

Hello again Latinx-ers,

This email is just to give a very brief update on our class. I'm still figuring things out, so there's no set plan as of yet. Thank you for bearing with me as we negotiate this new normal.

First of all, I appreciate that most of you already responded to the tech survey in the previous email. If you haven't yet, please do so ASAP as I am using your responses to plan the class. Please send me a response in REPLY to the original email, which helps me to keep things organized. Also, if you asked me a specific question in your response that's not related to your access needs, I may not answer as I'm prioritizing basic access right now. Finally, I appreciate the kind notes and encouragement in your responses :)

I've been doing a lot of research the past 24 hours, talking to a lot of instructors, and some of you, to get a sense of how to move forward. In considering all the possibilities, I'm basically stuck between two options: (1) to have live sessions where the whole class can convene online during a set time every week; or (2) to have you do your work in groups and take group notes. There are benefits and drawbacks to each one. I may aim for some kind of hybrid, where we have one big meeting as a class per week and one small meeting in groups per week.

Also, we will likely have a plan A, plan B, plan C, for doing video chat stuff. Because computers break and internet can suck, as you well know. We will probably (though I hate it) use Blackboard first, and then try out Google Meet/Hangouts (evil), and if that fails, Skype (blargh) or Webex (what even is it?). I have ethical issues with Blackboard, but it seems like the most reliable since you all already have accounts and I have premium features without having to pay (thanks, Hunter).

My main concern is that you get the most you can out of the course at this point. So, to that end, I am wondering if you might give me a sense of what you find most valuable about the class, and suggestions for how to maintain or extend that online. This is not mandatory, it's only if you want to contribute (and maybe a good way to pass the time at home!). I'm providing some prompts below, which you can just answer in reply to this email.

- What do you find particularly effective or valuable about this class?
- Can you speculate on how to maintain a meaningful discussion environment online? You might talk about blog posts, googledocs, video chats, something else, etc.
- Would you rather work primarily in small groups (without my presence) or in a larger class setting with me included? Why?

Again, you do not have to respond, this is totally voluntary.

More to come this weekend when I have a better handle on things. Until then, the class is totally on pause. No readings, assignments, nothing. In the meantime, stay healthy, and keep each other healthy!

- Miss Calado

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Responses:

Hi Professor,

First off, I highly appreciate your individualized attention to this matter and your extended efforts to include student input in this matter. I hope you are well and staying healthy, mentally and physically, during this trying time.

Though I understand your aversion with BB, I do think it is the most efficient method to continue the class through distance learning. I highly agree with the Hybrid method suggestion. I suggest that we have a live in class discussion on Mondays (so people can do their presentations and we can participate in group discussion) and group discussion about the text via BB on Thursdays (we'd ideally submit our annotations like usual, if we feel comfortable share it on BB discussion board to have a basis of discussion etc). I believe the discussion elements of our class were essential to clarifying the context of the reading and were instrumental to prioritizing key points. I believe this can best be achieved through the hybrid method.

The feature Blackboard Collate or Blackboard Collaboration (I forget what it's called) is what most of my teachers are using to host live classes. In this outlet, there are a ton of features we can take advantage like presentation (so you can add files or attachments so the class can see and I think you can present a working document and have a note taker contribute to it, or just have the note taker add comments into the chat section and just copy and paste it to our class page) One of my teachers did a dry run today for the live class during normal class session times today and I found it really helpful to test it out with him and ask questions. I also believe we should host the live class sessions during normal class time.

I hope this was helpful to you in any way!

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Hi Professor,

I hope you can get a handle on things quickly. I found that the GoogleDocs note taking during discussions was one of the most effective parts of our classes. It helps keep our ideas organized and keep track of them just in case someone misses something during the lecture. I also wanted to add that I have a Professor who had to do remote classes a week before this new development and has been using <https://zoom.us/> for lectures and a bit of discussion since the class can see and hear each other. It wasn't that bad of a lecture experience for the class as a whole and I thought maybe you should look into it. Good luck.

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1. I like the lecture portion of the class because I may not understand a text fully until a discussion starts and lectures get me thinking more.

2. I used discussion board on Blackboard for my previous courses and it was useful. Sometimes we would reply to other students on discussion board threads too. Some online courses I took in previous years used voice thread on blackboard I think.

3. Both methods work.

Thank you!

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Dear Ms. Calado,

What I find valuable are the group discussions. I find it helpful to be able to listen to the thoughts and opinions of my peers in order to gain a clearer understanding of the reading. I also find your guidance valuable as well because sometimes I find the readings do a good job at highlighting multiple intersectional problems but sometimes I have a harder time seeing the big picture.

To keep online discussions interesting, maybe we should set aside a specific time, like a hour window or something where we'd all have to be online so we could discuss readings in real time on chat? Might be hard to decide on a time since everyone has conflicting schedules but it's worth a shot.

I honestly don't have a problem with either option, though it goes back to the timing of when the classes would be. Personally, I live with my parents who meet the age gap that put them more in danger of the virus, especially my mom who already is susceptible to respiratory like colds and infections. Being an only child, I would be the one to run errands for them. So if anything, groups would probably be the more realistic option in order to accommodate everyone with jobs and obligations.

Hope this helps.

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Hi Miss Calado,

I'm sad that we won't have class anymore 😞 but I'd like to offer my thoughts on your questions.

1. What I really enjoyed about this class was the discussion aspect of it. Sadly this won't be as easy as it was before but hopefully we'll find a way to discuss the readings we had been assigned. I enjoyed listening to my peers' personal anecdotes and thoughts on the readings. As someone who is a Latina, I find this class to be really valuable because it's somewhere where I can learn about other people like me and how their life experiences are similar or different to mine. It's amazing to learn about just how much work on latino people is out there. I just really liked being able to read the readings and then come to class and discuss them. Sometimes we related to the things we learned about and other times they were things we weren't even really aware of. Either way I genuinely enjoyed the things we discussed.
2. Googledocs is definitely one of the easier ways to maintain a class discussion in the sense that it helped me when I missed class or didn't quite understand something. I could just go into the class googledoc and read the notes from that day. I don't think this will work as well for a live discussion just because it's not always clear who said what or

what is currently being added or what has already been written a while ago. Some suggestions are Skype, Zoom, Discord, etc. I don't know of too many and I'm not sure my peers will have access to any of these. I do however feel that it will need to be live or at least a way we can respond in real time to have a successful discussion. For a previous online class we used nowcomment.com to talk about readings. The professor uploaded documents and students could highlight key phrases/passages they felt were important and other students could reply with their thoughts.

3. I would rather work in a larger class setting with you included because although I understand the readings, some of them are dense and I need clarification. Sometimes my classmates understand the readings and are able to clarify for me but sometimes they aren't. I think I would just like to have the extra clarification if needed. I can work in a smaller group, but my preference is a larger class setting.

Stay safe and thank you for a great class so far! I know it's your first time teaching this class and this isn't making it any easier but I think you were doing great and I've really enjoyed the way you teach and the class so far!

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- 1) What I find particularly effective about this class is how detailed the assignments are and how we go over each reading.
- 2) I think Google docs can help bring meaningful discussions, we just have to label who said what in it.
- 3) I like working in small groups but I'm fine with a larger group.

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1. It's hard to say what I find most valuable about the class. Probably first and foremost is the reading assignments since I've never read any of these texts before, so expanding my horizons is a good thing. But very closely related to that is the class discussions of the text. I learn much from my classmates because their experiences and perspectives are so different from my own.
2. My husband is currently enrolled in an online Master's program from Georgia Tech. He says that the most effective tool for discussion with his classmates is Slack. He also uses Slack for effective communication with his coworkers, as their company is split between NYC and San Francisco. He also notes that, unlike many other discussion tools, it is easy to use on a phone, which is perhaps more accessible to many people. Both his program and my master's program (which made the switch from on-campus to online while I was in the middle of my program), have also used discussion forums. In my case, instructors required us to post a certain number of times per week (usually once) and reply to others a certain number of times per week (usually 2-3). Daniel Hengel does something similar for one of his projects. The project has three cycles throughout the semester. Once a semester, a student is required to post to the class's blog. (He uses Wordpress.) The next day, everyone else has to respond to a post. The day after that, everyone has to response to a response. So, 1/3 of the time an individual student is producing content. 2/3 of the

time he or she is engaging with content produced by others. A modified version of that might be helpful in this kind of situation.

3. I think that a hybrid model that mixes video chats with you and small group work is best. Students engage better in small groups, therefore internalizing the concepts more effectively. However, the availability of an "expert" is also important for students to feel that they are being guided, not necessarily just expected to teach themselves. Many students feel overwhelmed or cheated if they have limited engagement with a professor. Content delivery from professor to student can effectively take place asynchronously (pre-recorded videos from the teacher), leaving synchronous online time for discussion or questions/answers, both of which are crucial aspects of active learning. In some cases, it might be advisable to measure in some way the students' grasps of material presented in asynchronous videos to ensure that they're actually watching them. (In my experience with a digital learning environment, I created quizzes created through Google Forms, but short writing responses or something similar could also work effectively, similar to the freewrites that you had us do in class.) Having some sort of asynchronous component is probably important in a situation like this one. Not everyone will necessarily be able to participate online at the appropriate time, even if they were previously available to be in class at the same time. (For example, I was free during our class time because my son was in preschool. But if the schools are shut down, my husband and I will have to simultaneously deal with a 3-year-old with cabin fever while also working and studying online in a relatively confined space. Though we would make every effort to prioritize scheduled meetings, it is entirely conceivable that he would have a meeting scheduled at the same time I had class discussion scheduled.) I would also note that it is much more difficult for students to create community in small group discussions/projects online. It would be an easier adjustment for students if you were to assign them to work with people they already had discussions with in the classroom. To transfer group rapport online is easier than to create it from scratch.

Sorry for the long answers, especially #3. My education training kicked in a bit for that question! Whatever you decide will work fine for me. I have successfully managed online-only education previously. Not all students can manage it as effectively, so I very much appreciate the challenge you face in determining the best way forward.

I hope my perspective helps!

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Thank you for such thoughtfulness in planning. Here are some responses to your questions...

- What do you find particularly effective or valuable about this class? [I like how you guide and push conversations. I also like how you introduce free writes for each class. The questions that you ask are helpful in dissecting the text and sharing with partners around us. And I like how you have particular sections of the reading that you have as your goal to discuss. All of that makes the class interesting and alive.](#)
- Can you speculate on how to maintain a meaningful discussion environment online? You might talk about blog posts, googledocs, video chats, something else, etc. I

wonder if, through googledocs, we could respond to a question or set of questions that you ask based on the reading and then we are required to respond to a certain number of others in the class. This gets students to pay attention to other comments.

- Would you rather work primarily in small groups (without my presence) or in a larger class setting with me included? Why? I would prefer to work in a larger class setting with you included because I like having your voice, knowledge/content background and general direction steering the class. 😊

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* What do you find particularly effective or valuable about this class? -> The most important part to me about this class is the different perspectives I get from a reading and how it could be interpreted differently.

* Can you speculate on how to maintain a meaningful discussion environment online? You might talk about blog posts, googledocs, video chats, something else, etc. -> I used to discussion posts through blackboard and it was very useful, I am personally not a fan of video chatting because, I would prefer blog/discussion posts.

* Would you rather work primarily in small groups (without my presence) or in a larger class setting with me included? Why? -> Either or would work for me. As long as there is communication amongst us (the students) and you.

Hope this helps a little :)