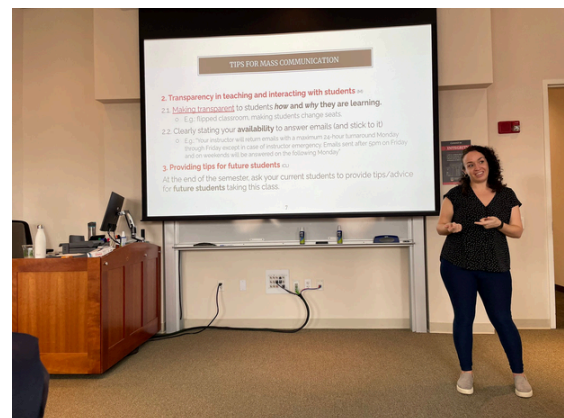


TEACHING PORTFOLIO

**MARÍA
GONZÁLEZ-FERRER**

PhD Candidate
Hispanic Linguistics Program
Romance Languages Department
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UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

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Letter of Nomination



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

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January 16, 2025

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic recommendation of María González Ferrer for the Center for Teaching and Learning's Excellence in Teaching Award. I have worked directly with María since she entered the M.A. program in Spanish with a focus on Linguistics in Fall 2018. Since that time, and through her progression to the Ph.D. program in 2020, she has taught the entire Elementary and Intermediate Spanish sequence in face-to-face, hybrid, and online formats. She has also assisted experienced faculty in a variety of upper-level courses. As Supervisor of the Spanish Language Program through Spring 2024, I have observed María's classes regularly and met with her to discuss her teaching and provide feedback. We have had many stimulating conversations about pedagogical topics, from the nuts and bolts of language instruction to issues such as course design, active learning, connecting coursework to the real world, and supporting the whole student. Her approach to teaching demonstrates remarkable innovation and creativity, as well as a genuine commitment to advancing the field of higher education on multiple fronts. Indeed, she has emerged as a valuable resource in our department and peer mentor for other Graduate Teaching Assistants. As an invited speaker to one of our monthly Spanish Teaching Circles, she conducted an interactive workshop on Inclusive Teaching that inspired both GTAs and veteran faculty members alike. Her materials were highly professional, and they provided fodder for dialogue that helped all present broaden their perspective. This is just one example that demonstrates the impact María is having on teaching at UGA now, and will doubtless have wherever she goes in the future.

Since María arrived at UGA, her teaching has surpassed all expectations, so much so that she was granted the prestigious Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award in 2024. Among her many accomplishments, particularly noteworthy is the degree to which she connects her doctoral research to classroom instruction, as in a research project on the ways in which key linguistic structures are presented and taught in Spanish language textbooks. Indeed, her program of research runs in parallel with a commitment to meaningful teaching that is exceptional among doctoral students balancing multiple areas of responsibility. María's combination of excellence in teaching and successful leadership on ambitious projects is remarkable. She is a creative and thoughtful instructor who values her students and places their learning at the center of all she does. In one Intermediate Spanish class I observed recently, her lesson plan was creative and engaging, integrating all modes of communication with a strong emphasis on the target language and authentic communication within an Active Learning framework. María's positive feedback and encouragement empowered the entire group to participate fully, without fear of making mistakes. She is mindful about showing respect and concern for each student as an individual, and her welcoming approach includes the development of class activities that effectively foster community. Unsurprisingly, María receives consistently stellar

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end-of-course evaluations. These note her innovation in the classroom and sensitivity to student needs; many students even report continuing their studies in Spanish further based on their experience in her courses.

Throughout her time at UGA, María has pursued innovative teaching methods and engaged in consistent self-reflection to evolve and grow as an educator. In meetings with supervisors following observations of her classes, she eagerly gathers feedback and asks intelligent follow-up questions that demonstrate a genuine interest in continued improvement. She has also sought out opportunities to learn from experienced faculty. As a Teaching Assistant supporting instructors for Introduction to Spanish Linguistics, Service Learning in Spanish, and a Writing-Intensive Latin American Film class, María supported student learning across a range of topics while expanding her own skill set. A team player and natural leader, she has continuously pursued professional development, taking time out from her busy schedule of research and teaching to work toward CTL's GradTeach Certificate and the Graduate School's Interdisciplinary Certificate in University Teaching. One fruitful experience was her year as a member of the Future Faculty Fellows. As part of her pedagogical training and research during the year-long, highly selective program, she designed and created a variety of instructional support materials ranging among topics from inclusivity to innovative grading. She has built on what she learned as a 3FP participant over the past year with out-of-the-box approaches to, for example, the constructive use of A.I. in online courses. All of these initiatives speak to her potential to have a transformative impact on student learning in higher education.

In addition to her classroom instruction and activities related to teaching and learning, María continues to make meaningful contributions to the UGA community. First as a Program Assistant and later as Coordinator of UGA's summer study abroad programs in Spain, she shared her own culture with students and helped them experience life in Spain in ways that connected their coursework with the broader world. She has also been a key organizer of the Department of Romance Languages's annual Spanish Short Film Festival, which reaches more than 150 attendees over two nights from across UGA and the broader Athens community. Given her impact on teaching and learning in her own classes, among fellow GTA/Instructors, and across campus, she is an outstanding candidate for the Excellence in Teaching Award. On behalf of the Romance Languages Department, I give her my highest recommendation for this well-deserved recognition.

Kind regards,



Dr. Catherine Simpson
Principal Lecturer
Supervisor of the Spanish Language Program, 2016-2024
Dept. of Romance Languages, University of Georgia

Personal statement

As a PhD candidate in Hispanic Linguistics and a Teaching Assistant in the Romance Languages Department, I am thrilled to apply for the **2025 Excellence in Teaching Award** through the University of Georgia Graduate School. Since beginning my master's in 2018, my journey at UGA has been driven by a passion for becoming a dynamic, inclusive, and effective educator. I have focused on integrating innovative teaching practices, fostering a collaborative academic community, and upholding the high standards of education that define our university.

Professional development has been central to my progress as an educator. In addition to taking courses on teaching pedagogy, I participated in the Future Faculty Program, collaborating with Teaching Assistants across departments to refine my instructional practices. I also earned the Interdisciplinary Certificate in University Teaching, developing a project that emphasized diversity, inclusion, and collaborative learning. Regularly attending workshops at the Center for Teaching and Learning, I continuously seek ways to enhance my teaching skills. These experiences have allowed me to engage with mentors, exchange ideas with peers, and apply new insights to improve my teaching, which I share through workshops and presentations within my department and at TA orientations.

A significant milestone in **my professional growth** was redesigning and teaching the online course SPAN 2001E, one of my most rewarding experiences. While I had taught this course both in-person and online before, this version emphasized interactive activities and adapting to the growing influence of AI in education. Rather than viewing AI as a challenge, I embraced it as an opportunity to innovate. I designed task-based video assignments, such as mock interviews, product pitches (like 'Shark Tank'), and coaching sessions, fostering creativity and real-world application. These activities integrated linguistic and cultural elements, prioritizing student-centered learning. To build community, I encouraged students to engage with each other's videos and use AI tools like ChatGPT responsibly, providing guidance on ethical usage. Mid-semester feedback praised the interactive structure and suggested clearer instructions, which I addressed by recording sample videos. Students appreciated this change in their evaluations.

In addition to my teaching, I am deeply committed to the **Scholarship of Teaching and Learning**, which shapes how I design engaging and inclusive learning experiences. I have presented research on language pedagogy at academic conferences, focusing on motivation, inclusion, and the integration of authentic materials into the curriculum. These principles guide my classroom practices; for example, in my Latin American Cinema class, students collaborate in pairs to refine a text, promoting critical thinking and fostering an interactive, student-driven environment. This approach helps them become independent learners while connecting classroom material to real-world contexts.

My work at UGA is driven by a **commitment to excellence** in teaching and a desire to contribute meaningfully to both students' academic development and the broader educational community. I am honored to be considered for the Excellence in Teaching Award and look forward to continuing to inspire and support students in their academic and personal growth.

Thank you for your consideration.

Teaching Philosophy Statement

In my classroom, **inclusivity** and a sense of belonging are the foundation for fostering a collaborative, engaging learning experience. I am committed to creating a **supportive environment** that recognizes the challenges of language acquisition. I prioritize **connection** and **transparency**, humanizing the learning process by celebrating mistakes as a natural part of it, while emphasizing language as a vital tool for human expression and connection.

My teaching style brings enthusiasm and joy to the classroom. As a native Spanish speaker, I develop interactive materials that facilitate an **immersive learning experience**. I share authentic materials such as personal anecdotes, real-life videos, and cultural events to deepen students' engagement. For example, I've shown videos of my 3-year-old nephew learning Spanish, my cousin's wedding, old family photos, and even used Google Maps to explore my hometown in Spain. This approach not only brings the Spanish language to life but also promotes cross-cultural awareness and encourages active participation.

To connect students with **Spanish beyond the classroom**, I offer resources like music and movie recommendations and invite them to explore and share their own. I also host biweekly discussions on topics like Hispanic restaurants, music, and cinema, and encourage students to share their favorite Hispanic characters or places they'd like to visit. This broadens their cultural perspective and fosters immersion. Additionally, I invite guest speakers to illustrate the practical applications of language learning. For instance, a former student shared how Spanish helped him connect with patients in a hospital, and a friend from Spain discussed the healthcare system there. These real-world examples make the learning experience more relevant and immersive.

To promote **transparency**, I communicate my expectations to students, which has led to increased engagement. I provide detailed rubrics, examples of exemplary work, and ask for mid-semester feedback. I address their suggestions, discussing which aspects of the course can be changed. This transparency not only improves student satisfaction but also enhances the learning experience.

I also focus on **humanizing the language learning process** by creating a safe space where students can learn from their mistakes. I share my own language mishaps, like when I mistakenly asked customers if they liked "stones" instead of "scones" while working as a waitress in Australia. These personal stories help students feel more comfortable taking risks with their language use. I consistently express gratitude for their courage in making mistakes, reinforcing that it's an essential part of learning.

Recognizing diverse learning preferences, I offer varied participation options, such as oral and written responses, group activities, and technology-based exercises. This variety ensures that all students can engage meaningfully with the material. I encourage students to change seating arrangements and take part in active learning exercises, **fostering communication and community** within the classroom. Building relationships with my students and cultivating an open, supportive environment is central to my teaching philosophy. In my ongoing efforts to create an inclusive classroom, I work on projects that promote diversity and inclusivity in language learning. For example, I have been collecting

resources to make my Spanish classes more inclusive. This commitment to diversity extends beyond teaching practices and is integral to my approach.

Ultimately, my teaching philosophy centers on fostering an environment where language acquisition is about **personal growth and meaningful connections**. Through empathy, creativity, and inclusivity, I strive to empower students to embrace the learning process and cultivate a lifelong passion for the language and culture. I believe that language is transformative, and my goal is to instill not only linguistic proficiency but also an appreciation for the role language plays in shaping human expression and understanding.

Description of Courses taught

In-person Spanish courses at UGA

Spanish language classes

SPAN 1110: Accelerated Beginners Spanish (2 sections) Fall 2021

Description: Accelerated Spanish class for beginners.

SPAN 2001: Intermediate Spanish I (6 section) Fall 2019, Spring 2020, 22, 23, 24

Description: Course designed for students who completed basic Spanish levels.

SPAN 2002: Intermediate Spanish II (2 section) Fall 23

Description: Course designed for students who completed Intermediate Spanish I class.

Role: *Instructor of record*

Responsibilities: I created and updated lesson plans and grammar guides, designed collaborative activities like discussions and language games to improve conversational skills, and developed assignments with evaluation criteria. I also incorporated student feedback to refine both content and teaching methods.

Spanish Content classes

SPAN 4090: Service Learning in Spanish (2 sections) Fall 2019, Spring 2020

Description: In this course students practice their language skills and cultural awareness through community involvement. Students work directly with the Latino community in planned and systematic activities coordinated with a variety of community organizations.

Role: *Teaching Assistant*

Responsibilities: I was responsible for assisting the instructor by facilitating class discussions, tracking students' participation with local organizations, encouraging active engagement in class, and grading their reflections throughout the semester.

SPAN 4082: Latin American Cinema (2 sections) Spring 2022, Spring 2023

Description: Students hone speaking, reading, and writing skills by analyzing and debating films from Latin America that explore gender, immigration, globalization, and the region's diverse cultures, in addition to creative questions related to humor, satire, and artistic creativity.

Role: *Writing Intensive Program Teaching Assistant*

Responsibilities: As a writing coach, I assisted students with essay writing and composition. I provided support throughout the course and delivered five presentations (10-15 minutes each) on tips to improve writing, including comparisons between English and Spanish, self-editing techniques, and common mistakes made by English speakers writing in Spanish.

SPAN 3050: Introduction to Spanish Linguistics (2 section) Spring 2023, Spring 2024

Description: This course (in Spanish) introduces the study of Spanish, focusing on linguistic knowledge, language variation, and contact phenomena. It covers key areas such as the Spanish sound system, syllable structure, sentence patterns, word meaning, and language variation.

Role: *Teaching Assistant, Instructor*

Responsibilities: My role was twofold. In addition to supporting the instructor with course delivery, and student engagement, I also provided valuable insights as a native Spanish speaker. I helped students better understand the practical nuances of the Spanish language, offering real-world examples of linguistic phenomena such as pronunciation, sentence structure, and regional language variation.

Online Spanish courses at UGA

SPAN 1002E: Basic Spanish II (1 section) Summer 2020

Description: Online Spanish class for beginners.

SPAN 1110E: Accelerated Basic Spanish (2 sections) Summer 2021, Summer 2024

Description: Online accelerated Spanish class for beginners.

SPAN 2001E: Intermediate Spanish I (2 sections) Fall 2024

Description: Online class designed for students who completed basic Spanish levels.

Role: *Instructor of record*

Responsibilities: I managed all aspects of the online courses, updating materials on eLC, designing collaborative activities, and supervising the final projects. I created and maintained the online learning environment, incorporated student feedback, and produced instructional videos. Additionally, I held weekly Zoom tutoring sessions and sent monthly feedback to enhance engagement. In my SPAN2001E course, I introduced a pilot activity focused on AI tools (expanded below).

Other Spanish courses outside UGA

Classes taught at Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama (2017, 2018)

- Spanish for Beginners I, Continuing Learning for adults, *Instructor*, 1 section
- Spanish for Beginners II, Continuing learning for adults, *Instructor*, 1 section
- SPAN 201. Intermediate Spanish I, *Instructor*, 2 sections
- SPAN 202. Intermediate Spanish II, *Instructor*, 2 sections
- SPAN 301. Advanced Spanish, *Instructor*, 2 sections
- SPAN 301. Conversational Spanish Table, *Instructor*, 3 sections
- SPAN 302. Conversation, Composition, and Grammar, *Instructor*, 2 sections in Study Abroad in Madrid (Spain)
- SPAN 352. Cultural Studies Abroad, *Instructor*, 1 section during Study Abroad program in Madrid (Spain)

Sample Teaching Materials

SPAN 2002 – Fall 2022

Quiero conocerte mejor. Escribe en español o inglés.

Tu nombre (en ELC) _____

¿Cómo quieres que te llame? _____

¿Con qué pronombres te identificas? _____

¿De dónde eres? _____

¿Qué estudias en UGA? _____

¿Por qué estudias español? _____

¿Hay algo más que yo debo saber de ti? ¿Tienes alguna preocupación que quieras compartir conmigo? (Is there anything else you want to share with me? Do you have any concerns?) _____

Image 1. Questionnaire for first day of class.

1. Making connections with my students. I

believe it's essential to get to know my students. To facilitate this, I use a student questionnaire (image 1) on the first day of class, and it allows students to share important information, such as their preferred names and pronouns, concerns, and other details.

Understanding their backgrounds and preferences help me create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. This approach helps students

feel more comfortable introducing themselves and fosters a sense of belonging in the classroom.

2. Immerse Students in a Cultural Learning Experience. I begin my lessons by

highlighting a cultural aspect, such as Frida Kahlo (Image 2), and playing music, such as Maná as students enter the classroom, creating a sensory connection (in this example, to Mexico). I then share intriguing cultural facts (Image 3), encouraging students to relate the material to their own experiences while practicing specific grammar concepts (Image 4). Since I began incorporating engaging warm-up activities, I find that students are more attentive from the very start.



Image 2. Introductory slide showed while students enter the class.

Frida Kahlo

- Fue una pintora muy famosa de México
- Pintaba principalmente autorretratos
- Es un ícono de la cultura pop mexicana
- Tuvo un accidente de joven, tuvo 32 operaciones quirúrgicas
- Si quieres saber más, mira este corto [video](#)

Four small images of Frida Kahlo's paintings arranged in a 2x2 grid. The top-left shows her in a red shawl, the top-right shows her in a white dress, the bottom-left shows her in a red headscarf, and the bottom-right shows her with a black cat.

Image 3. Cultural facts.

ACTIVIDAD DE CALENTAMIENTO.
Habla con tu compañero (5 minutos)

Presente	Pasado	Futuro
¿Quién es tu pintor/a favorito/a? ¿Por qué?	¿A qué museo fui ste por primera vez?	¿Qué vas a hacer el próximo fin de semana?

Habla español

Image 4. Warm-up activity connecting cultural & grammar content.

3. Engagement and Motivation. I strive to create a student-centered environment that

captivates my students' attention through humor and genuine interest in their experiences (Image 5). For example, I share a funny cat meme and ask, "Which cat are you today?" This interactive approach encourages students to connect with the material while fostering a lighthearted atmosphere. This approach not only enhances engagement but also builds a sense of

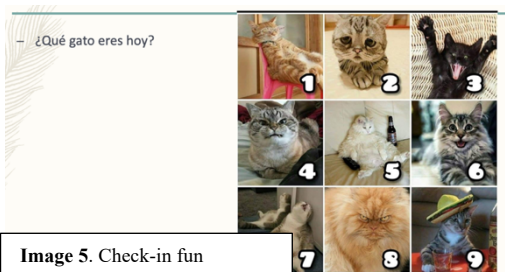


Image 5. Check-in fun

community, allowing students to feel comfortable and valued in the classroom.

4. Authentic Materials. I use genuine materials to enhance learning. For example, in SPAN 2001 we learn about family and the past tense. I show a video of my 3-year-old nephew learning to count to five (Image 6) and a video of my cousin's wedding (Image 7), offering students a glimpse into a real Spanish wedding. This approach connects language learning with cultural context, increasing student engagement with Hispanic culture.

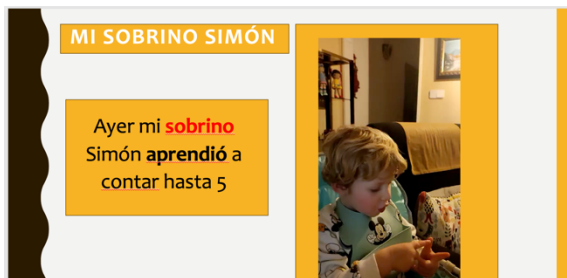


Image 6. Video of my 3 years old nephew counting in Spanish.

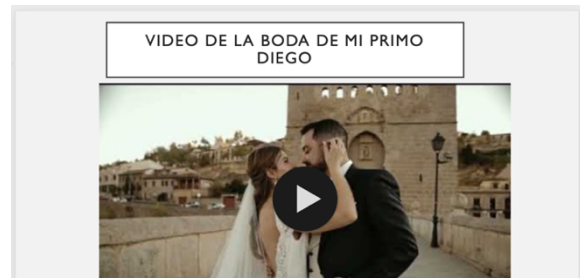


Image 7. Video of my cousin's wedding in Toledo (Spain)

5. Safe space for diverse participation and interactions through active learning.

where students can engage comfortably. For example, I use *Mentimeter* for polls, enabling students to respond via QR codes on their phones, fostering participation (Images 8 and 9). I also design collaborative activities like Escape Rooms (Image 10), where students work in teams to solve challenges.



Images 8 and 9. QR code and *Mentimeter* activity to share students' preferences and opinions.



ESCAPE ROOM ¡Salva a Alberto y a Tomás!

- **OBJETIVO DEL JUEGO:** Alberto y Tomás, estudiantes de UGA, están atrapados (locked) en el baño del aeropuerto de Buenos Aires, donde fueron de vacaciones. Necesitan ayuda para tomar su vuelo de vuelta a Atlanta. Para poder salvarlos, es necesario tener un código de seis dígitos. En equipos, tienen que juntar los códigos al resolver cada uno de los acertijos (riddles). El equipo ganador es el grupo que reúna los seis dígitos en el menor tiempo posible.

Acertijo 1. Los pasados.



Image 10. First page of Escape Room to work in teams.

6. Encouraging Student Connections with Spanish Outside the Classroom. As a language teacher, I emphasize that learning extends beyond the classroom. To motivate

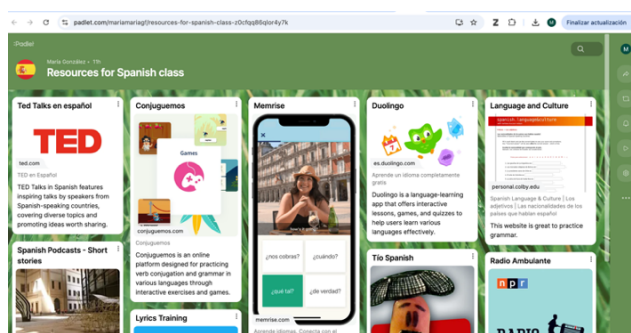


Image 11. *Padlet* platform to share Spanish resources with students.

students, I guide them to explore diverse resources. One example is that I created a *Padlet* (Image 11) where I share resources and encourage students to add their favorites, like music and videos. In my Fall 2024 online SPAN2001 class, I encouraged students to practice with friends and family. Some worked with coworkers, roommates, and even family members.

One student, whose mother is Cuban, began weekly Spanish interactions with her. These experiences not only strengthened their connection to the language but also highlighted the transformative power of real-world practice.

Samples of Students' Materials

1. Role-play to connect learning to real world. I aim to help students connect what they learn in class to real-world situations. In my in-person classes, I facilitate a role-play activity where one student creates a profile of a job seeker (Image 12), while their partners develop a new company that is hiring (Image 13).

After completing their profiles, students simulate a job fair by interviewing and being interviewed. In my online classes, my students do a similar activity but instead they record the interview. Many students have expressed that they find this activity invaluable for their real-world experiences.

Información de la empresa
(Crea tu propia empresa)

- Nuestra empresa se llama... La Agencia Mejor
- Es una empresa... agencia de publicidad

TRABAJADORES
(Tipo de trabajador que buscas)

- Personalidad: trabajador, responsable, serio, inteligente
- Tiempo: parcial / completo
- Años de experiencia mínima: 1 años
- Estudios: universidad
- Idiomas: ingles y español
- En este trabajo hay que viajar: Si/No

CONDICIONES
(Qué beneficios ofreces)

- Sueldo: \$50,000
- Extras (Cochi/Ordenador/Móvil)
- Días de vacaciones: 30
- Edad de jubilación: 65
- Seguro médico: vida / seguro / dental

Image 13. Student's mock company description.

Nombre: Elsa Hamburger

Mi educación: Tengo mucha educación. Estudié la universidad Howard Dorechey, Yale, y USA

Mi experiencia: Soy una persona en mi ciudad, pero voy a todas las clases. Trabajé en un laboratorio y estudié ciencias académicas. También fui un profesor de ciencias de la vida.

Idiomas: Español, Mandarín, Francés, Portugués, Italiano, Alemán, y Inglés

Personalidad: Muy simpática, inteligente, creativa, divertida, generosa

Disponibilidad: Parcial / completa

Estás dispuesto a viajar: Si/No

Quiero ganar: 3,000,000 dólares por año

Quiero jubilarme con: 40 años.

Quiero: 15 días de vacaciones

Quiero: 3 años para mi familia

Quiero un seguro de: vida/médico/dental

Image 12. Student's mock job profile.

2. Bonding Through Teamwork and Creativity. In this exercise, students practice technology vocabulary by collaboratively designing a new social media platform (Images 14 and 15) and applying it to a real-world scenario.

ACTIVIDAD 7.

Todas las redes sociales del mercado (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.) han dejado quebrado (went bankrupt).

El Gobierno de Estados Unidos ha decidido dar 1 millón de dólares a nuevos creadores para empezar una nueva red social.

PASO 1. En grupos de 3 vas a crear una nueva red.

PASO 2. Después, vas a presentar la red a la clase.

PASO 3. Cada grupo votará la mejor red social.

Image 14. Activity description where students have to create a new Social Media platform.

This activity encourages them to engage with the material, enjoy the creative process, work effectively in teams, and explore their imaginative ideas.

La nueva red social

Nombre: Mascota-gram

Tipos de usuarios: Las personas con las mascotas

Breve descripción: Una red social las personas se pueden postear las mascotas y también buscar para las mascotas.

Por qué la red es la mejor?

- Las mascotas son muy divertidas
- Todas las personas se enamoran las mascotas

Características:

- Se pueden subir fotos ☒
- Se puede compartir música ☐
- Se pueden enviar mensajes de texto ☒
- Hay un muro público ☒

Otra información relevante:

Image 15. Student's mock new Social Media platform.

3. Active student participation in the learning process. In my Latin American Cinema class, I designed an activity that empowers students to take on the role of teachers (Image 16). They work in pairs to improve a text and then share their enhancements with

Actividad 1. Lee el siguiente análisis. ¿Cómo podrías mejorarlo? Cada línea tiene una o más correcciones.

Título: (1) Pizza, Birra, y Faso

(2) En la escena de este análisis personajes entran en un taxi a robar. (3) La cosa que más me llama la atención es que viven en medio del "caos" y eso se refleja en las técnicas cinematográficas. (4) La yuxtaposición es importante.

(5) Varios elementos como el sonido, los planos, los movimientos de cámara son importantes. (6) Esta escena establece el tono de lo que va a pasar en el resto de la película. (7) Si esta escena no existiera, no sabríamos lo que va a pasar. (8) No solo sabemos que es una película sobre la clase baja, pero nos muestra el caos.

Actividad 2. Escribe las correcciones que harías para mejorar el texto.

(1) uso de mayúsculas y comas y cursiva en títulos: Pizza, birra y faso / Pizza, birra, faso

(2) uso de artículos → los personajes

(3) "caos" → infierno

(4) → conexión de ideas, frases, lugares, uso de palabras vagas: "yuxtaposición" = justificar

(5) → conexión de ideas, frases, lugares, uso de palabras vagas: "yuxtaposición" = justificar

(6) → conexión de ideas, frases, lugares, uso de palabras vagas: "yuxtaposición" = justificar

(7) → conexión de ideas, frases, lugares, uso de palabras vagas: "yuxtaposición" = justificar

(8) → conexión de ideas, frases, lugares, uso de palabras vagas: "yuxtaposición" = justificar

Image 16. Student's corrections as they take on the teacher's role.

the class. This approach incorporates the pair-think-share active learning strategy, encouraging collaboration and deeper engagement in their learning process. Introducing this type of activity has made me realize that students pay closer attention to details and become more aware of their own mistakes, fostering a growth mindset and enhancing their overall learning experience.

Innovative Teaching Projects and Roles

1. Project to promote diversity and inclusion in the classroom. Throughout my career, I have attended various talks and workshops on inclusion and diversity. While I was eager to celebrate these values, I initially struggled to implement them in my own classes. To address this, I created an eLC course that provides resources to promote inclusion within our language department, sharing it with my peers. The resources I included encompass activities to foster student connections, tools to enhance communication, strategies for creating a sense of belonging, materials for reflecting on our biases as educators, methods to combat stereotypes, and resources for students to explore further. I presented this project at the Spring Symposium for the Center for Teaching and Learning at UGA (Image 17), as well as at a Teaching Circle in my department.

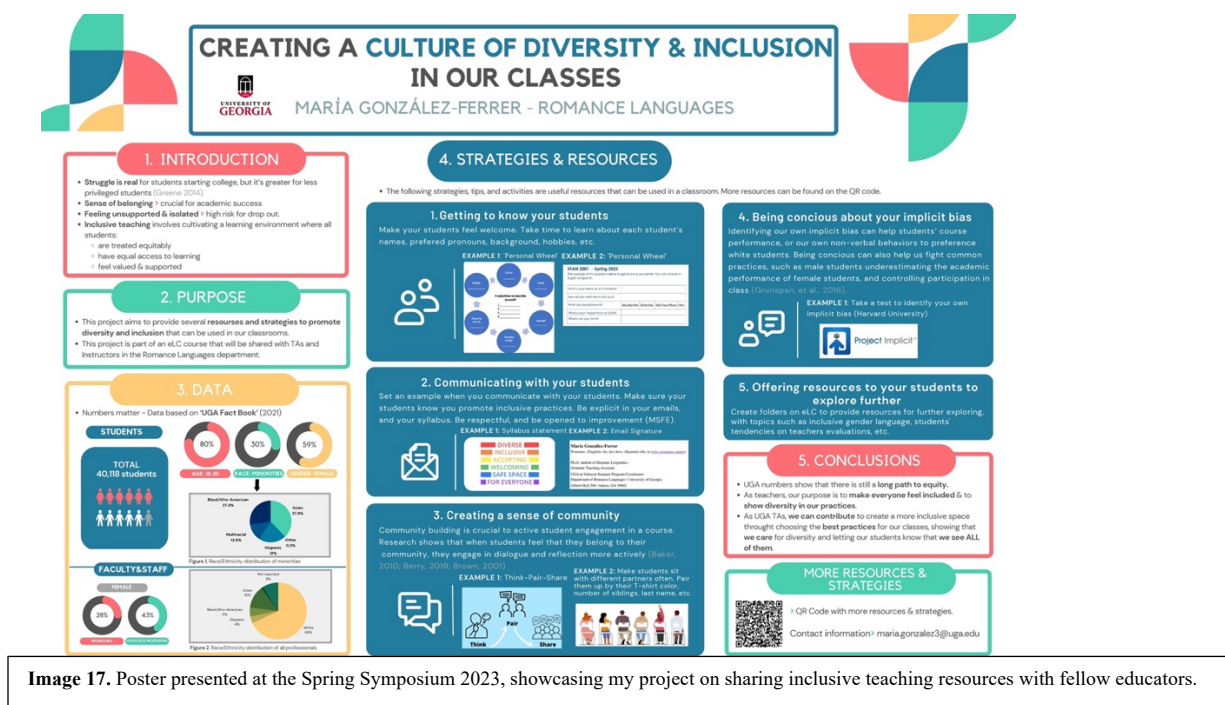


Image 17. Poster presented at the Spring Symposium 2023, showcasing my project on sharing inclusive teaching resources with fellow educators.

2. Adapting our classes to the emergence of AI. The emergence of AI in education prompted me to rethink my teaching practices. In the summer of 2024, I noticed students relying on AI for assessments. Rather than taking a punitive approach, I adapted by making two key changes: teaching students to use AI responsibly and introducing *Interacciones*, a project with eight interactive assignments like video recordings and reflections to foster creativity and original work. For example, in *Interacción 2*, students introduced a friend or pet (Image 18) and commented on classmates' videos, with the option to refine their responses using ChatGPT followed by reflecting on the experience. I found that students particularly enjoyed creating videos, and using ChatGPT reduced anxiety, allowing them to focus on learning without fear of mistakes.

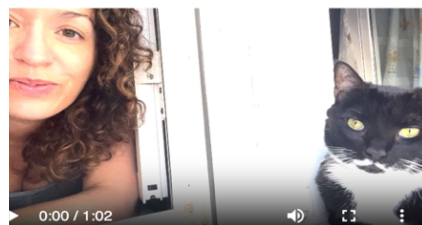


Image 18. Video of my example for *Interacción 2*, where I introduce my pet Maui.

Professional Activities, Training, and Work Experiences Related to Teaching

Professional Contributions and Leadership

UGA Future Faculty Fellows Professional Development- Center for Teaching and Learning

- Leadership- TA Café: Effective communication with students and faculty 3/1/2023
- Leadership- TA Café: Welcoming International Students 11/2/2023
- Leadership- Microteaching I and II sessions for GRSC 7770 11/2020/2023, 10/2/2023
- Panelist- What I wish I knew when I was a new TA - TA Orientation 8/15/2023
- Contributing Facilitator- Spring Teaching Symposium UGA 4/5/2023

Invited Guest Lectures

- “Inclusive Teaching Resources” at the Romance Languages Dept., UGA 11/16/2023
- “‘Al *por*, *por* y al *para*, *para*’: Evidencia lingüística e histórica a favor de un nuevo enfoque”: SPAN 6850 Spanish Applied Linguistics, UGA 4/18/2023
- “Cómo se enseña *por* y *para* en los libros de español” Colloquium, UGA 2/11/2022
- “Hacer negocios en España”: SPAN 4150 Business Spanish, UGA 9/5/2019

Teaching Poster presentation

- Creating a Culture of Diversity and Inclusion in our Classes at Spring Teaching Symposium, UGA 4/5/2023

Mentorship

- Mentor for UGA Graduate Master Student Steve Vazquez Summer 2024
- Mentor for UGA Graduate Master Student Keenan Keola Hunt Fall2019-Spring2021

Teaching Honors and Fellowship

- Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, Center for Teaching and Learning, UGA 2024
- Future Faculty Fellow, Center for Teaching and Learning, UGA 2023
 - This is a year-long professional development program with an interdisciplinary cohort of 15 graduate TAs with a demonstrated commitment to innovation and teaching excellence.
 - Workshops and talks about Teaching

Teaching Certificates

- GradTeach Certificate by the Center for Teaching and Learning Ongoing
- Interdisciplinary Certificate in University Teaching by The Graduate School Fall 2024

Other Professional Activities Related to Teaching

- Spanish Teacher at the language school Estudio Sampere in Madrid (Spain) 2016-2017
- Spanish Tutor at Indonesian Embassy in Lisbon (Portugal) 2015-2016
- Instructional materials developer, Spanish teacher, translator at Escuela de Español de la Universidad de Salamanca in Lisbon (Portugal) 2015-2016

Professional Training and Development

UGA Academic Pedagogy Semester Courses

- GRSC 7900 Course Design – 3 credits Spring 2024
- WIPP 7001 Pedagogy of Writing in the Disciplines – 3 credits Fall 2021
- EDIT 7520E Online Teaching and Learning – 3 credits Summer 2020

- ROML 7700 Romance Language Pedagogy – 3 credits Fall 2018

Future Faculty Fellowship (3FP) Professional Training and Development

- Teaching Matters, The Role of Teaching in the R1 setting – 1.5 hours 11/3/2023
- The unlearning curve: Mitigating Student Resistance to Learning with Student Development Theory – 1.5 hours 10/20/2023
- Panel: Lily Teaching Fellows; Transitioning from Grad Student to Junior Faculty – 1.5 hours 10/6/2023
- Panel: Ungrading – 1.5 hours 9/22/23
- From the Initial Interview to Job Negotiations – 1.5 hours 9/8/23
- The emergence of Generative AI/ChatGPT in the Classroom – 1.5 hours 8/25/23
- Course Design I – 1.5 hours 3/31/23
- Course Design II – 1.5 hours 11/30/23
- Panel: Teaching Outside the Box – 1.5 hours 3/17/23
- Time Management – 1.5 hours 2/17/23
- Panel: Career Paths for PhDs – 1.5 hours 3/17/23
- Individual Development Plans and Goal Setting – 1.5 hours 1/20/23

UGA Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) Professional Development and Trainings

- How, when, and why to Implement Peer Feedback in the classroom – 1 hour 9/07/2024
- Motivating and engaging students – 1 hour 1/30/2023
- Creating SPACE for ourselves and students – 1 hour 9/8/2022
- Teaching Resources – 1 hour 11/18/2022
- Teaching Philosophy Professional Development – 1 hour Spring 2021
- Making Teaching Fun – 1 hour 10/28/2021
- Teaching Assistant Orientation – 4 hours 8/9/2018

Class observations and evaluations

- Midsemester Formative Evaluation by Rachel Harris from CTL for SPAN 2001 2/14/2023
- Class observation by Dr. Kelly Farmer from CTL for SPAN 2001 3/21/2023
- Class observation by Dr. Catherine Simpson for SPAN 1110 11/17/2023

Professional Talks at UGA

- Transitioning from WIP TA to Instructor of Record by Christina Crespo 2/16/2023
- Active Learning by Dr. Kelly Farmer 3/23/2023
- Inclusive spaces for learning by Randolph Carter 9/22/2022
- Inspiring Proficiency in Spanish classes by Annie Wendell 10/20/2022

Professional Talks outside UGA

- New approaches to ideologies and identities in Spanish Heritage Language Education by Dr. Jennifer Leeman 11/6/2022

Workshops for Certificate in Diversity and Inclusion

- Best practices for accommodating students with disabilities – 2 hours 9/31/2023
- UGA Non-discrimination Anti-harassment – 2 hours 9/12/2023

Workshops for Grad Teach Certificate

- How Learning Works – 1.5 hours 9/21/2023
- Metacognition – 1.5 hours 10/5/2023
- Motivation – 1.5 hours 10/9/2023
- Introduction to Inclusive Excellence in Teaching – 1.5 hours 11/2/2023
- Active learning 101 – 1.5 hours 11/30/2023

Evaluation of Teaching

Quantitative Feedback

Student evaluations	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Summer 2024
Evaluations completed / Students in the course(s)	54/55	26/28	40/44	18/18	6/24
Departmental Questions	Agree or Strongly Agree answers				
The course was taught primarily in the target Romance language.	98.14% n=53/54	100% n=26/26	97.5% n=39/40	100% n=18/18	100% n=6/6
The teacher was available for consultation.	98.14% n=53/54	100% n=26/26	100% n=40/40	100% n=18/18	100% n=6/6
Overall, the teacher performed effectively in this course.	96.2% n=52/54	100% n=26/26	97.5% n=39/40	100% n=18/18	100% n=6/6

From Fall 2021 to Summer 2024, my student evaluations consistently demonstrate strong performance across key areas. In all semesters, most students (95%–100%) affirmed that my courses were taught primarily in Spanish, reflecting my commitment to immersive language instruction. My availability for consultation received 100% satisfaction in four out of five terms, while my overall effectiveness as a teacher was consistently rated between 96.2% and 100%, highlighting my ability to engage and support students successfully.

Selected Qualitative Evaluations

Overall

- “I learned a lot in this course and was challenged to speak in front of my class. Although this was a very difficult class, it was probably one of my favorite classes at UGA due to my professor Maria Gonzalez-Ferrer. Maria was the best teacher I've ever had for a language class in my life and I have taken Spanish for over 10 years. Maria **truly wanted us to learn** and **would explain things in many different ways** so we could understand. She incorporated games into class so that we could test our knowledge, and this was extremely helpful. I really appreciate everything she did for me and our class. She truly believed in us.” (Spring 2022, SPAN 2002)
- “Maria is amazing and always so **extremely helpful and understanding**. Always went the extra mile when help was needed.” (Fall 2021, SPAN 1110)
- “María is an amazing teacher! She makes herself very available and is such a kind instructor! She has **helped me push myself** in Spanish.” (Spring 2022, SPAN 2002)

Fostering Motivation and Engagement

- “The teacher had a great attitude, very positive, and it **helped me focus.**” (Fall 2019, SPAN 2001)
- “My professor, Maria, inspired me to study and actually learn Spanish. This is my fifth year taking Spanish, and I've never had a teacher that made learning this language easy. Maria is clearly passionate about what she does and she has **motivated me to continue learning Spanish** until I am fluent!” (Spring 2020, SPAN 2001)
- “I honestly think this is the best spanish class I have taken. I have learned so much more than in other classes and feel like I can speak a lot better than even last semester. We were **encouraged to speak spanish for the entirety** of each class which helped me improve my skills. I think the group discussions went really well, and the fun and interactive games at the end of class periods were very helpful and **engaging.**” (Spring 22, SPAN 2001)
- “I've really enjoyed your courses, and I learned and improved a lot more than I ever thought I would. Even though I had to take both courses online, I loved that you made it **interactive** and focused on every aspect of language (speaking, understanding/reading, vocabulary, grammar). The discussion videos and RVC topics were so fun and creative, but also challenging and **reflective** (of progress).” (Fall 2024, SPAN2001E)

Authentic Materials for Enhanced Learning

- “I really liked the **visitors that would come** in and tell us about their lives while speaking Spanish. It really motivated me to become good enough for their level of speaking. I even watched the movie that a visitor talked about in class one day.” (Spring 2020, SPAN 2001)
- “We got lots of experience talking and learning about **culture that applies outside** of the classroom.” (Spring 2022, SPAN 2001)
- “The activities that my instructor created for us to learn Spanish were very helpful. One of my all time favorite instructors. She helped us learn Spanish through **songs, podcasts, movies, and shows.** I found that learning to speak and write Spanish in this way was more helpful than just reading straight from a textbook.” (Spring 2022, SPAN 2001)

Humanize the learning process by welcoming mistakes

- “I believe having time to practice my Spanish in class was very important and I felt **comfortable** enough in class that I **was not scared to make mistakes** because I saw my mistakes as **learning opportunities.** I found the homework to all by very useful to my own learning, and test and quizzes were all very related to what we learned. I would definitely say I have learned more Spanish and become a better, more confident speaker after taking this course.” (Fall 2019, SPAN 2001)
- “Maria was extremely helpful, kind, and personal to all of us. She made the environment very **comfortable to learn and practice in.**” (Spring 2022, SPAN 2001)
- “I loved being able to practice my Spanish in class **without the fear of being judged.** The teacher made me feel very comfortable and encouraged me to speak up. This improved my speaking and communication skills immensely.” (Spring 2023, SPAN 2002)
- “Maria was **never a condescending** in her corregimos which made us more confident to speak in class and practice! Overall she made the course fun and enjoyable.” (Spring 2023, SPAN 2002)

Creating an Inclusive and Safe Space for a Sense of Belonging

- “I think the course was taught very well. Maria did a good job **including everyone** and made sure everyone felt confident in their Spanish skills. She did everything in her

power to help us succeed and I would recommend her to anyone taking this course.” (Fall 2021, SPAN 1110)

- “Teacher did very well at **creating a safe and respectable environment**, to where everyone wanted to participate and learn together.” (Spring 2022, SPAN 2001)
- “Throughout this course, my speaking skills greatly improved through daily prompted conversations in Spanish with a partner. Throughout the semester, Maria was always available, able, and eager to help answer my questions! She truly wants what is best for her students. She devoted a great deal of effort to make her presentations aesthetically pleasing and funny. She incorporates jokes and is just the cutest! Her teaching made this class more enjoyable for me. This was also the first Spanish class I've taken at UGA that I've found to be challenging. **She pushed me to improve without damaging my confidence** in Spanish, which is a difficult thing to balance. She's the best!” (Spring 2022, SPAN 2002)

Feedback from Teaching Observations and Formative Evaluations

- **Class observation** for SPAN2001 by Dr. Kelly Farmer from Center for Teaching and Learning, UGA 3/21/2023

I observed such kindness and warmth in your teaching. Your nonverbal communication (e.g., smiles, gestures) is positive and helps students feel safe, and what is more, it lets them know (implicitly) that they're doing well. You circulate among your students, you check in on them during groupwork, you ask them how they're doing before class, and you encourage them constantly. All this creates an atmosphere where students feel safe to volunteer, interact, communicate, and participation levels were high.

- **Mid-semester Formative Evaluation** by Rachael Harris from Center for Teaching and Learning, UGA 2/14/2023

Instruction Approachability: In our large group discussion, students commented on your approachability, noting that they feel encouraged to speak in class without the anxiety of being cold called. Students also unanimously agreed that they feel comfortable making mistakes when speaking Spanish, and that you contribute to this through your use of gentle corrections and verbal affirmations. Below are their comments from the worksheet:

- Our teacher is very nice and unthreatening, so participation doesn't feel intimidating (7 students; 2 groups)
- Teacher is always positive and encouraging (9 students; 3 groups)
- Good environment created by teacher (2 students; 1 group)
- Good at explaining things in Spanish or English when necessary (3 students; 1 group)

- **Class observation** for SPAN1110 by Dr. Catherine Simpson, Spanish Language Supervisor, UGA 11/17/2023

María's ability to communicate with the students in natural yet comprehensible Spanish was remarkable throughout the class. The students felt comfortable and at ease, actively participating without fear of making mistakes. María continually encouraged them, and the atmosphere in the class was collaborative and positive. During a pair activity in which they had to invent a new holiday, the students showed particular creativity and enjoyed each other's creations. Great job, María!