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Fwd: Digital Africas Self Evalaution Mariah

C. Rhonda Cobham-Sander   Sun, Mar 3, 2019 at 4:29 PM

---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Rhonda Cobham-Sander**
Date: Sun, Feb 18, 2018 at 7:30 PM
Subject: Digital Africas Self Evalaution Mariah Hill A
To: Mariah

Mariah, although your self-evaluation earned you a very solid A- I have given you an extra grade point because of the sheer creativity of your posts and the overwhelming testimony (which you can read for yourself) from your classmates about how vital your contribution was -- not only to their engagement with the material but in helping them find their voices on the blog.

This capacity to encourage and inspire others is rare in intellectuals of your accomplishment, many of whom (like Julius!) use the necessary introversion of the life of the mind as an excuse to cut themselves off from meaningful engagement with others.

You have not chosen not to take that path. Instead, you brought along several of your classmates who might otherwise have failed to complete the course successfully and you encouraged them to do their best work. The "Whose gonna pass this class" thread was one stellar example of this but there were many others that your classmates mentioned to me in private – like the times when you shared your class notes with people who overslept class or when you reached out to students who you knew were having a hard time.

These are the kinds of qualities that will make you an intellectually generous colleague in some academic context in the future but they are also qualities that make you a great person now. It's been a pleasure and honor to have you in this course

Also have a look at my marginal comments on your form

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Comments for Mariah

The third post that I really appreciated was the joint post between Mariah and Mikayla. Inspired by *Open City*, they created a "vlog" called "Open Campus." I thought this was incredibly creative and the narration that they created was truly inspired. I also really enjoyed the ways that this post encompassed our journey of experimentation with blogging.

"Open Campus" (mikavr & bees/Mika & Mariah) – In this post, Mika and Mariah created a short film inspired by Teju Cole's *Open City*. The film follows Mariah walking through Amherst's campus offering her musings on, and historical knowledge of, the places she encounters. Much like Julius, she uses what she observes on the outside to spark more profound commentary on the world around her. I really enjoyed their cinematic interpretation of the book and can appreciate all the hard work involved in creating this post.

The other piece I also enjoyed was the collaboration between Bees and Mikavr that mimicked *Open City*'s function of observation by the Flâneur. This was comical to watch but also really signals the need for perception and observation. I was inspired to be more present aster watching this.

Bees talks about how the discussions in class has led her to post about her fear/discomfort about online blogging. She mentions about yukonboi, who is a great blogger (who knows how to blog) and creates a new "voice" on this blogpost, imitating the Tumblr-style writing. She talks about the next fb post, which she created a new open space for discussion. I thought this was a very smart idea because it makes us want to continue to read her posts, which is the main goal as a blogger.

One conversation I had with Evan and Mariah about our newness to the land of intense online discourse and our desire to express it in a controlled environment. This led to the creation of our collaborative post.

I also had a rich exchange with Mariah during the symposium about online publishing. She is also keenly following the trajectory of groups like Jalada, Chimurenga and Kalahari. It was interesting to have something in common with her and exchange links and tweets about new organizations in the publishing market.

I have come to appreciate Mariah's quiet but perceptive insights this semester. Scattered over several different conversations, but one November night specifically Mariah and I were talking about Digital Africas and how we felt the class was going. We both confessed that while the content is incredibly stimulating, and you as a professor are always so engaged, it can be difficult to feel settled on any reading or topic. In many ways the class itself functions as an online experience jumping from 3 or 4 (or more) different readings each class, covering a lot of ground but sometimes at a cost. In contrast to a Fanon class (which we both take) where we close-read each essay ever written by Fanon in a slow and deliberate manner, Digital Africas is akin to the digital experience of flying over webpages. But then Mariah told me something that changed how I saw our class. She said that is in incredibly inspiring to see you (Prof. Cobham-Sander) so dedicated to impressing on us this vast world of digitalized Africa, and an Africanized web, and that she sees the immense reading load as a labor of love. It was important for me to see that the sheer quantity of content was not only important in its own right, but that it was also there to familiarize us with the vast world ofDigital Africas and challenge us

to dive into any of the topics in a deeper way. She told me that the entire class functions as a challenge. (This was before the grading system of the blogs/likes/shares became apparent). This class breezes through so much, and recognizes that. This space we have created dares us to go deeper into any topic, or rather develop to skills to make an impact outside of the classroom.

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After the Decolonization in a Comparative Context symposium (2 weeks later), Mariah Hill, Bryan Miller, Chimaway Lopez, Jalencia Wade, Kat Hague and I all snacked on the fancy hor d'oeuvres in frost had dinner in Val. There is clump of students all taking overlapping 3 or 4 overlapping classes this semester and so we see each other frequently and are able to discuss connections between our classes regularly as well (DigitalAfricas, Fanon, and Indigenous Amer. Epics). After the Decolonizing symposium we were all riled drawing connections between the MENA region, Indigenous, African, diasporic, digital and environmental decolonization were intimately dependent on each other but also quite different. Approaching anti-Black racism is related but not the same as approaching appropriations of native land. To have a community of peers who are all taking the same classes and thus understand all the "hyper-links" or diverse references made in that heated conversation was so energizing.

I really appreciated Mariah's reflection on her fb collab post "We Can't All be Yukonboi" (note: the reflection of, not the fb blog post itself). I found it very much like Mariah to both open the space for vulnerabilities on the reflexive performance of this class, but to also uplift a peer simultaneously. Mariah's post secured Spencer's DA fame, which in many ways is the currency of this class. Not only was it self-less (having spent a lot of time with Mariah have I come to truly understand this), but also deliberate. It was not so much her post that wowed me, but how she constructed an online persona who is genuinely collaborative and out there to uplift others

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