

Project Year

2015-2016

Project Title

Introducing Brazilian Culture and Flipping a Cultural Studies Classroom

Project Team

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Audience

This project initially targets students enrolled in AS 211.394 *Brazilian Culture and Civilization*, a popular class that introduces Brazil to students with little to no exposure to the country's unique history and culture. In the longer term, the proposed videos could be modified for inclusion in the Portuguese language curriculum. There are also opportunities for these videos and online content to be of use to students in Latin American Studies, International Studies, History, and Romance Languages.

Pedagogical Challenge

The course, *Brazilian Culture and Civilization*, offered yearly by the Department of German and Romance Languages & Literatures is a popular undergraduate course that regularly exceeds enrollment limitations. Because the course is given in English, the student audience varies from those students majoring in Romance Languages or International Studies with a focus on Latin America, to students with absolutely no exposure to Brazil, its language, history, and culture. Given the diversity of student backgrounds and motivating interests, starting discussions within the class can be difficult, and introductory articles regarding distinct elements of Brazilian culture tend to be either too broad, so that important regional traditions are glossed, or excessively focused, so that they fail to connect regional trends with wider-reaching national trends.

Solution

We will create a series of six 5 to 7 minute long videos and related interactive content including evaluation materials and external links to other resources such as maps, documentaries, articles, and other thought-provoking and student-oriented materials. Instructors may use these videos in conjunction with homework assignments and/or in class in order to introduce and contextualize specific elements of Brazilian culture and to ensure that each student arrives in class prepared to discuss their evolving understanding of Brazilian culture. These videos will facilitate a flipped classroom model so that class time may be better spent in active and engaged cultural exploration rather than a passive lecture experience. The videos will be used every other week to introduce new class modules. Suggested themes are: 1) Geography and Climate 2) History 3) Race; 4) Religion 5) Popular Culture and 6) Fine Arts.

Assessment Strategy

We will be using more than one measure to evaluate the impact of the developed material on course teaching and learning. First, we will create cognitive questionnaires to assess the impact of the material developed on the teaching and learning. The questionnaires would be supported by a direct open-ended question tackling the same aspect. Regarding the impact on the learning, we will create online close-question activities to be completed by students after viewing each video. The goal is to offer students the opportunity to think about what they had just watched, access their short-term memory and revisit the content they had just been exposed to. As they do the activities they will get automated feedback. The last item of the activity will be an open-ended discussion question.

Faculty Proposal

Brazilian Culture and Civilization attracts students from different disciplines and most do not have background in Brazil-related topics. This can make it difficult for the students to engage in class discussions. Students are required to read articles to lay the foundation for the in-class discussions, however, participation is still below expectations.

I have been assessing the class to understand what students expect from the course in order to create a better learning environment. Student feedback indicates an interest in visual content that would make learning easier and more meaningful. In response, I have used available online videos and created shorter, more dynamic PowerPoint presentations to boost the discussions. However, most of the available videos tend to be long, with extensive explanations, some are not in English, and, when YouTube videos are used, students are sometimes forced to watch ads, which disrupt the classroom experience. More effective and dynamic would be a video series tailored for the course, accompanied by online activities.

The technology fellow who will work on this project has taken the course and understands what I am expecting of the material to be developed. The fellow does not only possess a strong technological background but is also very creative. We will establish milestones and deadlines to manage the work flow. I will work on the content of the course and on the development of the assessment material, while the fellow will assist in creating the online activities, the videos, and the video/audio alignment.

Our goal is to create six 5 to 7 minute long videos. Initially, we will develop two videos and pilot them with students in the Portuguese language course in order to evaluate their efficacy on delivering the content. The content and format of the next four videos will take into account the feedback obtained during the pilot phase. Once the material is developed and we have mastered the technique, the online material will be available to language, history, anthropology, and sociology courses teaching the subject of Latin American culture.