

Observations/Evaluations of Neeru Nagarajan's Course

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I am highly impressed with Neeru's style, which I am calling *edu-casual*. This means that her style of teaching is very laid back, but her students are engaged in the learning process. All of the students helped one another on the assignment, and they did not hesitate to speak to one another about any questions they had. Furthermore, when Neeru spoke, they listened immediately. The mutual respect in this classroom is great, and I believe it's due to the edu-casual style she employs in her class. Ultimately, I feel like Neeru's teaching style and ability in the classroom is fantastic. I am definitely going to express more of my genuine personality in my own class, because I now see how important it can be in the trust and learning process.

Matthew Stewart
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Neeru's classroom is a large computer lab in the Psych Building; it has a good view of the north of campus that was appropriately overcast and full of sonder this morning. The room offers challenges – computer monitors blocking the front of the room; immovable desks – that Neeru navigates expertly, eager as she is to sit down and chat with students one on one as the class works on writing towards an assignment. The most inspiring thing about Neeru's class is her immediate rapport with her students: they feel comfortable joking, asking questions, etc. Aryanna's class was before Neeru's, and she'd left cookies and allowed Neeru to use her Spotify account to play a Halloween playlist; as the Ghostbusters theme played, students danced in, or just looked amused as they found their seats. Truly an enviable vibe of enthusiasm in the classroom.

Other inspiring things: Neeru's absolute power and presence in the classroom. I've heard from others who've observed her class that she has a wonderful rapport with her students, and that bears out in class. Her students are so obviously comfortable raising issues and concerns with her. Also, she's very effective at maneuvering around a somewhat awkwardly set-up classroom.

Aryanna Falkner
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From the moment Neeru's class began to the very last second, I could see that her students were entirely captivated, and I felt the same way. At the beginning of class, Neeru seemed to get a feel for her students' current moods. She knew all of her students, not only by name, but where they sit and how much they typically participate. Before all of her students arrived, Neeru was already walking around the classroom, checking in with certain students about their health or family life. I think what stood out to me the most was how genuine all of this interaction was—she was not just playing the role of the teacher. Neeru seemed incredibly happy to be able to interact with her students in this capacity.

I took away a lot of valuable lessons from watching Neeru—particularly in the way she asserts her role as the instructor—but what I loved the most was her openness toward her students. At one point, Neeru asked her students how they would like the conferences to function. She wanted to know if they wanted to use that time to brain-storm ideas for Project 2, or if they wanted her to talk about their rough drafts. The general consensus in the classroom was that it would be more helpful to address their rough drafts. Neeru went along with this change effortlessly. I was impressed by her flexibility here, and I feel like this shows a lot about who Neeru is as a teacher and as a person. The fact that Neeru made the dedication to look at her students' drafts before their conferences tells me that she is willing to put the time and effort into helping her students, rather than simply doing what is easiest for her.

Neeru's classroom was a fun, respectful environment. She knows her students extremely well, and she knows the perfect times to joke with them versus reprimanding them. This created an open classroom in which many of her students felt comfortable enough to participate in a large group discussion. I believe Neeru's students are going to learn a tremendous amount in terms of writing technique, discussion tips, and how to be more confident in themselves as writers.

Ali Miller
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I really admire the community that she has built in her classroom. While her students were doing her activities, she went around to each group and checked in on them. This is actually something that I have started doing since attending Neeru's class! It allows us, as teachers, to make sure our students know what's going on and allows our students to ask us questions. What makes Neeru's class even more special, though, is that Neeru definitely has a more casual vibe with her class and her students clearly feel very comfortable with her because of that. She likes her students and they like her. Before class, she and her students were conversing very comfortably with each other. During class, they asked her questions if they were confused. They didn't even raise their hands to ask, which I thought was really impressive. A lot of freshmen take a long time to break out of the idea that they have to raise their hands any time they need to ask something, but Neeru's students feel comfortable enough in her class that they don't feel like they need to do that every time.

Even more impressive than Neeru's rapport with her students is the students' relationships with each other. Each student in each group seemed to speak with one another easily and even communicated with students outside of their groups. There was a comfortableness between a lot of students in her class. Sometimes my students can be a little awkward with each other, but this did not seem to be a problem in Neeru's class at all. It seems that, at the very least, her students are very used to group work. However, I really think that this is a community that Neeru was able to create on her own, and not just her students being used to group work. I could tell that her students have fun in her class and enjoy being in her class overall. So, that definitely translates to the way her students interact with each other and how Neeru facilitates conversation between her students.