



Contains articles by:

- Julie Donnelly
- Alma Alarcón, Lisa Nalbone, Anne Prucha, and Kacie Tartt
- Naim Kapucu and Abdul-Akeem Sadiq
- Shahram Ghiasinejad
- Stacey DiLiberto
- Martha Garcia and Esmeralda Duarte
- Barry Edwards
- Cesar Rivera Cruzado
- Sandra Sousa
- Enrique Guerra-Pujol
- Kersten Schroeder

Listserv

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AIM Knight's Choice Award Julie Donnelly



Dr. Julie Donnelly is Lecturer in the Chemistry Department. She regularly teaches large enrollment introductory Chemistry courses as well as Physical Chemistry and Instructional Experiences for Undergraduate Chemistry. She is the inaugural winner of the AIM Knight's Choice Award.

On February 16, Brandon Greenaway, the Academic Affairs Coordinator for the Student Government Association, presented me with the inaugural Affordable Instructional Materials (AIM) Knights' Choice Award. I was incredibly surprised to learn that I had won this award because I did not feel I had done anything particularly exceptional. I considered my use of "First Day" as the extent of my effort to make course materials affordable. During the AIM High Award Ceremony, almost 600 other faculty members who use "First Day" were recognized. I was so honored to have won this award but did not immediately understand what made me stand out.

Brandon explained the nomination process. Alondra Gittelson, a former student and later my teaching assistant, had nominated me. In her nomination she explained a little more about how I instruct students to access their course materials.

Sometimes I use clickers in my large classes, and the clicker system is included with the textbook I use through "First Day." If all of my students opt-in to "First Day" materials, any clicker activity scores sync automatically in my gradebook. However, I usually have some students who want to purchase a hard copy of the text or who already have a copy from a previous course. These students ask to purchase the clicker system independently from the other "First Day" materials to save money.

When some students opt-in and some buy the clicker system independently, the gradebook cannot sync automatically. Rather than requiring students to opt-in so that my gradebook will sync, I download clicker scores, link them to my roster, and manually upload grades for multiple sections of 450 students weekly. I was lucky to have Alondra helping me in Fall 2021. It was then that she realized the effort I was making to reduce cost for students and nominated me for this award.

Once I understood the award and why I had been nominated for it, it took on new meaning for me. I learned that students notice and appreciate these efforts. I hope this encourages other faculty to consider "First Day" or other affordable course materials. Textbooks are expensive and should not be a barrier to learning when options to lower costs are available.

For faculty looking to reduce the cost of course materials, "First Day" is a low-hanging fruit. The iLab website accurately describes the faculty experience as one in which "little to nothing changes." "First Day" even makes my life a little easier because I know every student enrolled in my course already has access to the textbook during the first week of class.

In the Chemistry Department, we are trying to eliminate the cost of course materials in the Chemistry Fundamentals series. Matt Rex, Nicole Lapeyrouse, Tamra Legron-Rodriguez, and I have been working with iLab and the Center for Distributed Learning to develop a free eText in Pressbooks using existing open-source materials. We are all excited to roll out this free eText this summer and next fall!

I wish to thank Alondra and Brandon for giving me this recognition and to iLab (and so many others) for supporting faculty in reducing the cost of their course materials.

Affordability: Maximizing Open Educational Resources Personalized Adaptive Learning

Alma Alarcón, Lisa Nalbone, Anne Prucha, and Kacie Tartt



Kacie Tartt is Senior Instructor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, where she teaches Spanish and Latin American Studies. She is co-faculty leader of the Journey Cuba study abroad program, and co-created the LAS course, *Cuba: A Collective Portrait*, designated an Integrative Learning course. Now, in the third round of the Course Redesign Initiative supported by the Pegasus Innovation Lab and the UCF Board of Trustees, she works hand in hand with the Center for Distributed Learning to further distance-learning initiatives within the Spanish lower division, most recently exploring Adaptive Learning methods and technology within her discipline.

Alma Alarcón is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, where she teaches courses in Spanish language and linguistics. Since Fall 2020 she has been teaching Spanish courses with Personalized Adaptive Learning (PAL) alongside her colleagues. She is currently working on course development with elementary, intermediate, and advanced Spanish courses incorporating PAL and OER.

Anne Prucha is Senior Instructor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures (MLL) and teaches courses in Spanish, Latin American Studies, and TESOL. She co-founded the Journey Cuba study abroad program and co-created the Integrated Learning-designated course, LAS 3026 - *Cuba: A Collective Portrait*. She has also directed study abroad programs for UCF in Spain and Nicaragua. Currently she is working in the third round of the Course Redesign Initiative with colleagues in MLL and CDL to incorporate Personalized Adaptive Learning and OER content into elementary, intermediate, and advanced Spanish courses.

Lisa Nalbone is Associate Professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, where she teaches Spanish language, literature, and culture. She is the director of the Spanish MA program and the coordinator of the Latin American Studies program. She is currently on a team involved in UCF/CDL's Course Redesign Initiative to incorporate Personalized Adaptive Learning in her courses and is also working toward badging her courses as part of the Affordable Instructional Materials (AIM) initiative.

Our team began collaborating on the redesign of multiple Spanish courses in Fall 2018, with two primary components of our project: using affordable instructional materials and implementing Personalized Adaptive Learning (PAL) to influence and foster student success. To date, we have earned the Affordability Counts badge for a total of three Spanish courses. Here we will focus on those courses as they have made the most impact on affordability initiatives in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. We will also focus on two of these three courses and how their use of PAL has made a positive impact on student learning.

Using affordable instructional materials has become a cornerstone in Elementary Spanish I and II (SPN 1120C and SPN 1121C) and Advanced Spanish Grammar and Composition (SPN 3300). We have designed these undergraduate level courses with content that incorporates Open Educational Resources (OER) and affordable instructional materials. These

online courses also use the PAL platform Realizeit, at no cost to our online students.

In addition to presenting content and practice in Realizeit, we have created numerous Materia widgets to enhance learning. Fundamental to the team's work has been access to UCF resources, as the courses incorporate Canvas features such as Conferences, Pages, Files, and Discussions, as well as access to embedded content like YouTube videos, grammar websites, and imported Commons material. We have also used Lightboard to create videos centered on grammar, vocabulary, and culture topics to deliver course content in a meaningful and structured manner, addressing both linguistic proficiency and cultural competency. These materials promote student learning that recognizes diversity and inclusivity in a global environment.

One point that we would like to emphasize is the "impact on access" for its monumental shift in our courses' approach to

affordability. Textbook/Courseware packages in introductory language courses are expensive, generally in excess of \$200.00. Since adopting affordable instructional materials, 2,761 students have taken SPN 1120C and SPN 1121C and have not had to pay anything for materials. Fifty-eight students have taken SPN 3300 with PAL, spending below \$20 per credit-hour, meeting the threshold for affordability under UCF's Affordable Instructional Materials (AIM) badging initiative. We are guided by the principle of Open Education that "prioritizes identification and removal of many types of barriers to education and learning" (Walz 48).

Institutional support has been fundamental to our ability to redesign our classes and has included collaboration with our instructional designer and other colleagues from CDL, UCF librarians, and graduate and undergraduate student course assistants. The support of our department chair has also been instrumental in the success of our project.

We implemented PAL via the platform Realizeit in these courses to better serve our students, since "digital generation learners are increasingly pursuing diversified, personalized and comfortable learning needs, learning styles and learning scenarios, etc." (Li, He, and Xue, 243). Currently, student tech fees cover the cost of Realizeit in fully online (W) classes. This component of the project was focused on adaptive learning which, according to UCF's Center for Distributed Learning, is:

...a software platform approach that provides each student with an individualized learning experience by allowing them to progress along their unique learning path through the course content based on their knowledge, skills, and learning needs. Adaptive learning systems customize the presentation of the content or present new concepts to the student based on their individual activities and responses. (<https://cdl.ucf.edu/teach/pal/>)

Students in our courses frequently have varying levels of knowledge when it comes to the Spanish language, especially as we are in Florida where a considerable percentage of the population is comprised of native Spanish speakers, but often publisher courseware can be "one size fits all." PAL addresses this challenge by creating an individualized learning path for each student, allowing them to focus more on what they don't know and what they need to learn.

As a way to measure the impact of our initiatives and to articulate the types of successes we have encountered, both quantitative and qualitative data collection is ongoing. Thus far, data for the elementary Spanish courses from the first semester these courses were taught (Spring 2019) have shown increased student success (grade of A, B, or C), decreased with-

drawal rates, and increased student satisfaction as indicated by measures on the Student Perception of Instruction survey. For example, in SPN1120C Elementary Spanish I, student success increased 23%, and the withdrawal rate decreased 7%. Overall student satisfaction increased from 4.41 to 4.55, a .14-point increase (scale of 1–5). Further, student testimonials affirm the quality of the learning experience and the impact of affordability, with comments that highlight both affordability and innovation in curricular design. We are currently in the process of gathering data from Fall 2019 through Fall 2021 to assist us in the continuation of our efforts to examine the effects of our project on student learning and success.

Students have expressed their satisfaction with our approach to blending OER and PAL. A sample of recent student feedback appears below:

"No textbook" is quite possibly the most pleasant thing I've heard since the pandemic took over our lives. Looking forward to class!

...thank you for the work you're doing creating sections of this class that don't have the extremely pricey textbook. As a low-income student that was SUPER worried about this aspect when initially signing up for classes, I can't tell you what a relief it was to join your class and discover I not only didn't have to worry about that, but was still receiving a great education with the online, interactable interface we used.

As someone with very little confidence in language-learning abilities, the course was very well-done and easy to handle as a beginner. Not having to purchase a textbook was wonderful.

The successes we have experienced thus far have shown the connection between the benefits of incorporating quality course materials in the form of OER content—delivered in the personalized learning setting—and our students' acquisition of knowledge. We look forward to providing an update on our project at a future date!

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Improving Reflection and Professional Development in a Leadership Class: A Deep Learning Approach

Naim Kapucu and Abdul-Akeem Sadiq



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Abdul-Akeem Sadiq, Ph.D., is Associate Professor in the School of Public Administration at UCF. He is also the Director of the Master of Public Administration and Master of Public Policy programs. His research focuses on community flood risk management, organizational disaster preparedness, mass fatality management, and collaborative governance. Dr. Sadiq has over a decade of teaching experience both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. His teaching interests include public administration, emergency management, homeland security, public policy, terrorism, and public safety.

Deep learning is important for reflective practice and leadership, especially for public service professionals as they need to build leadership competencies to function effectively within democratic governance and deal with complex policy problems. Deep learning is defined by the National Research Council as a “process through which an individual becomes capable of taking what was learned in one situation and applying it to new situations” (NRC, 2012, p. Sum-4) in *Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century*. For deep learning to occur, classroom pedagogy must go beyond just providing information to students. Application of reflective practice as an element of deep learning needs to be developed in addition to theoretical knowledge. Reflection can be described as a process of intentional evaluation of personal and professional experience for the purpose of developing self and improving future practice. Reflective assignments offer opportunities for faculty and students to engage in deep learning and cognitive development. Through reflection, students learn how to take personal responsibility in fostering their own learning and develop metacognition, persistence, and stamina. We aim to highlight the deep learning approach and apply it to a public service leadership course in this short paper.

Deep Learning Strategies for Leadership Development

The Leadership in Public Service course focuses on leadership from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Students explore their strengths and weaknesses as managerial leaders and develop competencies in the areas of management, planning, and stakeholder engagement, among others. While students learn about theoretical frameworks, they focus on leadership action cycle framework that is useful in analyzing and developing oneself and others for public service leadership positions. With the idea of helping students to become aware of their personal and leadership characteristics to make

informed decisions, the reflective assignments become a core aspect of the course. By the end of this course, students are expected to recognize and define public service leadership issues at all levels of government and nonprofit organizations, to offer insightful analysis, and to ask critical questions, offer suggestions, and make sound arguments concerning how issues might be addressed or solved from a leadership perspective. The focus of the leadership course is not so much on the material as it is on students’ style of leadership and the development of competencies to help them become better leaders. Reflective assignments are structured in a logical sequence and culminate in the development of a major leadership research paper at the end of the course.

Provide a framework for students to write reflection assignments. Students are provided with a leadership action cycle framework at the beginning of the semester from the core reading for broader understanding of the leadership topic. The orientation and the first module of the course emphasize the role of reflective practice and communities of practice idea. These two perspectives are included to explain personal reflection and collaborative learning over the semester. Students were reminded that the most critical question they need to consider as they read and complete assignments over the semester is: How might the information you gained from this reading affect you personally and professionally?

Guide the students through the process for higher level learning. The course includes a short assignment called “reflection paper.” This assignment integrates activities to stimulate deep learning and contemplation, and it helps students use incremental steps in building their group leadership research paper with critical thinking. Moreover, this assignment also provides students with the opportunity to formulate their own questions to facilitate discussion and collective reflection in

the course webpage discussion board. A detailed grading rubric is supplied to students, which provides ways to assess students' learning regarding the application of leadership theories, frameworks on leadership action, and students' reflections from personal and professional experiences. Each student shares the reflection paper in advance with other students and asks for their feedback. Students who submit a reflection paper in a particular week also facilitate discussions around the topic of the week with reflection and contemplation in mind.

Provide opportunities for students to “practice” reflective thinking and writing. Students analyze a case from the textbook or current events that require leadership action. The case briefs represent a real-world scenario related to the topic of the week and allow students to explore real situations and critical decisions that one might face in public service leadership. Applying the theories, models, frameworks, and concepts covered in reading materials, students use these perspectives to illustrate the case dilemma and possible decisions or actions of a public service leader. The briefs address the problem(s) or issue(s) at the core of the case and/or an evaluation of actions taken by a leader in the case to address the problem(s) or issue(s); an application of the theories, frameworks, and models covered in the course; possible decisions/action strategies; and recommendation for next steps for leadership. Students need to include their reflection for the case analysis.

Periodically provide feedback. Regular feedback is an important component of deep learning. Formal feedback and grades are provided as well as additional feedback during open discussions on all reflection assignments to promote engagement and elaborate on certain topics for further engagement. Students receive a guideline that indicates the assignment must be a critical assessment of themes and claims within the readings or the application of the theory in an empirical article. Students are encouraged to be creative, energetic, empathetic, and to be engaged with the materials.

Finally, evaluate student learning through reflection activities over the semester. All assignments in the course have personal and professional reflection elements as they are critical for leadership development. Students write a group leadership research paper, the goal of which is for students to use the concepts, frameworks, and tools covered in this course to analyze (1) a particular public service leader, 2) a particular organization (or subunit), or (3) a particular issue (e.g., contracting, or response to a significant event or a crisis) that interests them. The core of the paper is expected to be analytical and answer a “why” question, e.g., Why did a reorganization fail (or succeed)? How was response to a particular crisis managed, and why? Analysis in the paper is expected to utilize

relevant leadership concepts and frameworks from readings discussed in the course.

Conclusion

Course materials and weekly modules provide opportunities for students to mutually engage in the process of learning and sharing knowledge and personal and professional experience over the semester. The course is conducted in a participatory fashion with discussions focused on a common set of readings to promote the development of critical thinking, reflection, and practice. When possible, students process these learning activities, asking about not only “what” was learned, but also the “so what” and “now what” questions for reflective practice. Students, especially those at upper-level leadership positions, appreciated the pedagogy and strategies used in the course. They repeatedly said, “We consider this course as a therapy session.” The use of Webcourses for additional collaboration, reflection, and engagement was also appreciated; one student highlighted that “the content included in each module and the way the professor encourages us to participate in the discussion board kept us engaged on a regular basis.” These comments from students reflected on the quality of assignments they produced, including the final leadership research paper. The integration of collaboration and reflection into the course increased student engagement and ownership of the materials and assignments as indicated by student feedback.

Acknowledgement: The essay utilized resources from the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning 2021 Summer Faculty Development Conference. A longer manuscript developed on deep learning in public service programs will be published in a major pedagogy journal.



Undergraduate Research as a Way to Address “Engagement” and “Equity”

Shahram Ghiasinejad



Shahram Ghiasinejad is Associate Lecturer in the Psychology Department. He holds a B.A. in Computer Science from the University of Texas at Austin, and an M.S. and a Ph.D. in Cognition and Neuroscience from the University of Texas at Dallas. His research interests are broadly concerned with understanding human language comprehension through a combination of experimental and computational modeling approaches.

I attended the FCTL 2021 Winter Conference that focused on two main topics. First, challenges with student engagement and motivation in the context of providing flexible accommodations across modalities. Second, ensuring fair and equitable learning experiences for all students. In this article, I share my thoughts and ideas related to these topics.

I teach at the Sanford/Lake Mary campus, where most of my students are transfer students from the community colleges in the area. My students are typically minority students and from lower socioeconomic status. Over the years, I have identified the following needs and concerns of my students:

1. Inadequately prepared for UCF academic demands.
2. Financial hardship, family, and other responsibilities outside the classroom.
3. Lack of knowledge about options and resources available outside the classroom.

Therefore, concerns related to “Engagement” and “Equity” have been front and center in my classes. Recent events surrounding social justice, social tensions, and discussions of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have provided a framework for me to think about these challenges. I was struggling with the same issues on my own without knowing that others might be facing similar challenges. More importantly, I have been able to access many resources and training on these issues. In fact, most of what I will present here is based on the knowledge I have gained by attending conferences, training, and workshops at UCF and at other national organizations.

For the purposes of this article, I will focus on item 3. Specifically, I will focus on “undergraduate research” as a way to address Engagement and Motivation. But more importantly, I will discuss undergraduate research as a way of ensuring fair and equitable learning experiences for all students.

I have tried a few strategies to generate interest among students and to promote undergraduate research. On the first day

of class, I discuss topics related to the theory of knowledge and the role of education in their lives, a theme that I carry throughout the course. I also assign individual research projects on topics dealing with their daily challenges. This activity serves a dual purpose. First, students get an opportunity to research a topic of interest that is relevant to their daily lives. Second, it allows me to learn about their struggles. Finally, I encourage them to continue their research by enrolling in independent research with me.

Working with students on their research projects in a directed research course typically lasts at least one semester. This extended contact time allows for the opportunity to learn about and to acknowledge the strengths and assets that they bring to their projects, given their unique life experiences. It also provides for the opportunity to build upon their existing knowledge and to expand their academic skills. All the while engaging them and making sure they have fair access to resources that are available to them.

Another important point to consider regarding undergraduate research is the concern about the selection process as a possible barrier. For example, to qualify for the Honors in the Major program, the GPA requirement is 3.5 and above. For Directed Independent Research/Study, students with higher GPAs and writing/research skills are recruited. However, students who meet these criteria and pursue these options are typically students who do not face the challenges noted earlier.

To address this concern, I decided to change my approach to recruiting students. I started to look for curiosity in my students; I took it upon myself to create an environment in which they can explore and express their curiosity and provided resources and activities to help them develop an interest in a topic. I also looked for commitment and dedication. Interestingly, I observed that most of my students, due to their real-life struggles, are highly committed and highly dedicated individuals. Finally, even in absence of these qualities, I try to identify and work with the skills and assets they possess.

Of course, implementing my modified approach to engage students in undergraduate research is more challenging and is more work. It is harder to come up with quality and feasible projects, and it takes extra effort to teach the basic skills needed to support their projects. One needs to be flexible and to accommodate students given their challenges noted earlier. Finally, students are more likely to withdraw from their projects along the way due to their daily challenges.

Given the events of the last two years, no presentation is complete without saying something about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because I was not able to interact with

students in-person during the pandemic, I offered numerous optional zoom meetings and sent announcements to promote and encourage undergraduate research.

In the last three years, I have made an intentional effort to engage students in undergraduate research. As a result, I am happy to report that I have co-authored six research presentations and received three grants based on the research projects conducted with my undergraduate students. I have also trained 20 undergraduate teaching assistants, the majority of whom are from underrepresented groups. Currently, I am working with four students on their Honors thesis and independent research.

To demonstrate a positive outcome of my attempt to engage and encourage my transfer students at our regional campus, I share the following acknowledgment from one of my transfer student's honors thesis:

A special thank you to my thesis chair, Dr. Shahram Ghiasinejad for being my mentor. His unwavering patience, intuitive demeanor, and feedback have allowed me to explore and grow in the field of research but also as a person. Thank you for instilling confidence in my ability and reminding me to persevere.

Finally, I must note that before I intentionally promoted research opportunities, I did not have even a single student from our regional campus approach me about research or any other academically related opportunities available to them.

Yogic Minds In and Out of the Classroom: Incorporating Yoga Techniques in Teaching and Learning Exactly What Counts as the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning?

Stacey DiLiberto



Stacey DiLiberto has been a Lecturer of Humanities and Cultural Studies in the Philosophy Department since 2019, where she teaches GEP humanities courses to over 300 students each semester in-person and online. She also teaches interdisciplinary courses in postcolonial theory, Latin American, and Latinx cultural studies.

Being an educator is a challenging but highly rewarding experience. As scholar-teachers, we try not only to be experts in our subjects but to find new, innovative methods to meet the needs of our students. For me, merging personal interests with professional practice has always been a bench-

mark for my approach to teaching. As a humanities professor tasked with making the humanities relevant to many reluctant first-year UCF students enrolled in my GEP courses, it is extremely important that I find ways to make my students' experiences in my classroom meaningful, and one way I have been able to meet this need is by integrating contemplative practices because of my personal experiences with yoga.

Wait, yoga? you might ask. What does that have to do with the humanities or with teaching? Isn't yoga physical fitness? You're not a phys-ed teacher!

I understand these doubts, but hear me out. For me, yoga has had everything to do with teaching and my approach to the humanities.

I have been practicing yoga for most of my adult life, and in 2016, I embarked on yoga teacher training not only to deepen my physical practice but also to study yoga philosophy more closely. Through these studies, I found that yoga not only improved my physical and mental well-being but also shifted my approaches to my profession as a teacher. I learned how to "chill out" a lot more, not taking classroom management challenges so personally and empathizing with students more deeply. Since achieving my yoga teacher certification in 2017, I have included yogic practices in the classroom.

Yoga, as we learn, is not just a physical practice. That is just a small part of it. More importantly, it encourages contemplation, which no matter the academic discipline, is essential to meaningful learning. It allows us to step back and fully consider why we are doing what we do: are we just going through the motions (e.g., getting the grade to pass the class, delivering the same unrevised lecture from five years ago, etc.) or are we really engaging with our tasks and surroundings to get something more out of them? Contemplation promotes intentional practice, allowing us to find significance and value in our actions, which is a core tenet of the humanities that I hope students will gain from my courses: how individuals understand themselves and each other and how they make meaning in our world.

I have incorporated contemplative yogic practices in various ways, depending on the course. One activity that I have included in all classes, no matter the subject, is intention setting, which is something one also does before practicing physical asana (movement). On the first day of classes, I ask students to set an intention for the semester (to pass the class, to learn something new about X subject, to be happy, etc.). I normally have students write down this intention which I then collect (if the class is small) or ask students to hang on to for later use. If the class is online, I ask students to incorporate this intention into their "icebreaker" discussion. Then, around midterm, I do

a “check-in” and ask students to revisit the intention they set at the beginning of the term: are they on track, do they need to revise or improve? Finally, students revisit their intention during the final week of classes in a “final thoughts” assignment: a reflection of what was learned during the semester and how successful they were in realizing their intention. The “final thoughts” assignment is one I look forward to reading since I am always impressed by the level of engagement and thoughtfulness students put into the assignment. By observing students complete this semester-long exercise, I have seen several student learning outcomes achieved. First, intention setting allows students to set short-term goals for success, a useful skill for outside the classroom as well. It makes students accountable to their goals and to themselves, encouraging motivation. Lastly, intention setting encourages students to define their purpose and look inward, which is not only a goal of my humanities courses but the purpose of yoga as well!

Just from this one example, we can hopefully see that yoga is not just some physical exercise for super-flexible people or some mystical philosophy to which only few have access. Instead, yoga is a tool for contemplation and, ultimately, peace. In such a high-stakes and high-stress environment like academia, especially academia now post-COVID-19, we need more contemplative practices in the classroom to help facilitate mindfulness and wellness for ourselves and for our students. Namaste!

Emboldening Analytical Thinking for the Understanding of Cultural Contexts in Languages: From Introductory to Advanced Stages of Teaching and Learning

Martha Garcia and Esmeralda Duarte



Dr. Martha García is Professor, Coordinator of the Bachelor of Arts in Spanish Program & the Minor in Spanish, and the Faculty Liaison of the Honors Undergraduate Thesis programs of the College of Arts & Humanities. Her research concentrates on the aesthetic aspects of the literature and culture of

Medieval Spain, as well as early Modern and Enlightenment periods of Spain. She has presented her research at regional, national, and international conferences. She is active in NEH programs and has been the recipient of teaching and research awards and recognitions.

Dr. Esmeralda Duarte is Lecturer and Lower-Division Spanish Language Coordinator in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. She received her Ph.D. in Latin American literature from the University of Florida. Her research interests include Latin American cultural and literary studies, foreign language education, and technology integration.



I. Preliminary Considerations

Based on the current literature review found in a select bibliography (2018–2020), we proposed the incorporation of critical thinking assignments starting in the introductory Spanish courses and scaffolding this practice to reach the advanced level. Since our senior students count with the possibility to take classes at the graduate level, this initiative contributes to preparing not only students minoring in Spanish, but also students majoring in Spanish towards graduation and beyond. Our proposed initiative of incorporating critical thinking and analytical questions at an early stage in the learning process has informed us and assisted us for the task of course review and program assessment.

II. Ownership in Formulating Questions

Based on our participation in the 2021 Summer Faculty Development Conference at the UCF Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, we have been equipped with the support of relevant studies and speakers' presentations that led us to understand the benefit of critical thinking through an environment where students formulate their own questions.

When students work together in the introductory levels and later individually at the advanced level, learners can create a space where dialogue with the proper skills in oral inter-

actions, a select repertoire of literary texts, and the need for cultural sensitivity become a reality in their language acquisition journey. Reciprocally, when students are prepared with critical thinking skills in introductory Spanish courses, and they bring them along to the advanced level, these analytical abilities—in conjunction with the interrelation of applicable dexterities in verbal communication, in reading and writing, and a culturally responsive curriculum—enrich and represent an asset in the acquisition of the intended language.

The features that we implemented to facilitate the formulation of questions in several in-person and virtual learning modalities enhance the existent tools already utilized for pedagogical purposes. Towards this aim, it is essential to remember that the implementation of presenting and supporting arguments should take place according to the proper style of expression in each discipline; the applicability of the argument into the subject; and the level of intended instruction. What reinforces our approach is the recognition that grouping students to formulate their own questions at the introductory courses, and encouraging independent critical thinking in the advanced classes, may be beneficial throughout the entire learning experience. During this activity, we have also reconfirmed the efficiency of self-evaluation and self-assessment with emphasis on the *process*, and not only on the *results*. This praxis in analytical exercises may prepare students to consider courses with *High Impact Practices* designations along their plan of studies, where learners may gain competency inside and outside of the confines of the learning environment.

III. Adaptive Expertise across Levels of Cultural Contexts in Language

In the curriculum designed for the first-year Spanish classes, a critical thinking component was integrated into two discussions assigned for students to learn about the rich cultures of Latin America and Spain. Since the objective of these discussions is that students learn about complex cultural issues, the activities are assigned in English for strategic learning purposes as recommended by the ACTFL. For the cultural discussions, students need to watch a selection of videos and write about the topics that interest them the most. As part of our project's objective of encouraging critical thinking, students were also asked to formulate questions for their classmates to answer. As expected, the level of engagement in these assignments improved significantly. The modified discussions required students to make an additional cognitive effort and gave them control of the direction of the discussion. Some students did additional research, and the topics discussed were beyond the content presented in the videos.

In upper division courses designed for the third and fourth year in Spanish, parallelly, the integration of students' formulating their own questions took place according to the respective degree of complexity of the material studied and the expected level of proficiency in the Spanish language. The ownership in the formulation of meaningful questions leads to research questions in courses related to specific areas of concentration. The integration of this component validated the significance of analytical thinking in maturing cognitively and reflected the level of knowledge acquisition of the learners closely related to embracing language, literature, and culture. Students, for example, demonstrated inquisitiveness and keenness in writing and formulating their own topics and/or questions when they approach themes that are new for them, or when they are not yet fully knowledgeable about the subject of study or exploration. Equivalently, if the students count with a solid background and previous preparation in the subject of study, learners seem to feel more confident also in responding and/or expanding the provided questions and are willing to move to the next level of competency and proficiency.

IV. Observations and Reflections

As students thought critically about the cultural issues presented in the videos, formulated their own questions, and answered those of their classmates, or worked individually in researching and responding to their own questions, a deeper understanding of the topics was evident. In more general terms, we also noticed that students feel motivated and encouraged exercising critical thinking in groups during the introductory levels of language acquisition while students would prefer individual formulation of questions in advanced courses. At the advanced level, specifically, this outcome corroborates the active growth and progress in language competency, not only in the practice of a second or third language, but also represents the expected cognitive and social advance, where skilled students displayed a gradual increase in confidence and autonomy. From introductory up to advanced degrees of improvement, emboldening students to think critically actively contributes to their own interpretation of cultural contexts, enhancing the interaction among familiar and unfamiliar communities. We may conclude, then, that the understanding of the value of critical and analytical thinking is applicable and relevant to *any* subject of study, and it does increase the motivation and foci in students to move forward towards their ultimate aims.

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Thinking about Late Work Policies
Barry Edwards



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What should we do with assignments students submit late? It’s something we all encounter teaching classes at UCF. I deduct 10% per day late. This seems like a reasonable approach to me, but I decided to investigate two basic questions: (1) What do my faculty colleagues do about late work? and (2) What difference do late work policies make? I have found that there is a lot of variation in how faculty treat late work and how we treat late work has a significant impact on class outcomes, particularly for students who are at-risk for academic probation and disqualification. I encourage other instructors to examine their late work policies and adopt thoughtful policies.

To get a general idea of how college instructors handle late work, I analyzed a random sample of 30 syllabi from courses taught in my department over a recent five-year period.¹ I summarize the results in Table 1.

Late work policy on syllabus	Percentage	Count
No lateness deductions	0.0%	0
Percentage deductions	60.0%	18
Late work not accepted	16.7%	5
No stated policy	23.3%	7
Totals	100.0%	30

Table 1. Late Work Policies on Sample of Course Syllabi

1 Classes taught 2016 to 2020, see Syllabi Archive, available at <https://sciences.ucf.edu/politics/syllabi/>.

10% per day is the most common policy (14 classes), but the details of this policy vary. One instructor deducts 10% per day, but only up to 30% off. Other instructors deduct 10% per day, but do not accept assignments more than 3 days late, 4 days, or one week late. One instructor deducts 1% per hour late, another takes 50% off all late work, while another varies the percentage deduction by assignment type. In my classes, I follow a 10% deduction per day late policy, but will waive lateness deductions when lateness is caused by unforeseeable adversities, like health issues, and situations covered by general policies for active-duty military, student-athletes, religious observances, and the like.

To get a general idea of how late work policies affect my grade distribution, I applied several different late work policies to a couple of classes I taught in the past few years (70 students total). Table 2 shows the results. Both classes required students to submit assignments every week.

Rule for late work	Course Average	Grade Range	DF Rate
No lateness deductions	85.7% (B)	25.9 - 96.6%	2.9%
10% deducted per day	84.6% (B)	20.5 - 96.1%	8.6%
No credit for late work	81.8% (B-)	14.6 - 95.9%	14.3%

Table 2. Effect of Different Late Work Policies on Course Grades

When I analyze data from my own classes, I find that 62.9% of students submitted at least one graded assignment late. The overall difference between my 10% per day deduction and a strict, no credit for late work policy is approximately 3 percentage points. The overall difference between my 10% per day policy and imposing no lateness deductions is approximately 1 percentage point. The difference between the most lenient and strictest policies is half a letter grade (from B to B-).

The choice of lateness policy has the biggest effect on the low-end of the grade distribution. With 10% per day deducted, 8.6% of students finish with D or F grades. If no credit is awarded for late work, the DF rate jumps to 14.3%, but if no lateness deductions are imposed, the DF rate is just 2.9%.² *The difference between the most lenient and strictest late work policies in my sample classes corresponds to nearly a 5-fold increase in the DF rate!*

There is one student in my sample who finished with a 45.2% (F) under the strictest policy, a 71.5% (C-) with percentage deductions, and 88.0% (B+) when no lateness deductions are imposed. A procedural rule determines whether this fails the class, just passes, or gets a good grade. There’s a wide range of potential outcomes here. I take some comfort in taking a middle-ground approach, but I’m still not sure what the outcome should be. *[Editor’s note: there is currently no university-wide policy that governs grading late submissions; this question is usually left up to the discretion of the instructor, but check with your department as they may have internal guidelines for you to follow.]*

More research needs to be done to identify best practices, but I think we can take some steps to improve how we treat late work. A good first step, I think, is to have a clear late work policy on your syllabus. 23.3% of syllabi I reviewed had no late work

2 It’s possible that a strict no-late-work policy would motivate the student to submit fewer late assignments. I think the student’s lateness is more habit than utility-maximizing strategy, but I am not reporting results of a controlled experiment here.

policies. You should expect students to submit some assignments late and grading them on case-by-case basis as the course goes along will be inefficient and potentially unfair.

As an instructor, I understand some of the reasons for not accepting late work. It can reduce one's grading workload and may teach students about the importance of following deadlines. However, awarding no credit for late work or imposing drastic penalties on late work seems excessive and unreasonable. This leads to my second recommendation: Consider deducting some percentage per day late, rather than giving no credit for late assignments, when you can. The gradebook settings in UCF webcourses allow instructors to implement a reasonable late work policy efficiently (see Figure 1). If you set a 10% deduction per day policy, UCF webcourses will track submission times, apply the policy automatically, and allow you to waive or modify its lateness deductions.

Figure 1. Late Work Settings and Options in UCF Webcourses

Instructors should recognize that there are cultural differences when it comes to due dates and deadlines. Strict attention to the office clock may be the norm for those of English and German descent, but other cultures and nationalities are more casual when with respect to time (Brislin and Kim, 2003; Graham, 1981; Streamas 2020; Usunier and Valette-Florence, 1994; Usunier and Valette-Florence, 2007; Van Eerde and Azar, 2019; White, Valik, and Dialmy, 2011). We should recognize that others may think about time differently and that imposing our “time style” on others can have negative consequences. By writing this article, I hope to make other faculty aware of the significance of late work policies and encourage them to consider late work policies like 10% deductions per day late.

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Rapid Transition to Online Teaching: Using Micro-Lectures and Podcasts

Cesar Rivera Cruzado



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The rapid shift to online course delivery throughout the recent pandemic has prompted a renewed emphasis on the importance of student engagement and its impacts on the social and affective dimensions of online learning (Lemay et al., 2021). Experts in higher education research agree that engagement is “the glue” that ties critical contexts to student success, such as those pertaining to students’ home lives, their university experiences, interactions with peers, and their community (Bowden et al., 2021). Recognizing the importance of engagement during the shift to online learning in the pandemic and what Lemay et al. (2021) have deemed a “large social experiment” (p. 1), we designed micro-lectures and podcasts for a face-to-face culinary laboratory at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, which rapidly converted to the online modality at the beginning of the lockdown in March 2020. Following the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison et al., 2010), which is based on three presences (i.e., social, teaching, and cognitive), we implemented the micro-lectures and podcasts with corresponding assessments, thus targeting the teaching and cognitive presences of CoI (Garrison et al., 2010; Orlowski et al., 2021).

Recorded Micro Lectures

One of the strategies used to mitigate the effects of isolation and to achieve engagement between the students and the instructor was the development and use of recorded “micro-lectures,” which were a series of videos, each approximately three-to-seven

minutes in duration. When micro-lectures were implemented in conjunction with reflective measurement assessments at the end of each video, academic research conducted in this area demonstrated that students used higher order thinking skills (Orlowski et al., 2021), thus achieving connection with the cognitive presence (Garrison et al., 2010). Harnessing the easy access and on-demand format, the micro-lectures were designed to promote active learning while deepening student knowledge. As evidenced by UCF's internal measures (SPI) and the previously mentioned empirical study (see Orlowski et al., 2021), the cognitive presence was realized using the micro-lectures in the summer and fall of 2020 and led to high levels of student satisfaction in the online labs.

Podcast "The Front Burner"

As part of our efforts to provide students with practical and cutting-edge educational experiences, we also implemented a series of podcasts as part of the course. A podcast is a set of digital audio files that can be downloaded to any computer or mobile device. "The Front Burner" podcasts were intentionally designed for this online culinary lab and consisted of eight episodes in a radio interview format, where the instructor engaged in stimulating conversation with industry professionals on carefully curated topics relevant to the course material and learning objectives. Since its first implementation in Spring 2021, "The Front Burner" has reimagined not only the way our content was delivered, but also the way in which students accessed and engaged with the content. In addition, as an asynchronous tool, students approached the instructor directly, thus reinforcing the teaching presence within the CoI framework, pivotal to achieving the expected learning outcomes (Garrison & Akyol, 2013).

The changes implemented due to the pandemic allowed us to explore a variety of digital learning tools in the spectrum of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Like many ICTs, micro-lectures and podcasts have the advantage of being easily adapted to different subjects and courses. Prior empirical research has demonstrated that the integration of video and audio resources into coursework positively affects student collaboration, content retention, and student motivation (Widodo & Gunawan, 2019). Furthermore, the pervasive use of smartphones underscores students' access to video and podcast content quickly and easily, particularly outside of class (Besser et al., 2021).

The introduction and use of micro-lectures and podcasts implemented during an unprecedented time in the history of higher education has revealed both advantageous and unanticipated outcomes as a powerful mechanism for teaching and learning. Although the results have been positive, and to a certain extent have exceeded our expectations, we understand that there is still room for improvement, especially within the

development and use of the podcasts. For example, while the podcasts fulfilled the instructor and cognitive needs of students beyond our expectations, they did not satisfy the social presence criteria for the holistic CoI framework (Garrison et al., 2010). One potential remedy is to utilize podcasting software which allows for a social or discussion component such as VoiceThread (<https://voicethread.com/>) or Flipgrid (<https://info.flipgrid.com/>). From a theoretical perspective, our interest is to explore the effectiveness of this medium and test the validity of new scales of measurement on how podcasts can be integrated with other theoretical frameworks.

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The Self-Care/Mindless Generation

Sandra Sousa



Sandra Sousa is Associate Professor in the Modern Languages and Literatures Department, where she teaches Portuguese language, Lusophone and Latin American Studies. Her research interests include colonialism and post-colonialism; Portuguese colonial literature; race relations in Mozambique; war, dictatorship and violence in contemporary Portuguese and Luso-African literature; and feminine writing in Portuguese, Brazilian and African literature.

Participating in the last FCTL Winter Conference dedicated to “Strategies for Engagement, Equity, and Wellness” has led me to think deeply about the question of mental health, which is currently one of the “hot” themes in the university setting, certainly intensified by the pandemic. It seems that you hear the expression everywhere, and I sometimes wonder if, just by saying it, we don’t all automatically get influenced by the sometimes-negative connotations that are associated with it. The reality is that there is no established definition of mental health, and each definition is not merely ambiguous, but quite different from one another.

As I look back twenty years ago, when I began teaching at my first institution in the United States as a newly foreign educator just out of college, things have, no doubt, changed. And, I am tempted to say, dramatically. I used to teach only face-to-face classes and entered a classroom full of energetic and noisy students every day at eight a.m. I still remember thinking, “How can they be so awake at this time in the morning?” Even for an early bird like myself that was quite shocking. I suppose I should have refrained from those thoughts, since just fifteen years or so after, I would be thinking, “How can they be so quiet, not talking with each other, and not able to lift their heads from their phones? What happened?” The reality is that twenty years ago I had to literally yell at my students to stop talking because class had already started. Years later, I was taking their phones out of their hands and asking them to say a word to the person next to them. Is this what they call getting old; or what our parents and grandparents have been criticizing about us in what seems like a pattern as old as the dinosaurs?

Perhaps the most disturbing difference is not the advancements in technology, but the alienation that it carries and its effects on younger generations. I could list quite a few positive factors about our technology-driven society, from which my own situation of living abroad has also benefited. Nonetheless, twenty years ago I can’t recall hearing the expression “mental health” amongst our students and peers. Was I distracted? I remember laughs, a sense of being relaxed, lots of

talking, creativity (I don’t want to mention a group presentation on nudist beaches in Portugal where one student came to class wearing only a towel...), some cheating by writing verbs on desks, but not a word on “I need to take care of my mental health.”

I am still trying to figure out what is happening, and I am also trying hard not to fall into madness. I am getting more and more convinced that #mentalhealth is a highly contagious thing. What I have noticed, and following my last piece regarding my class assignment “Time to celebrate yourselves and be positive,” is that in the past two years that I have implemented it, there is a topic that has been consistent amongst the vast majority of students: a preoccupation, almost on the verge of obsession, with self-care and mindfulness practices. In this space dedicated to students’ posting something positive about their week and/or their accomplishments, it is a common thread to see comments such as: “Then yesterday (second break day) I was able to meet up with a few members of the XYZ Health & Wellness working group for our ‘wellness retreat.’ It involved some calisthenics, yoga, and a meditation”; “Finally, I’ve been able to meditate, exercise”; “One of my goals for myself is to start everyday with some sort of self-care”; “Does anyone know about good YouTube videos for meditation?”; “I’ve also been trying to do more on the self-care end as a new year’s resolution. I don’t do yoga (which I probably should because I’m the least flexible person ever), but I did start doing meditation at the beginning and end of the days so I can start the day off well and then later concentrate to sleep good. I think it’s helped a lot and I recommend it because it just makes you feel like you are taking care of yourself more, I’m not sure how to describe it but I love it. There are a lot of meditation videos on YouTube!”; “Today was day 19 of my 30 days of yoga, and even though it has been hard to get out of bed every morning early enough to do this, I am amazed at how far I have come”; and the list of examples could fill out the pages of a book.

Striving for a balance is also part of the issues that our students are struggling with and probably their biggest challenge: “I’m making a concerted effort to try and cherish my last semester here, and balance a healthy social life with finishing off strong academically”; “Making it to the end of the week with at least half of my sanity has proven to be a challenge”; “Time management is something I struggle with too, but I am trying really hard to be better at it”; “Enjoying a little change of pace” seems to be a goal as increasingly students are going on cruises and trips at any given time during the semester. I am not sure if the wave of mental health issues is here to stay, but it is my belief that what I have labeled the “The Self-Care/Mindless Generation” is here to teach us something that I suspect we have lost track of during the past twenty years, as we became entangled in the hyperinflation of the present given

us by our fast-paced and demanding, work-centered societies. Our students are going back to nature to restore themselves, they are exercising and meditating, trying to eat and sleep better; they are invested in spending more time with family and friends, even reading books! So, I ask myself: why aren't we following their lead?

Teaching *Tiger King*

Enrique Guerra-Pujol



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Before coming to UCF in 2014, he was a Ronald Coase Fellow and a law professor at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Puerto Rico.

Are you Team Carole or Team Joe?

When most of the world came to an abrupt halt amid the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of people somehow ended up watching the unorthodox docuseries *Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem, and Madness*, which was released by Netflix on March 20, 2020. My undergraduate business law students, graduate teaching assistants, and I were no exception. So, when UCF moved all instruction online in response to the pandemic, I decided to redesign my “legal and ethical environment of business” survey course from scratch in preparation for the Summer A session. Specifically, I decided to use the first seven episodes of *Tiger King* to explore the legal and ethical environments of business firms. In summary, since I would now be teaching online during the Summer A mini-semester, and since Summer A is a six-week session, I divided my survey course into six separate modules—one module per week—as follows:

For the first week of the course (Module #1), I assigned *Tiger King* and a discussion post/academic activity asking my students to identify the most salient legal and ethical issues in the docuseries.

Next, Module #2 identified the main sources of law—state, federal, and international—that could apply to a roadside zoo like Joe Exotic’s G.W. Exotic Animal Park or to a wildlife sanctuary like Harold and Carole Baskin’s Big Cat Rescue.

Module #3 then introduced my students to the Common Law, including property, contracts, and torts, and I illustrated these areas of private law with cases involving animals, such as a cattle trespass case (*Rockow v. Hendry*) and a case involving the ownership of a wild fox (*Pierson v. Post*).

Building on the previous two modules, Module #4 covered what I like to call the law of ideas or intellectual property rights, including such things as trademarks, copyrights, and trade secrets, all of which are essential in the world of business.

Using the civil and criminal cases featured in *Tiger King*, Module #5 then introduced my students to such important legal concepts as due process and the burdens of proof; here, I also highlighted a real-world phenomenon called “the vanishing trial” (Galanter 2004) to explain why many lawsuits—even the ones involving arch-enemies Joe Exotic and Carole Baskin!—settle out of court.

Lastly, Module #6 was devoted to ethics and corporate governance, including the relation between law and morality, the moral status of animals, and the main theories of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Additionally, I recorded a series of pre-recorded videos and podcast episodes on Mondays and would then embed the relevant videos and podcast episodes into their corresponding module for that week. Also, after the conclusion of the course, my teaching assistants and I wrote up a full-length scholarly paper titled “Teaching *Tiger King*” describing the course content as well as the logic of our design choices in greater detail. (As an aside, our paper was eventually published in a special symposium issue of the *Saint Louis University Law Journal* devoted to teaching law online; see Guerra-Pujol, *et al.*, 2021.)

Among other things, one of the unexpected advantages of using *Tiger King* is that my students and I were able to explore the moral status of animals throughout the course, especially in the ethics module. Among other things, we considered the position that our Kantian moral duties, however defined, extend to non-human animals. Although Kant himself did not extend his influential theory of ethics to the animal kingdom (see, e.g., Potter 2005), there is no logical reason why we should exclude animals from Kant’s categorical imperative. This Kantian view, however, if taken to its ultimate conclusion, contains a radical and perhaps untenable implication: entire industries like factory farming, fast food, horse racing, medical research, etc. would have to shut down!

Next, we discussed the more pragmatic and malleable multifaceted consequentialist perspective, which attempts to bal-

ance the competing claims of animals and humans. Alas, even if we could somehow measure these competing and often incommensurable claims, all consequentialist theories must at some point confront the late Derek Parfit (1984)'s haunting *repugnant conclusion*. By way of example, I asked my students which of the following is a more desirable state of affairs:

State *A*: the existence of 1,000 lions, all of whom are free to roam in a large and protected wildlife preserve full of prey and most of whom live long, healthy lives—say, 10 years on average.

State *B*: the existence of 100,000 lions, all of whom live in cramped cages and are fed subsistence diets and most of whom live short and brutish lives—say, 5 years on average.

A consequentialist would have to defend the “repugnant conclusion,” to borrow Parfit’s memorable phrase, that *B* is a morally superior state of affairs to *A* because 100,000 times five (500,000 lion years) is several orders of magnitude greater than 1,000 times 10 (10,000 lion years), even discounting for the low quality of life of the captive lions. A Kantian, by contrast, would have no trouble choosing state *A* over state *B*, since unjustified captivity itself deprives animals of their moral right to live in the wild.

The class and I also discussed the moral status of animals from a virtue ethics perspective. Whereas a consequentialist might ask, *What are the consequences of acting in a certain way or of following a certain rule*, and a Kantian, *What are our moral duties in a given situation*, a virtue theorist asks a different question altogether: *What would a morally virtuous person do in that same situation?* In other words, consequentialism and duty ethics both focus on the acts and omissions of human actors, i.e., on the consequences of our acts or omissions or on our moral duties to act, or refrain from acting, in a specified way. Virtue ethics, by contrast, focuses on the actor herself, on her motivations and intentions, on her moral character.

Alas, without naming names, one of the most striking features of *Tiger King* is the utter lack of moral virtue of so many of its protagonists! The point of this ethical exercise, however, is not to debunk virtue ethics or champion any of the other major theories of ethics; the larger point is to introduce my students to the world of ethics in a relevant, timely, and engaging manner by showing how hard it is to apply general moral principles to specific business models like fast food, factory farming, or medical research.

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Innovating Your Course Does Take Work, but Is Well Worth It

Kersten Schroeder



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For the last four years, UCF has been ranked as one of the top twenty “Most Innovative Schools” in the United States. Every article I read about how different aspects of UCF was being innovative made me reflect on how I was being innovative in the courses I teach. I did not want the students I taught to think innovation was a buzz word that was only talked about at the university. I wanted the students I taught to be surrounded and immersed in innovation including in the classroom. Even though I love preparing and giving lectures, I realized that I had to start innovating in the courses I teach in order to allow the students to realize that inspiration and innovation can happen anywhere.

In order to innovate different aspects in the various courses I teach, I started with a single assignment. When the assignment was completed, I asked the students their thoughts on it. Then, I compared their exam scores and compared it to previous semesters. I started noticing that the exam scores were improving. To free up more class time, I started pre-recording most of my lectures for the different courses and developed different active learning exercises for the students. I have now added problem-based learning, case-based learning, game-based learning, competition-based learning, and Escape Rooms. When classes went online, I was able to turn the assignments that were performed in-person to ones that

could be completed online, including moving my in-person Escape Room to being a Virtual Escape Room. As an example for a fifty-minute class using case-based learning, I would discuss the topic for the day including the learning objectives for about ten minutes. Then, I would introduce the case for five minutes and have the students answer the ten questions related to the case for twenty-five or thirty minutes. The last five or ten minutes of class we would have a case wrap-up where the students talk about the questions they found difficult and then discussed the answers to those questions.

How did I implement, you might ask? The first thing I did was move the course to mixed-mode in order to have the flexibility to pre-record the lectures and offer the lectures online. I found that if I had the students read the chapter, take a reading quiz, then gain access to the voiceover lectures, that they were prepared for the active learning assignment. Since most students read the chapter and listened to the voiceover lectures, the active-learning was the third time the students were seeing the material. I then had students work in groups of three or four. I found that when students came to class to discuss the material, it really helped the students learn it. I realized during the pandemic that the students could complete the assignments in groups online very similar to how they worked together in groups when we were face-to-face. The students that looked at the material before coming to class said they learned a lot more with the active learning assignments. The students that glanced at the material before coming to class learned what they need to study more.

There are best educational research practices to know if your innovation is working. But during the semester while you are implementing the innovative teaching idea, it is tough to know if it is working or not. The first aspect I compare during the semester is the previous years' reading quiz scores and exam scores. If the averages and median are the same or better, then I know it is helping the students learn the material at the same level as previous semesters. By taking surveys and talking to students during the semester and at the end of the semester, the students seemed to be happy with their progress. Occasionally, there was a student that said they learned by lecture and did better when exams were only lecture based. I am not going to get into the psychology of a student and why they believe this to be true. The one take-away from comparing exam scores and taking surveys is that the innovative active learning exercises seemed to allow students to have better long-term retention, especially when they took the cumulative Final Exams in my courses or professional school entrance exams. The other comment that students said consistently is that they now see what they are learning in class correlates to the real world.

To be honest, it is not all rainbows and unicorns. There can be difficult times because it really depends on how you sell the idea of using active learning in your course from the very beginning of the course. Each cohort is different, and what works one semester might not work another semester. It may also depend on the students' perspectives and readiness for each class. Therefore, being willing to pivot during the semester—or in some cases in the middle of class—needs to be considered when designing each active learning exercise. Most students find the active learning exercises engaging, and it helps them be accountable to which learning objectives they know and which learning objectives they need to continue to study.

In conclusion, innovating your course is well worth it. It is a lot of work and can be difficult to implement at first, but more students will appreciate it than not during the semester. I highly recommend trying first to innovate one assignment or one section of your course before you commit to transforming it entirely. One of the innovations I had in my course allowed a student and I to work together and apply for a research patent. A person smarter than me once asked how we can expect our students not to be afraid to fail if we are not afraid to fail ourselves. However, if you approach your innovation in the classroom with the same passion you give your lectures, then you will not fail, and your students will learn more and be more successful in the long run. Your new approach might even help one or three more students earn a letter grade higher than if the course was taught using traditional lectures. Let's continue innovating at UCF, so join me and the other faculty that are trying new teaching innovations in our classrooms.



Submissions

The *Faculty Focus* is a publication for all instructors at the University of Central Florida. This includes full-time and part-time faculty and teaching assistants at all UCF campuses. Its purpose is to provide an exchange of ideas on teaching and learning for the university's community of teachers and scholars. It is envisioned that this publication will inspire more dialogue among faculty whether in hallway discussions, departmental meetings, or in written articles. This represents an opportunity for faculty members to reach their peers throughout the growing UCF community. The *Faculty Focus* invites you to contribute your ideas on teaching and learning in a short essay. See the guidelines for submission online at <https://fctl.ucf.edu/teaching-resources/faculty-focus/>. Please send your submissions to fctl@ucf.edu.

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