Remote Teaching Updates & Resources

1 message

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To:

Going Remote: Planning, Challenges, and More

By Betsy Barre on Mar 23, 2020 05:47 pm

This post is a guest post by CAT Innovative Teaching Award winner, Carmen Pérez-Muñoz, Assistant Teaching Professor of Spanish. To read more from Carmen, visit her new blog, Dr. Carmen's Corner.

Since writing has always been therapeutic for me, and I sure feel like I could use some therapy these days, I've decided to start a blog. This is mostly for myself, but seeing the amount of resources that people are sharing with this whole "going remote business", I thought I would leave it public in case someone would consider these posts useful in some way, even if it's just through being reminded that many others are having similar feelings, challenges, etc. during this odd situation.

I'm not completely new to teaching online. I taught a hybrid Spanish class as a

graduate student at UNC and a remote Medical Spanish course at A.T. Still University (Missouri) after I moved to Winston-Salem. However, the situation we are going through these days is a very different animal. Materials are having to be adapted quickly; decisions about the syllabi, assessment, and more are being made by instructors, coordinators, and administration; and then there's policy changes in attendance, grading… so much for a spring "break"! Remote classes start tomorrow, and I'm uneasy, to say the least. I have a bazillion things in my head and as many feelings about each one of them.

I teach three different classes this semester: SPA 112 (Elementary Spanish), SPA 212 (Exploring the Hispanic World), and SPA 328 (Spanish for the Health Professions). **Challenge #1** is having three different preparations; **challenge #2** is being teaching 112 for the first time. But I also think about the plus side; **positive #1** is that I have amazing students, so they make things much easier for me with their enthusiasm and their sense of responsibility. Having to adapt materials to this new format is not easy, particularly for my Medical Spanish class. This course relies a lot on student participation through class discussion. As I always tell them, "this is not a class on medicine, but a class on communication." My goal is to make students better future providers for Spanish-speaking patients, linguistically capable, culturally knowledgeable, and simply caring and empathic professionals overall. **Positive #2**, these are highly motivated students, so their adaptability and eagerness to make remote teaching work is providing me with the energy I need to get it done.

This is my first semester back teaching after maternity leave, so **challenge #3** is child-care. My nanny, like so many people, is practicing social distancing and can't help with baby Diego. My husband works at Baptist Hospital and, as of today, he still needs to report to work. All of my family is in Spain (**challenge #4**, which would deserve a post of its own) and my in-laws live 4 hours away, so I'm basically on my own for this one. **Positive #3** is that Diego is a pretty good baby. Of course, at 7-months old, he's still quite demanding, but all in all, he makes things easy for me. **Positive #4** is that, in order to be able to care for Diego until my husband gets back home, I've been able to schedule my classes in the evenings thanks to my students' flexibility. There are some particular cases that will require some adjustments due to them being in different time

zones (**challenge #5**), but I am confident everything will be worked out.

I feel very privileged to teach in a place like Wake, where almost from the minute it was announced that we were going remote, there was guidance and support from friends and colleagues, the Center for the Advancement of Teaching, and more (**positive #5**). I'm not going to lie, at times I have felt like I was given "too much" information and "too many resources", but I try to remind myself that I don't need to read everything or follow every tip. I'm looking for my own tailored way to make remote classes work for me and my students, and I'm hoping that this blog will be another tool I can use for self-reflection and analysis on what works and what doesn't. This first post has already reminded me that for every challenge, I can also think of something positive that's on my side. So I guess I can say this is working so far…

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