. Some writing classes I've taken in the past have turned me off on writing, this didn't do that.

Honestly, when I signed up for English 353 I expected the class to be pud. I based my assumptions on a previous poetry class that I took two years ago. I was in the class for an entire semester and did not learn a thing. Before August 29<sup>th</sup> of this year, I had no idea what form consisted of in poetry. I've come a long way in just three months. At first, learning about form was terrifying and overwhelming. I thought there was no way my writing would conform to such rigid rules. I soon found out that many forms that seem complicated are actually quite easy to use. In fact, I have found that some forms actually help me to fill in the blanks of my thought process.

### **English 237 (Doane College) Intro to Fiction**

I am so happy I chose to stick this class out to the end. In the past few weeks alone I've grown more than I did for the middle decade of my life. My relationships with those around me have become stronger, because I've allowed myself to open up a little more. I've come to believe that life is a process, and every once in a while we get to experience something like English 237, that pushes us to grow and understand ourselves a little better.

I have heard from friend about the other Intro to Fiction classes, which are easy. They don't read the books and still get As in the classes. I believe your class was hard, but I enjoyed the challenge. I wish all students at Doane could be exposed to the ideas and open mindedness you provided in our classroom or in your "office" outside.

You push us because you see the potential in us to write the way we should. You make us build up our confidence and it helps throughout the class.

You actually care about your students and how they succeed in your class, and it feels nice when teachers care about your grade and success.

I liked that we could be open about how we felt about what we were reading and discussions were very open and honest so that we could say whatever came to mind without worrying about sounding dumb or being put down. It was easy to share our opinions and our interpretations of the stories that we read.

I was challenged in a way that I did not want to be, but I think it is exactly what we all need to become better versions of ourselves.