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Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación  
Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, España

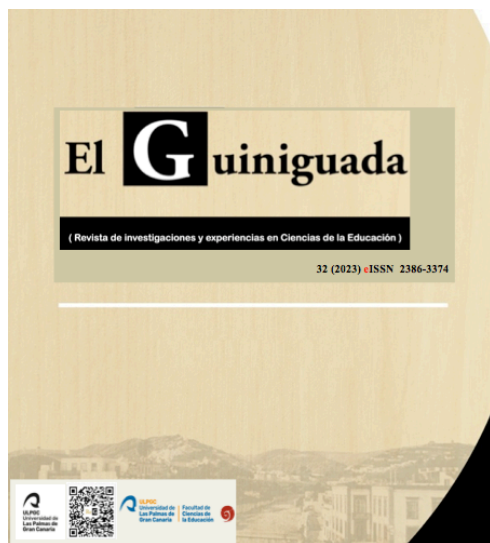
## El Guiniguada

(Revista de investigaciones y experiencias en Ciencias de la Educación)

eISSN: 2386-3374

10.20420/ElGuiniguada.2013.333 (doi general de la revista)

Journal information, indexing and abstracting details, archives, and instructions for submissions:  
<http://ojsspcd.ulpgc.es/ojs/index.php/ElGuiniguada/index>



**Redesigning a Spanish undergraduate course considering affordability, diversity, equity, and learning styles. Plan and results**  
Rediseñar un curso de grado en español considerando la asequibilidad, la diversidad, la equidad y los estilos de aprendizaje. Plan y resultados

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DOI (en Sumario/Título, en WEB de la Revista)

Recibido el 07/12/2022

Aceptado el 20/01/2023

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## **Redesigning a Spanish undergraduate course considering affordability, diversity, equity, and learning styles.**

### **Plan and results**

Rediseñar un curso de grado en español considerando la asequibilidad, la diversidad, la equidad y los estilos de aprendizaje. Plan y resultados

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### RESUMEN

En este artículo, se mostrará cómo se rediseñó el curso Español-3710 (Temas de Literatura-Teatro barroco español), incluido en el Grado en Español de la California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB).

La razón principal para rediseñar el curso fue eliminar el libro de texto, siguiendo la iniciativa “Affordable Learning Solutions” (AL\$), empezada por la oficina del Rector del sistema universitario California State University, CSU, para promover en los cursos el uso de materiales de bajo costo o sin costo, lo que limita la carga financiera para los estudiantes. Desde 2013, AL\$ ha ahorrado a los estudiantes de CSUB aproximadamente dos millones de dólares en costos de libros de texto<sup>1</sup>. La universidad da estipendios a los profesores para rehacer sus cursos teniendo esto en cuenta.

A continuación, se añadieron otros elementos que se querían incorporar o modificar, por lo que, finalmente, se consideraron cinco aspectos: 1) simplificar los materiales y hacerlos más asequibles a los estudiantes seleccionando materiales gratuitos y de acceso abierto; 2) dar más vida a las obras barrocas presentándoselas a los estudiantes grabadas en vídeo (unas veces en la versión clásica y otras con diferentes enfoques modernos); 3) continuar incorporando a las mujeres al canon de la literatura; 4) ofrecer a los estudiantes una oportunidad de aprendizaje activa y atractiva a través de las discusiones, los vídeos hechos con Flipgrid (ahora llamado Flip) y los proyectos visuales creativos (mapas mentales y pósters), y 5) seguir trabajando en las habilidades lingüísticas y discursivas que adquirieron en Español 3000 (Advanced Language Skills).

Se realizará una descripción exhaustiva de los cambios realizados y también se incluirán gráficos con las opiniones de los estudiantes en relación con algunos de estos cambios, a la vez que se compararán las notas obtenidas al final de curso modificado con relación a las de la versión anterior de este, para saber si los cambios tuvieron un impacto en el aprendizaje de los contenidos.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

DISEÑO DE CURSOS, MATERIALES ASEQUIBLES, PROYECTOS VISUALES, DIVERSIDAD

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<sup>1</sup> Véase <https://csub.libcal.com/event/8644830>. Uno de los requisitos para recibir la ayuda económica

## ABSTRACT

This article will show how the course Spanish 3710 (Topics in Literature-Spanish Baroque Theater) was redesigned. This is a Spanish Bachelor of Arts course at California State University, Bakersfield.

The primary reason for redesigning the course was to eliminate the textbook, following the “Affordable Learning Solutions” (AL\$) initiative, started by the CSU Chancellor's office to promote the use of low-cost or no-cost course materials, thereby limiting the financial burden on students. Since 2013, AL\$ has saved CSUB students approximately \$2,000,000 in textbook costs.<sup>2</sup>

Next, other elements were added that were wanted to be incorporated or modified, so, finally, five aspects were considered: 1) to simplify the materials and make them more affordable to students by selecting Open Access (OA) and free materials; 2) to bring more ‘to life’ the Baroque plays by exposing students to the recorded plays (sometimes in the old version, and others with different modern approaches); 3) to continue incorporating women to the literary canon; 4) to offer students an active and engaging learning opportunity through the discussions, the Flipgrid videos (now called Flip), and the creative visual projects (mind maps and posters); and 5) to keep working in the linguistic and discourse skills that they acquired in Spanish 3000 (Advanced Language Skills).

A detailed description of the changes made will be provided. Graphics with the students' opinions about some of the changes made will be included. Also, we will compare the grades obtained in the modified course with those of the previous version of it to know if the changes impacted content learning.

## KEYWORDS

COURSE DESIGN, AFFORDABLE MATERIALS, VISUAL PROJECTS, DIVERSITY

## INTRODUCTION

In this article, it will be showed how the undergraduate course Spanish 3710 (Topics in Literature-Spanish Baroque Theater), one of the elective courses in the literature area of the Spanish Bachelor of Arts at California State University, Bakersfield, was redesigned. The course teaches about the main characteristics of the Spanish Baroque theater, with a focus on the plays by Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, Calderón de la Barca, Ana Caro Mallén de Soto, María de Zayas, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, and Ángela de Acevedo.

This three credit-course can be taken as one of the two required courses for the literature section in the Spanish major. It is usually taught every 2-3 semesters, always online, in Canvas. The maximum number of students allowed in these courses is 20. The main reason for redesigning the course was to eliminate the textbook. Next, there were several elements that were incorporated or modified, so, finally, five aspects were considered mainly: 1) to simplify the materials and make them more affordable to students by selecting open-access and free materials; 2) to bring more “to life” the Baroque plays by exposing students to the recorded plays (sometimes in the old

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://csub.libcal.com/event/8644830>. One of the requirements of the grant we got was to share the process with other teachers, which is done on the Merlot website, and also disseminate it in other places, if possible.

version, and sometimes with different modern approaches); 3) to continue incorporating women to the literature canon (years ago they did not usually appear in the programs); 4) to offer students an active and engaging learning opportunity through the discussions, the Flipgrid videos (now called Flip), and the creative visual projects (mind maps and posters); and 5) to keep working in the linguistic and discourse skills that they acquired in the required course, Spanish 3000 (Advanced Language Skills), which they had to take previously.

#### METHODOLOGY

The changes involved several aspects, which will be detailed below. The indications provided in the Merlot website ([www.merlot.org](http://www.merlot.org))<sup>3</sup> were followed, as required by the university. The Merlot system provides access to curated online learning and support materials and content creation tools led by an international community of educators, learners, and researchers.

#### Pedagogical approaches

The course is organized in **modules**, sometimes with submodules. These learning **micro sequences** facilitate the assimilation and the scaffolding of knowledge.<sup>5</sup> Each micro sequence is formed by a set of short interrelated, and linked activities oriented to elaborating a final product in the form of a text (oral, written, visual or audiovisual). Every module is started with short video lectures and readings, and/or other videos related to the topic. There are also short review quizzes and end of the module quizzes (multiple-choice, true-false, and multiple-answer questions) with instant feedback.

Micro lectures are an excellent resource. These are short, instructor-produced videos designed to provide adequate explanations of a single key concept or specific skill set. This format helps students focus and maintain attention, provides them with content they can easily fit into their busy lives, and allows them to reengage with the content when and if needed (Scagnoli, 2012). Micro lectures also help students to feel the instructor's presence. Writing a script to avoid wandering away from the main topic and keeping the video under 15 minutes are some of the main rules to follow when creating these lectures.

**Critical thinking** is incorporated in the class through the assessment and the multiple questions they had to answer and return to the instructor. The course is in high demand, but it closes with 20 students. These numbers allow the instructor to correct assignments and discussions promptly (within a week), which is good for students, since they get quick feedback (apart from the instant feedback they get from the quizzes). (See Hughes, 2014; *Critical Thinking Toolkit*, 2015; Dummett, & Hughes, 2019).

Including **visual assignments** was a significant part of the redesign.

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<sup>3</sup> An explanation of the changes can also be seen at <https://www.merlot.org/merlot/viewSite.htm?id=9164438>.

<sup>5</sup> The modules were: 1. El Siglo de Oro. 2. La cultura del Barroco. 3. El teatro barroco: formación y espacios de su representación. 4. Lope de Vega. 5. Calderón de la Barca. 6. Tirso de Molina. 7. Autoras del teatro barroco: María de Zayas y Sotomayor, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Ana Caro Mallén de Soto y Ángela de Azevedo.

Probably the most compelling reason for using images in instruction is that images are stored in long-term memory. Unlike factoids and phone numbers that “can go in one ear and out of the other,” images are indelibly etched in our long-term memory. The implications for achievement testing are obvious. The key is to make sure students have a picture in their “mind’s eye” of the important concepts and content that they will need to recall (Burmark, 2002, p. 11).

As Burmark, who has been promoting “visual literacy” for decades, states, “the brain becomes active when individuals are exposed to verbal and visual information” since two brain regions are involved (p. 12).

**Discussion boards** are the heart of a distance education course. Discussions promote learner interaction with the course content, other learners, and the instructor. Sometimes, students could choose between topics. (See Cox & Cox, 2008; Akcaoglu & Lee, 2016; Douglas et al., 2020).

**Attention to diversity.** Diversity (of sex, culture, mother tongue, level of Spanish, and learning style) is standard in the classroom, so including different activities favoring various students is a must. It is also important to consider the principles of universal design applied to teaching (Lance & Wehmeyer, 2001, in Roselló Ramón, 2010: p. 7). Incorporating female writers into the canon is also necessary and involves attention to diversity. Including some recorded versions of the plays in different varieties of Spanish also pays attention to the diversity of Spanish language varieties spoken and studied in the classroom.

Importance of including **open educational resources (OERs)**.

[...] OER, as freely available learning objects encapsulating learning resources, are pedagogically neutral and, as a concept, can lend themselves to any learning theory. OER proponents in different theoretical “camps” of learning, such as constructivist, connectivist or behaviourist, can design their OER either to support their theories uniquely or to be more generalisable in a wider variety of learning contexts. (McGreal, 2013: XVI)

As the same researcher indicates, although there have been critics against OER resources, “MERLOT (Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and Online Teaching; [www.merlot.org](http://www.merlot.org)) and other organisations [...] are supporting the improvement of the effectiveness of teaching and learning by enhancing the quantity and quality of OER” (*ibidem*, XX). Incorporating these resources into our courses allows us to use materials creatively, choosing and adapting lesson plans according to our course’s needs and students’ interests. Printing, reproducing, and modifying materials gives freedom to the instructor and affordability to the students (see more advantages and limitations in Trillo Miravalles, 2012; Kurelovic, 2016; and Vásquez, 2021).

**Social and emotional learning.** Based on Salovey and Mayer (1990), Gardner (1993) and Goleman (1995), education cannot be reduced solely to academics, to obtaining and processing information, to strictly cognitive development, or to the social interactions, as if they were given in the abstract. The development of emotional intelligence should be an essential part of the classes. For teachers, having an awareness of the students’ emotions allows them to gauge their mood and carefully examine the classroom climate. Knowing the emotional states of the students and

their learning styles can help the teacher better organize the learning-teaching process (Thompson & Aveyra, 2004).

Also, positive reinforcement is needed. Students will do some things better than others, but, in general, they are always learning, also or even more, from their mistakes. It is necessary to insist that learning and achieving goals gives them confidence in themselves and the instructor. Reviews and modules built on previous modules help them realize that and get them more involved. The teachers are a key piece and must have a permanent interaction with the school contents, adapting them to their students.

We must also bear in mind that the dominance of Information Technology, Communication and Information (ICT), brings possibilities of communication, but also affects negatively, including cognitive and emotional behaviors bordering on the pathological (García Retana, 2012: 8).

**“Slow teaching.”** This is a philosophy that challenges the culture of distraction (Thom, 2018). We need to calm the “monkey mind” and include more activities to visualize and connect concepts and ideas (this was done in the course through mind maps and posters). Slow teaching is a philosophy that challenges the culture of distraction.

#### Background on the Redesign

The first changes concerned the course’s “physical” characteristics: from having textbooks to using links to open-access materials and other resources available online, plus more motivating assignments, such as visual projects. The number of discussions to foster the creation of a community were also augmented, plus more engaging activities and assessments with innovative tools (mind maps, posters, Flip videos) were created.

The class is (as usual) taught online, so it is difficult for students to engage in 17th-century Spanish materials by only reading about them. Videos about the period studied and of the plays, and discussions on the topics (apart from written assignments and short quizzes) are needed.

On this occasion, the length of the theoretical readings was reduced (they were also less complicated), and more recorded explanations were included, with a PowerPoint as a base text. In addition, the activities and assessments became more creative: posters, mind maps, and Flip videos. Thanks to the LMS Canvas, very detailed feedback on each assignment can be provided to each student; grammatical and writing aspects can be marked in the tasks and, in this way, they are helped to improve their command of the language while being guided in how to respond appropriately to a question or how to solve problems related to visual projects, etc.

Apart from general tips about online learning provided by the university,<sup>7</sup> I have created an introductory video explaining the course’s objectives and the reason for choosing the materials and activities/assessment. It is advisable to create a script to follow when creating the video, apart from paying attention to some other tips.<sup>8</sup> That

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<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDKFIXRbljg>

<sup>8</sup> Lighting and other considerations are important when recording, as the online learning team at Kent State University reminds us.

script can also be more detailed and become a transcript of the video, to satisfy the federal law, which requires multimedia content to be compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act; that is, text transcripts should be made available for any enrolled students. Additionally, accessible course content is a requirement of Quality Matters Rubric standard 8.2. (the university was using this rubric when the course was designed).

I also explain that students will be graded through different types of assignments to give them more opportunities to succeed. They are often also allowed to choose between the materials (between readings or videos for the plays; or between a documentary or a reading to get information to do an assignment).

Impact of Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives (SLOs) on Course Redesign.

Alignment of SLOs with Activities, Assessment and Materials

Before, I only included course outcomes; now, I also have module outcomes aligned with the course ones. Materials, tools, and assessment are aligned too.

An example of a new course outcome in the course:

CO1. Students will be able to identify, define and describe the characteristics of the Baroque theater, and those of the main authors and their plays, acquiring a general knowledge of the Baroque style and period. Students will demonstrate their knowledge by doing the quizzes and answering the questions in each lesson.

An example of a learning module outcome (alignment with course outcomes is shown in parenthesis):

*Module 3. Baroque theater: Formation and spaces of representation.*

Outcome 1. Students will be able to identify the characteristics of the Baroque theater. Materials: two short readings and a documentary (with captions). Assessment: Students will demonstrate their knowledge by doing two review quizzes (two attempts are allowed). (CO1).

Regarding the materials, it was easy to substitute the chapters from the books students had to buy for previous courses for readings on Open Access sites (links were in Canvas) to address the content expressed in the outcomes. Several short videos explaining the theory were created, and copies of two articles written by the instructor were included (only some pages since the idea was to keep it short, and not all the content was needed). Experts on some of the authors were invited: Professors Antoni Brosa Rodríguez, María José Rodríguez Campillo, and Inmaculada Rodríguez Moranta talked about women writers in the Baroque theater.

It was necessary to include a new learning outcome related to creating visual projects. This had to do with the fact that students must be creators of knowledge and participants in personalized instruction in which learning is done, preferably in a group. Even if there is not group work during the course, we should try to have peer-reviewed assignments or activities where students give feedback to each other. It is about converting the class into a team, collaborating, and giving and getting feedback. Generally, a series of technologies is proposed to the students in the class, but they are left to choose the one that interests them the most. For example, to make a poster, infographic, or video, they are given the link to the tool and to short tutorials explaining how to create it with Powtoon, Life, Lino, Piktochart, Glogster...

All course activities/assessments were evaluated with rubrics, except the quizzes (they are multiple-choice, true/false, multiple answer). These rubrics are integrated into the learning management system used at the university: Canvas. Below, some of them can be seen. For outlines, a holistic one was used, very simple (15 points: 5 per content, 5 per writing, and 5 per organization). For posters, although sometimes a more detailed one is used, due to the fact that this time it was a very short project, a holistic one was employed: 15 points (5 per pictures, 5 per content, and 5 per writing).

	4	3	2	1
Summary Skills and Purpose	Summary is excellent: all major points are restated clearly and concisely and minor details and opinions are avoided. No generalities.	Summary is good: key information is restated well and minor details and author opinions are avoided.	Summary is short; some important information is missing. Summary is relatively free of insignificant details.	Summary is very short; key information is missing and minor details are given too much attention.
Organization	Summary is organized well and invites readers to read more. Information follows a logical order and creates flow and clarity. There are different paragraphs for different ideas, and it includes an introduction and a conclusion with the content that they should include.	Summary is organized well. Information follows a logical order. Some room for improvement in the introduction and conclusion or selecting ideas in each section.	Summary is organized in a reasonable manner but needs revision. Some information is misplaced. Some problems with intro and conclusion.	Summary's organization follows no logical or coherent order. Introduction and/or conclusion are missing or do not have the content that they should include.
Content	Clear thesis, there is no repetition of ideas, comprehensibility, objectivity.	Minimal errors regarding thesis; minimal or no repetition or ideas. Summary is comprehensible, and mostly objective.	Some errors regarding thesis. Some repetitions and/or lack of comprehensibility; some examples of lack of objectivity.	Many errors regarding thesis. Many repetitions of ideas, lack of comprehensibility. Lack of objectivity.
Grammar and Mechanics	Summary is free of grammatical or mechanical errors. Adheres to instructions.	Minimal errors exist and do not impede meaning. Mostly adheres to instructions.	Some errors exist but only occasionally impede meaning. Some adherence to instructions. Sentences could be longer and more complex.	Errors make summary unreadable (spelling, use of capital letters, punctuation, accent marks...). Sentences are too simple, without many compound structures. It does



				not adhere to instructions.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary has no errors or repetition. It is appropriate to the subject (uses the vocabulary from the lesson correctly).	Minimal vocabulary errors (false cognates, anglicisms, repetitions, errors or lack of scientific vocabulary).	Some use of false cognates. Some repetition, anglicisms, colloquialisms... Some errors or lack of scientific vocabulary (vocabulary that is learnt in this course).	Use of false cognates, anglicisms, repetition of words, vulgarisms, colloquial words, literary expressions... Vocabulary not appropriate to the subject/not academic, with errors in the use of words.

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_ / 20

Table 1. Rubric for summaries. Source: made by the author of this article.

**Reading Comprehension/Critical Thinking Questions Rubric**

Category	4	3	2	1
<b>Interpretation</b>	Answers are mostly correct and demonstrate excellent comprehension. Opinions are always fully justified.	Answers are often correct and demonstrate good comprehension. Opinions are adequately justified.	Answers are occasionally correct and demonstrate an incomplete comprehension of the topic. Opinions are sometimes justified.	Answers do not reflect accurate comprehension of the topic(s). Opinions are unjustified.
<b>Detail</b>	Answers are mostly complete, extensive, and include many details.	Answers are usually complete and include several details.	Answers contain some details.	Answers lack the required detail or are incomplete.
<b>Use of Information</b>	Answers mostly include supporting evidence from the text/lesson when necessary. Quotations or paraphrases are often included in answers.	Answers usually include supporting evidence from the text/lesson when necessary. Quotations or paraphrases are sometimes included.	Answers include occasional supporting evidence from the text when necessary.	Answers do not include supporting evidence from the text when necessary.
<b>Clarity</b>	Answers are very easy to understand. They are clear and concise.	Answers are always easy to understand.	Answers are sometimes understandable, but need to be more to the point.	Answers are difficult to understand.
<b>Mechanics</b>	Conventional spelling and grammar is mostly correct.	Conventional spelling and grammar is usually correct.	Work contained several spelling and grammar errors.	Work contains many spelling and grammar errors.

Table 2. Rubric for questions/critical thinking. Source: <https://studylib.net/doc/25516441/comprehension-critical-thinking-rubric>

Criteria	Unsatisfactory (1)	Satisfactory (2)	Exemplary (3)
<b>Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of content</b>	Post(s) and responses show little evidence of knowledge and understanding of course content. (In this case, knowledge of the Spanish XVII century, and the Baroque literary movement, as well as the authors' plays peculiarities).  Lack of comprehensibility. Lack of objectivity (answers must be based on content, not	Post(s) and responses show some evidence of knowledge and understanding of course content.	Post(s) and responses show evidence of deep knowledge and understanding of course content. They even mention specific examples from the time, plays and authors studied.

	on your personal opinion, “just because”)		
<b>Answer to another classmate, following and discussing his/her ideas.</b>	<p>Posts do not attempt to elicit responses and reflections from other learners and/or responses do not build upon the ideas of other learners to take the discussion deeper.</p> <p>There is no answer to another classmate.</p>	<p>Posts attempt to elicit responses and reflections from other learners and responses build upon the ideas of one learner. Could go deeper.</p>	<p>Posts elicit responses and reflections from other learners and responses build upon and integrate multiple views from other learners to take the discussion deeper.</p>
<b>Grammar and Mechanics</b>	<p>Posts have many errors (accents, punctuation, false cognates, anglicisms...)</p> <p>Vocabulary non-appropriate to the subject.</p>	<p>Posts have some errors (false cognates, anglicisms...).</p> <p>Some lack of scientific vocabulary.</p>	<p>Posts have minimal or no errors or repetition.</p> <p>Vocabulary is appropriate to the subject.</p>

Total: \_\_\_/9

Table 3. Discussion forum rubric. Source: Created by the author of the article.

In the discussions, detailed instructions were given. It is worth mentioning that I was trying to build a community online, so I tried to avoid the *ping-pong ball effect*, whereby the teacher responds to every (or nearly every) comment made by students with immediate correction or affirmation. This quickly reinforces a hierarchy in which students constantly look to the teacher for approval. Thoughtful engagement and responsiveness should be modeled with several well-placed comments/questions, leaving space for the learners to follow suit.<sup>9</sup>

#### Accessibility, Affordability, and Diversity Considerations

##### a) Accessibility

The course has been considered to serve students with varied abilities. All recorded plays are accessible in writing, and all explanatory videos have subtitles; likewise, there is sufficient information on the slides from which some were created.

##### b) Affordability

Most of the course materials are clearly marked as Open Access or having a Creative Commons license, and others are simply freely available online. Students are saving money this way, and it is also a method to have the materials available from the first day of classes.

The technologies used were all readily available for free (Lino, Glogster...), or at least students could use a free reduced version.

Some examples of free materials:

-All the readings and materials regarding the studied authors are in Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Tip provided by the Teaching Learning Center, TLC (workshop “TOPS”), at CSUB.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cervantesvirtual.com>. Some examples about authors are [https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/lope\\_de\\_vega/](https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/lope_de_vega/) and [https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/sor\\_juana\\_ines\\_de\\_la\\_cruz/](https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/sor_juana_ines_de_la_cruz/)

-I also used the documentaries “El siglo de oro”<sup>12</sup> (part of the series *Nueva Historia de España*, 13, RTVE), and “El teatro barroco y los espacios de su representación” (UNED, 8-10-2010<sup>13</sup>), and recorded plays available in Youtube, such as *El burlador de Sevilla*,<sup>14</sup> by Tirso de Molina (many of them were from the old program Estudio 1, TVE, in Spain), and some were new versions such as *Valor, agravio y mujer*<sup>15</sup>, by Ana Caro Mallén or *Los empeños de una casa*<sup>16</sup>, by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. It is also convenient to have both the Castilian version and some others, if available, since students in the Spanish major should be exposed to different varieties (they also learn about them in the Dialectology course).

-There is also a Creative Commons site that was used in the course, “Un siglo de Barroco,” at <https://sites.google.com/entornoalalengua.com/un-siglo-de-barroco/>

-There were some other materials available online for free (without specifying that they are Open Access/Creative Commons):

[http://www.materialesdelengua.org/LITERATURA/HISTORIA\\_LITERATURA/TEATROBARROCO/teatrobarroco\\_index.htm](http://www.materialesdelengua.org/LITERATURA/HISTORIA_LITERATURA/TEATROBARROCO/teatrobarroco_index.htm)

Creative Commons images were also used in the course; among them,



Image 1. Corral de Comedias de Almagro (1628)<sup>17</sup>

### c) Diversity

Our classes reflect the cultural, racial, and socio-economic diversity of the CSUB Campus<sup>18</sup>. The different perspectives make class discussions a valuable and necessary tool. Cognitive differences have also to be considered by including different types of

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In this site, there are also interesting videos such as some dedicated to “Los corrales de comedia”, by María Concepción García de León, at [https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/lope\\_de\\_vega/obra/los-corrales-de-comedias-entrevista-a-maria-concepcion-garcia-de-leon--0/](https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/lope_de_vega/obra/los-corrales-de-comedias-entrevista-a-maria-concepcion-garcia-de-leon--0/)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0nH-Mrffv4>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yO7\\_hm4n22Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yO7_hm4n22Q)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSLOmfjMb7g>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JPuwk6OLDY>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfyeLv61NaQ&t=1s> and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYTAr3Vmoiw>

<sup>17</sup> See [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Almagro\\_Siglo\\_de\\_Oro\\_Español.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Almagro_Siglo_de_Oro_Español.jpg)

<sup>18</sup> See <https://maindata.csub.edu/media/24856/download?attachment>

assignments. Guiding all students from the beginning by giving individualized feedback and following the “slow teaching” approach (including more activities that have to do with visualizing and connecting concepts and ideas) helps them a lot.

“Equity Minded Practices and Culturally Affirming Teaching and Learning Practices” (Wood & Harris, 2020) need to be considered. These practices include strategies that can be used during the course, but can also be incorporated into the introductory video and the syllabus or maybe in an initial survey. They have to do with being

- intrusive (engage students proactively, for example, by asking them if it is the first online course or what concerns they have about the course);

- relational (by humanizing yourself and learning something personal about your students –a first discussion board where everybody talks about themselves is an excellent place to start). Another way to be relational is to include various assignments and indicate on the syllabus that this is to give students more opportunities to succeed; empowering them to produce knowledge is also a good practice;

- culturally relevant and affirming (by connecting the students’ experiences to the course content and materials; this is also achieved by always pointing out the female contribution to the topics studied; this way, we are not making an effort to bring them, finally, to the canon, but we are also connecting with our many female students, reducing stereotypes).

- community-focused (providing opportunities for students to engage –to propose group work outside of class is a good idea; they can also meet online, and even in this course, where there was no group work, students gave feedback on visual assignments to help the others to improve their work); and

- race-conscious (topics might try to include the talk, and you can always include equity issues, Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2019, pp. 37-53). For example – although it had not specifically to do with race, and more with culture and origin–, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, a Mexican writer, was included in this class (she was a prominent figure in this movement in colonial Hispanic America). Differences in sexual orientation must be considered, too. Through materials, we discussed the relationship of Sor Juana with the countess of Paredes, Viceroy of Mexico (this was important, not only for the pressure they suffered in those times but also in terms of Sor Juana’s production since the countess was her patron). Feminist issues are also mentioned in the materials related to women writers, but also in Lope de Vega’s plays, and are discussed when working with parts of the article by Dillingham, Fernández-Ulloa and Soler Gallo (2016) and Soler Gallo and Fernández-Ulloa (2021).

## RESULTS

### Course Redesign Impact on Teaching and Learning

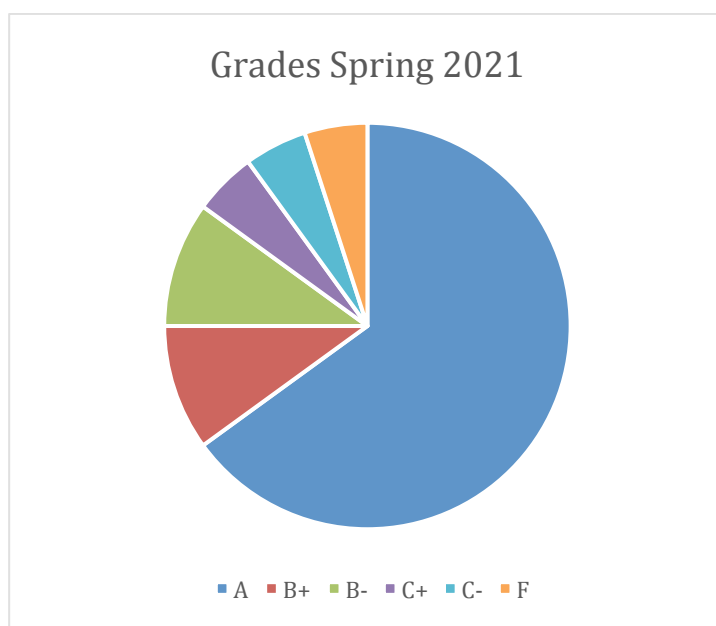
The redesign strategies affected instruction and student’s learning in various ways, and they helped to solve some previous issues:

- a) Using open-access resources is very important in our institution, where students are mainly working class. Many do not have the books at the beginning of the semester, and they wait until the end of the month when they get paid. Having everything online helps them to start working from day one (even before, because the course is usually open earlier).

b) Visual projects helped with the engagement of the students. With them, they seem to achieve the “flow experience,” or that immersive experience that means reaching an optimal psychological state when engaged in an appropriately challenging activity to one’s skill level. This can result in deep learning and high personal and work satisfaction levels<sup>19</sup>.

c) Regarding students’ success, scores were a little better. There was not a single F (before, there was usually at least one; mainly, because students were low engaged and did not turn in assignments). It seems, and their opinions will be shown below, that students were more engaged this time with the materials and activities.

We can see a comparison of the grades obtained in the previous version of the course and the modified course:



Graph 1. Grades, Spring 2021.

There were 13 A, 2 B+, 2 B-, 1 C+, 1 C-, and 1 F.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Example of a mind map about female playwrights:

[https://coggle.it/diagram/YmDL6X\\_hLg66GOO5/t/autoras-del-teatro-barroco/61d24b64d18426b96e481606d4cd6df324870cc43c6c14929c4d196101fd19ad](https://coggle.it/diagram/YmDL6X_hLg66GOO5/t/autoras-del-teatro-barroco/61d24b64d18426b96e481606d4cd6df324870cc43c6c14929c4d196101fd19ad)

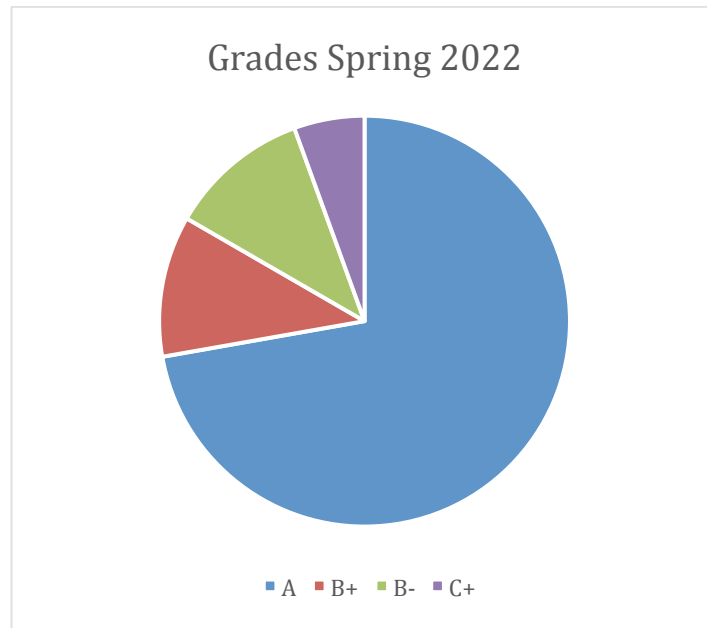
Example of posters in Canva and Lino:

[https://www.canva.com/design/DAE\\_hK6V2ss/9l3b9F4xmHiSfGDT1CTww/watch?utm\\_content=DAE\\_hK6V2ss&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link2&utm\\_source=sharebutton](https://www.canva.com/design/DAE_hK6V2ss/9l3b9F4xmHiSfGDT1CTww/watch?utm_content=DAE_hK6V2ss&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton)

<http://linoit.com/users/sgonzalez152/canvases/Dramaturgas>

<sup>20</sup> The grade system is

A	100-94
A-	93-90
B+	89-87
B	86-84
B-	83-80
C+	79-77
C	76-74



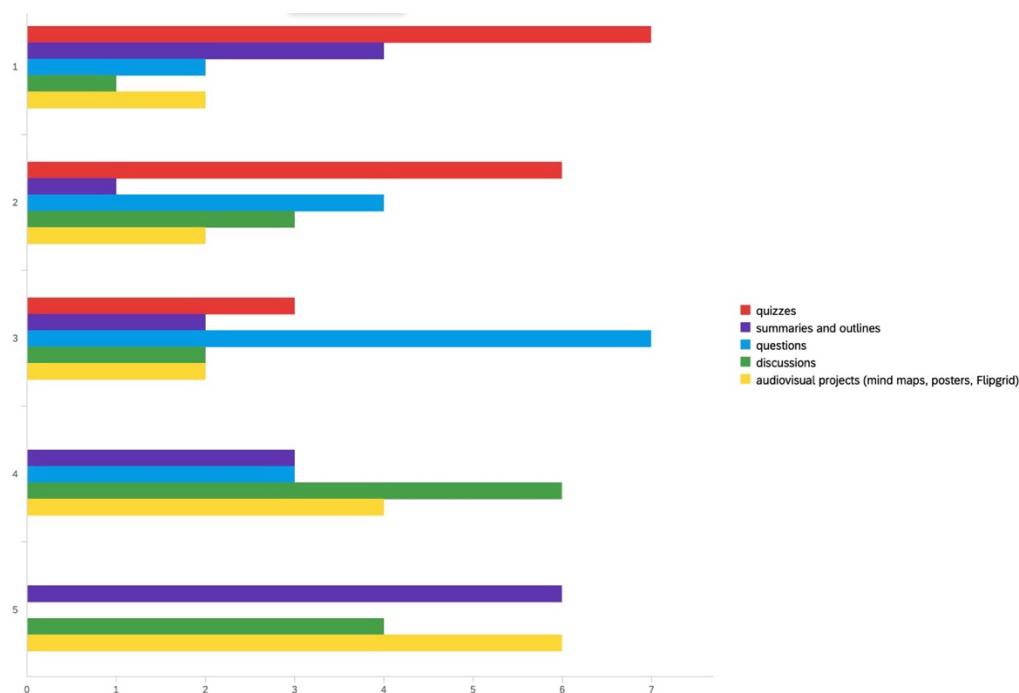
Graph 2. Grades, Spring 2022.

For this semester, there were A (13), B+ (2), B- (2), and C+ (1), so grades were better.

### Student Feedback

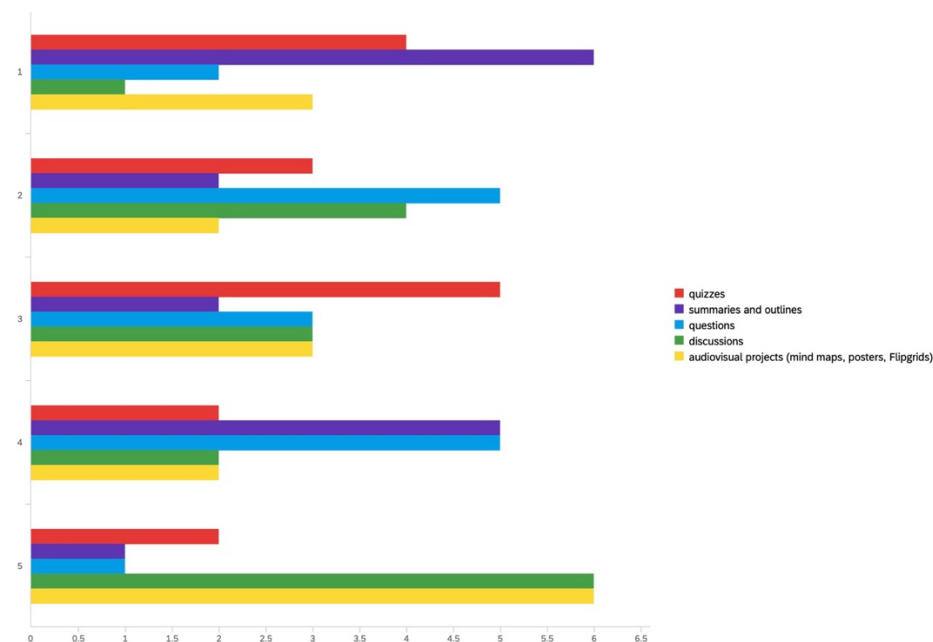
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C-	73-70
D+	69-67
D	66-64
D-	63-60
F	59-0



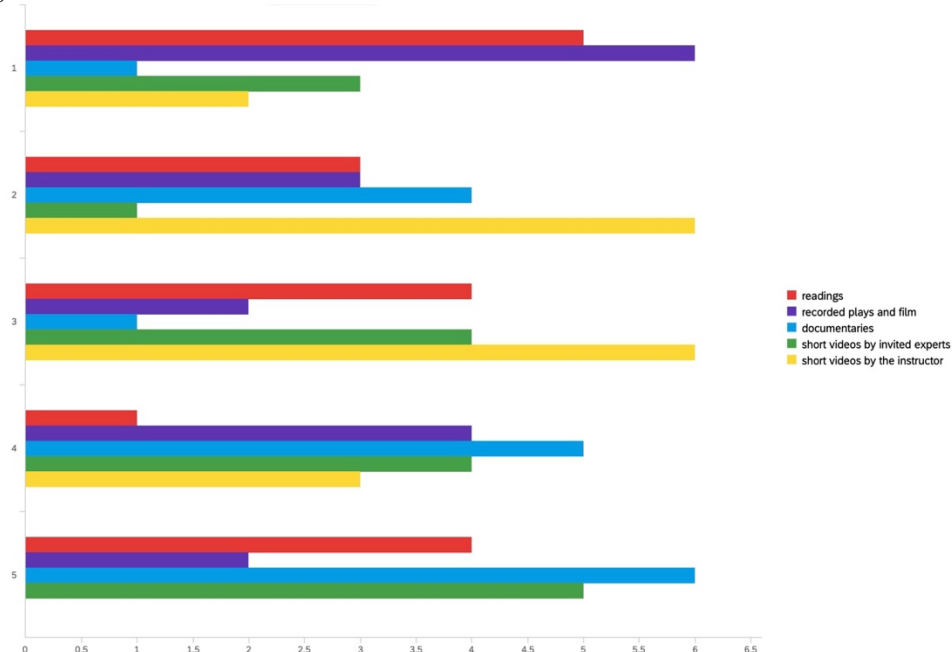
Graph 3. Question 1. Which assignments did you like the most in the course? (1-5, from the one you liked less to the one you liked the most).

Students mostly preferred audiovisual projects (which was obvious) but also summaries and outlines, which came as a surprise. It is easier for them to do those instead of the questions since they must thoroughly justify the answers with explanations and citations of the plays and readings.



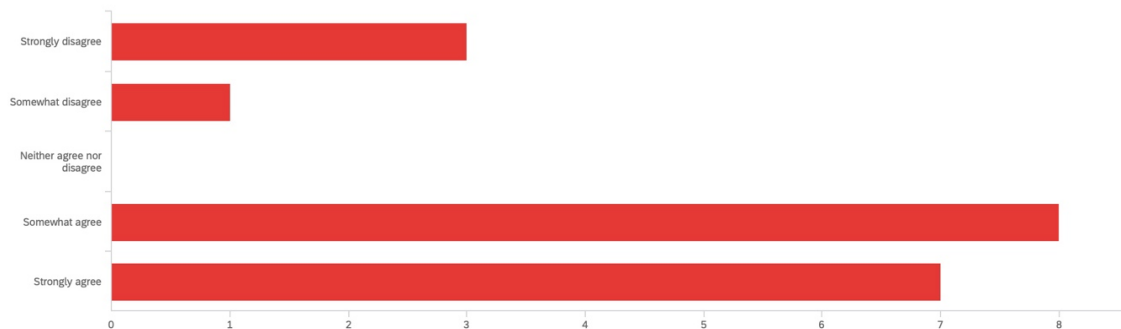
Graph 4. Question 2. Which assignments helped you to understand the content of the course more? (1-5)

As expected, they understood the content better by creating mind maps, posters, Flip videos, and discussions with their classmates.



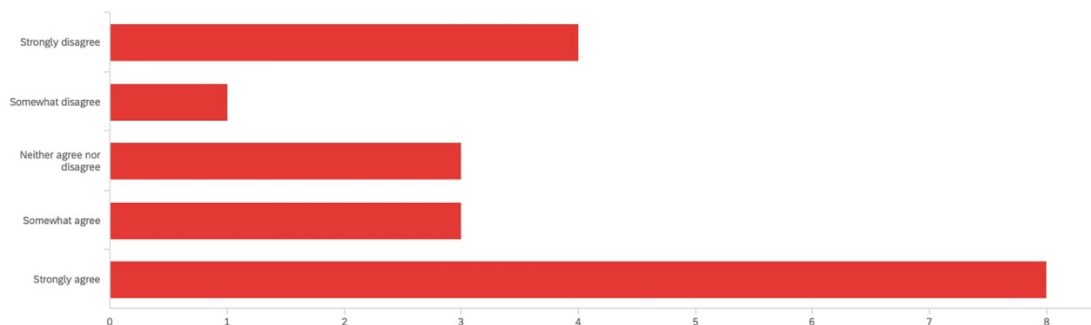
Graph 5. Question 3. Which materials did you like more? (1-5)

They liked the experts' videos, probably because they provided new content in a pleasant way.

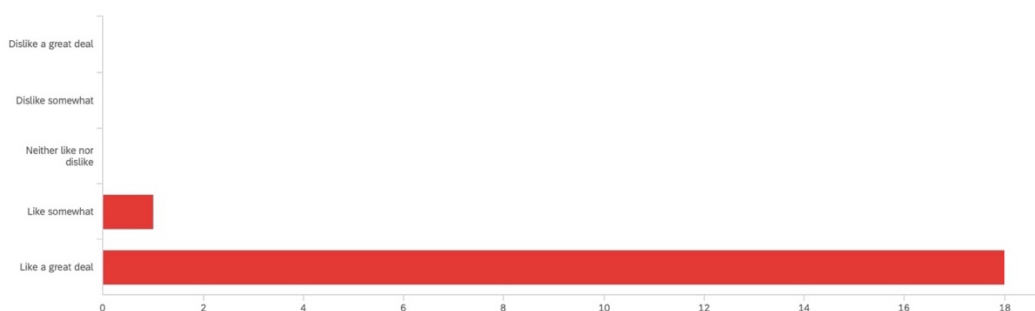


Graph 6. I found helpful the short explanations in a video by experts.





Graph 7. The audiovisual projects (mind map, poster, Flip video) helped me learn the content, distinguish the authors, and remember their lives and plays.



Graph 8. I liked that I did not have to buy a book.

The main reason for redesigning this course was to eliminate the books, and they liked that, probably because books tend to be quite expensive.



Graph 9. I liked that I could choose between materials and assignments sometimes.

As expected, they liked to be able to choose between materials and assignments. This was a way to let students take ownership of the course. This was achieved, too, by giving them a choice between discussion topics to participate and asking them to create or look for content used in the course (for example, relevant websites to share with the entire class).

Several studies have also shown that, in general, students respond well to open resources (Kurelovic, 2016; Harsasi, 2015; Garrote Jurado & Petterson, 2015; Holder & Bethea-Hampton, 2019; Kadada & Tshabalala, 2020).

## DISCUSSION

### Implementing the Redesigned Course

This has always been an online class, where students had to read chapters from one or more books and read/watch plays and then answer a few questions (quizzes were only added the last time the course was taught before being redesigned). Although there were some discussions in forums, they were few. The new course has short recorded explanations and open access materials. They can choose between reading the work or watching it recorded (most are available on Spanish public television or YouTube); sometimes, we focus on a few excerpts, and then they have short assignments, quizzes, and more discussions. They also have to create visual projects (mental maps, posters), which help to retain information more easily. They give their opinion on these projects in a discussion forum.

### Adopted Technologies

Now they create mind maps using Canva, Lucichart, or Coggle. They also create an infographic/poster with Canva, Lino, Piktochart, Glogster, or similar. Flip is also employed (they have to create a short video summarizing something); in one assignment, this is an alternative to a writing assignment, and in another is mandatory. Flip is handy because students can watch what others do and provide feedback. Alternatives are good to favor different learning/cognitive styles, as has been mentioned.

### Challenges My Students Encountered

Challenges were more related to the linguistic and discursive competencies (how to create a summary, answer questions giving details, and some problems with punctuation...). Although there was a module with reviews from aspects included in the previous Spanish 3000, which addressed these aspects, a video could be created in the future, or maybe there might be a Zoom discussion to review those aspects at the beginning of the course. They were fine with the new activities included since they had already prepared posters for the previous 3000 course. They seemed to enjoy doing those projects instead of having to answer more questions or create summaries about the materials. They were accustomed to having a few discussions, so adding more was not a problem. Regarding the materials, the idea of including short readings from Open Access websites and video recordings where the instructor or some invited experts explained the topics helped.

### Strategies Used to Increase Engagement

As a pedagogical strategy to engage students with the contents and make the course their own, there are several questions or prompts in the discussions to choose from. This is advisable when there are more than fifteen students. “It will be easier for your students to stay on top of the discussion as they won’t feel that they have to read everything everybody posts” (Simon, 2018). Another way to make the course a community where everybody contributes is by asking them to create or look for content used later in the course, as it has been mentioned (also, generating posters and mind maps to review content for the final quiz were a way of doing it). These assignments are also a great way to engage students through creativity. A mind map can assist students with understanding because it conveys hierarchy and relationships,

allowing them to see the big picture (for example, organizing the main features of authors and their plays). Mind maps activate many levels of brain activity and are a great instrument to help with memorization; they used, as mentioned, some tools such as Lucidchart and Coggle (more can be found at Quality Matters, “Enhance Student Activity...”).

They also had to create a poster/infographic. When created by the instructor, infographics help them understand something, but it is even better when they must create them. This allows students to connect information and make lessons more engaging. The difference between a poster and an infographic lies in the fact that the latter is made graphically with maps, statistical tables and diagrams, while the poster is made using images and texts that seek to capture the public's attention. (Quality Matters, “Use Infographics...”).

To engage students with each other, discussion boards were used, where they had social interaction since they were required to give feedback to at least another classmate. Flip also allows comments.

## CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the work done with the course has been important mainly because it allows the instructor to think once again about the course and how it can still be improved. In the future, for example, more visual projects could be incorporated.

Although the burden of doing group work was avoided in these online classes, maybe something easy could be added; they might contribute with a PowerPoint presentation or a poster with some ideas from a lesson (dividing several chapters or articles among them, for example, and have them present them online –for this, we will need to assign to the class a specific meeting time in Zoom). They could also create a collaborative presentation (divided into groups of 4-6 students, each could create some slides, and then the materials would be used by the whole class to review the content; that way, they also feel part of the learning community and they become *prosumers*). These have been done in our face-to-face classes but not online.

Regarding the open access materials, it sometimes seems more manageable for us and them to follow a book, but more than the book is needed. We end up using other materials, so we could take time before the course to select open access materials and different types of free materials, organize them well in the LMS, and create activities and assessments aligning them with those materials and the outcomes. We are making our students save money and providing various materials, usually needed to address different topics (such as female writers, in this case). Inviting experts to discuss and explain the studied topics, synchronically or asynchronously, is a good idea that should be continued and expanded.

Regarding the technology used, it is adequate to suggest different tools to our students (for example, when they need to prepare a poster) and to facilitate tutorials, but then let them choose the one they prefer.

Apart from all that, we need to have a learner-centered class, which includes some of the critical elements that define the learner-centered approach, namely an attempt to create community, a sharing of power and control over what is learned and how it is learned as well as a focus on assessment and evaluation tied directly to learning outcomes (Cullen & Harris, 2009, p. 117). This can be achieved by stating that students can choose some of their assignments, as it has been mentioned.

In summary, the redesign of the course aimed to continue practicing the writing skills previously acquired (this was done by including outlines, summaries, questions, and discussions), and at the same time, offering students an active and engaging class (discussions, Flip videos, posters and mind maps), bringing several plays in different versions, and discussing the contributions of women, making materials affordable.

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