

A Chat with an American University Professor

Lindsay: Okay so Georgia, you, uh, used to be a professor up at Colby's Sawyer College right?

Georgia: And at Keene State.

Lindsay: Oh yeah. And at Keene State as well. Okay. Cool. And what did you teach?

Georgia: And Antioch also.

Lindsay: Yes. What did you teach?

Georgia: I taught early... I taught Child Psychology and I also taught, uh, Early Childhood Education classes and a general course in Social Sciences...

Lindsay: Okay.

Georgia: ...for all the students to take at sometime in their course... in their four years.

Lindsay: Okay. Great. So within the Psych department. So what would you say – ya (you) know sometimes students come here from other countries and it's a little bit shocking the way that classes are run 'cause (because) they're run differently here. So what would you say were the things that you looked for in a student? Like if a student was going to be successful, what would you look for in that student?

Key Phrasal Verbs

1. To scare off

2. To jot down

3. To speak up

4. To show up

5. To break up

6. To look back on

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Georgia: Well first I would, um, hope that the student was interested.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Georgia: ...in the course.

Lindsay: So choose the course that you...

Georgia: And that they were there because they wanted to be there.

Lindsay: Yes.

Georgia: And... but sometimes students are in a class, an introductory class because they have to be.

Lindsay: Right.

Georgia: They have to choose something in that field.

Lindsay: I know. I had... I had to choose... Ugh... Bio... Intro to Biology and I hated that my freshman year. Ugh!

Georgia: But I was pretty lucky because I taught Child Psychology and most everyone at that... in that college age group of 18 to say 24...

Lindsay: Mm-hm.

Georgia: ...really were interested...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Georgia: ...in **looking back at** their childhoods.

Lindsay: Yeah. They were fascinated by that.

Georgia: Yeah they were. They were.

Lindsay: That's pretty interesting. Okay.

Georgia: So number one was interest.

Lindsay: Okay.

Georgia: So they... I... I... It's really... and showing in it... showing an interest in... in the topic is important...

Lindsay: Okay.

Georgia: ...and...

Lindsay: What's number two?

Georgia: Hm?

Lindsay: What's number two? What's the second criteria, piece of criteria like what do you....

Georgia: Um, come... I think being prepared for class. Um, having read the assignments that.... That... and that they would need to read, plus **jotting down** ideas about... usually they had a journal to write in, um, about 'how does this apply to maybe what they remember about their childhood, about or perhaps other... other people's...?'

Lindsay: Okay.

Georgia: ...childhood's that they knew or...

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Lindsay: Did you... did you just sort of lecture or did you expect students to ask questions or to challenge you?

Georgia: Oh no. No that's why we, you know, certainly it was important for them to come prepared and to, to really have thought about and the journal helped them to think about how to apply this to their lives and so on. So no, I, I, my expectations were that they would, they would participate, participate in um, conversations and small groups at first...

Lindsay: Right. Class participation.

Georgia: Class participation and I would **break them up** into small groups of four, five people in each group so that they could talk over certain questions. I'd give them, each group, a different question and they would, uh, talk amongst themselves, so it would help them to, um, get used to communicating, um, what they've read and what they... how they apply that reading, but in a, in a less threatening way than in front of the whole group.

Lindsay: Okay, that's good. I mean not all professors make that effort to make it less threatening, but some do.

Georgia: Well then we get... then when we were all done talking about the small group, um, topics, and I'd ask somebody... They would volunteer somebody from each small group to tell the whole class what they had talked about...

Lindsay: Okay. Great.

Georgia: ...and what their decisions were and that made them feel more comfortable. They stayed in the same small groups for a while.

Lindsay: Okay.

Georgia: So another time somebody else might have **spoken up**.

Lindsay: And in your syllabus, what weight did you give to, um, exams compared with the rest of...

Georgia: Oh boy.

Lindsay: ...the things, like class participation. Like how...?

Georgia: Oh class participation was very, very big.

Lindsay: Mm-hm.

Georgia: I think it was about 20% of their grade. So whether they wanted to participate in small groups and share or whether they wanted to ask questions, we had... certainly had time, um, before and after small group discussions to have everybody, anybody ask questions or make comments about... sometimes I'd have to.. It wouldn't be... I wouldn't call it a lecture, but a presentation that I might make.

Lindsay: Right. And then they discussed...

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Georgia: ... and then I might ask questions -- throw them out to the whole class of about 50 people...

Lindsay: So, yeah.

Georgia: ...and um... that... that would be nice. I, you know, I tried to make them feel comfortable and...

Lindsay: So the skills that you think that typical universities are looking for in a student in the US are maybe problem-solving skills, working together, critical thinking...

Georgia: Oh definitely.

Lindsay: ...presentation skills maybe.

Georgia: Yes because it's... for usually an end product, they were working (a project), they were working in a small group that might not have been the same small group they had discussions with and then they needed to present...

Lindsay: Mm-hm. That's important.

Georgia: ...back to the class at the end and they... each one of them needed to do something...

Lindsay: Okay.

Georgia: ...in that presentation.

Lindsay: So yeah, so the, the American style of higher education might be a little bit different from other countries.

Georgia: I would say so because I had some students from another country... Do you want me to tell you what country they were from?

Lindsay: Um, sure.

Georgia: All right. Um, they were, uh, from China and I, I was very excited to have them in my class -- about three young ladies. And, so I said, "Oh, I'm looking so much forward to having you in my class. I hope that you share with us how children are raised in China. We're very interested in knowing more about other cultures" and I think that **scared them off**...

Lindsay: Okay...

Georgia: ...because they didn't **show up** the next day to class.

Lindsay: Okay. Who knows? Who knows what happened there. Okay. So it can be threatening, and so we want to try to support students...

Georgia: Yes!

Lindsay: ...in that transition there.

Georgia: Right.

Lindsay: Okay.

Georgia: I think we need, as professors, to know more about cultures from which our students come so that we can...

Lindsay: That's probably true.

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Georgia: ...help support them better.

Lindsay: Mm. Definitely. Okay. Thank you for chatting with me.

Georgia: You're welcome.