

TA ORIENTATION: PROGRAM INFORMATION AND USEFUL TIPS

Compiled by Dr. Margo Milleret
Associate Professor
Department of Spanish and Portuguese
University of New Mexico

THE PORTUGUESE CURRICULUM AT UNM

Port. 275 is the first language course that undergraduates take at UNM. It is taught every semester at either 11am or 1pm, 5 days a week. MWF classes are 50 minutes, while T TH classes are 75 minutes.

Port. 276 is the second course that completes the introduction to grammar points, vocabulary, and some cultural concepts. It is taught at 11am, 5 days a week. Usually second year TAs teach Port. 276, after having had experience teaching Port. 275.

Port. 311 is an intermediate level language course that receives only 3 hours of credit and meets only 2 or 3 times a week. It reviews grammar concepts, but concentrates on developing all four skills by reading, writing and discussing culture. The course materials are designed to introduce students to controversial and engaging topics.

Port. 312 is also an intermediate level language course that meets 2 or 3 times a week.

It develops cultural understanding and conversational skills through the study of Speech Acts. Students watch examples of speech acts, interview Brazilians about speech acts, read about Brazilian communication and cultural patterns and perform and film their own speech act scenes.

There are NO placement exams for Portuguese at this time. Students in your classes will have chosen the class based on their interest in the subject and the time the class is offered. Our research suggests that most of these students will be upper-classmen; that is, juniors or seniors. We also know that most of them will have studied Spanish before, or will be bi-lingual speakers of Spanish and English. This means, your students will be learning Portuguese as a 3rd language.

MAJOR AND MINOR IN PORTUGUESE

All students majoring in Liberal Arts must have a major field of study and a minor field of study. A student wishing to obtain a minor in Portuguese can complete the 4 courses listed above, representing 18 hours of credit. More students decide to minor in Portuguese than to get a major.

A student wishing to obtain a major in Portuguese must complete 30 hours of coursework. The remaining courses in Portuguese at the 400 or 500 level are open to juniors, seniors, and graduate students. The seminar, Port. 570, is only open to graduate students. Graduate work can be done at the M.A. level only at UNM. Candidates wishing to return to Brazil for further work in higher education must write a thesis and take the M.A. exam. Candidates desiring to complete higher education in the US may elect to write a thesis, but they must take the M.A. exam.

RESEARCH ON UNDERGRADUATE LEARNING AT UNM

In the Fall of 2004, Prof. Margo Milleret began to evaluate the Portuguese program at UNM by conducting an on-line survey of former and current students. A revised version of the on-line survey was administered in the fall of 2005 as well. Here are some of the results from the student survey.

The Portuguese program enrolls about 75-100 students each semester. The average class size is approximately 15-20 students, however courses at the 400 level and above often have fewer students. The most common disciplines of study beyond Portuguese are Spanish and Latin American Studies in fields such as History, Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, or Business. The majority of the students in Portuguese are studying the language because they have an interest in Brazilian culture, and over _ of them have plans to either live or work in Brazil. The students want the opportunity to talk in class, learn about current events, popular culture and music, and improve their pronunciation.

When asked what they want to be able to do with their language skills, the students reported the following as important or very important:

97% travel in a Portuguese speaking country
93% talk to Portuguese speaking friends
90% understand slang or colloquial speech
89% understand cultural values and traditions
87% understand radio, films, or popular music
84% talk in formal situations (look for a job, talk to a doctor, give a speech).

When asked what they would like to do *outside* of class, the 5 highest activities listed were: Converse with native speakers of Portuguese in the community, Watch Portuguese language television programs or movies, Read magazines/newspapers in Portuguese, Listen to Portuguese language radio programs, participate in the Brazil Club.

Students reported that the activities that help them learn best are: Practicing pronunciation, studying vocabulary, reading, writing compositions, doing oral language drills, listening to the teachers, doing group or pair work, and translating. The students ranked the most important skills to learn in the following order: listening, speaking, writing, reading, grammar, and cultural understanding.

APPLYING RESEARCH TO CLASS ROOM TEACHING

1. Based on the information above, what kinds of activities should be used in the classroom? Assigned for homework?
2. Based on the information above, what kinds of materials beyond the textbook should be used in the classroom?
3. Do you agree with the students' views? With which ones do you agree? Disagree? Why?

RESEARCH ON TA TEACHING AT UNM

In the summer of 2005, Prof. Margo Milleret sent out an on-line survey to current and former TAs in the Portuguese program. Here are some of the results of that survey.

The most effective teaching strategies listed were: group and pair work, translation, teaching about Brazilian culture, using Portuguese only in the class, using a balance of lecture, games, and a book for grammar.

The least effective teaching strategies listed were: teaching too much grammar, too much repetition of the same kind of exercise, lecture, being picky about pronunciation and written production.

The most effective assessment methods listed were: combining oral and written, written assignments over the semester and an oral presentation at the end, periodic quizzes, exams with an oral component, informal assessments throughout the course, compositions, writing in journals.

The least effective assessments methods listed were: weekly quizzes, exams were less effective than compositions for looking at development.

In response to the question if there had been changes in their teaching approaches over the years, the following comments were listed: speaking less and eliciting more student participation, more methods for using materials, emphasize culture more and grammar less, change from a grammar approach to a more communicative approach.

APPLYING RESEARCH TO CLASS ROOM TEACHING

1. Based on the information above, with which of the teaching strategies listed as most and least effective do you agree? Disagree? Why?

2. What types of assessment need to take place in the classroom? What examples listed above fulfill those types of assessment? What are your favorite types of assessment?

3. How would you describe your teaching style? What is important for you to emphasize in your classes?

OBRIGAÇÕES DOS MONITORES DE PORTUGUÊS 275-276

1. Getting to know your students

- Who are your students?: Have your students fill out the “Student Profile” below. This information will help you understand your students’ background so you can tailor the class to them.

Name
E-mail address/phone
Major/minor
Year in school
Previous language study? How long?
Travel abroad?
Working? How many hours per week?

Reason for taking Portuguese Concerns/Questions you have for the instructor

- Learn names: Make your students responsible for learning each others' names by playing games with names, using ice-breakers for the first few days of school, and repeating their names outloud as you call on them. Of course, you need to learn their names soon, as well.
2. Teaching materials & general guidelines
- Intensive language class: Port. 275-276 condenses what is traditionally taught in two semesters into one semester. This means that the pacing of the class and the materials taught represent twice the amount usually taught. The students also receive twice the normal hours of credit (6 instead of 3 hours). Therefore, students should be doing a lot of work both inside and outside of the classroom (homework, journal writing, performances, dialogues, etc). The students will be expected to dedicate from 1-2 hours of study time outside of class to each 1 hour of class.
 - Syllabus: TAs will work with the supervisors to develop the syllabus, chapter objectives, task-based activities and exams.
 - The syllabus will include the objectives of the course, evaluation of student work, assignments for the semester, **general UNM and department policy** and Office Hours. As a general policy Portuguese students do not receive extra credit.
 - Homework: If you ask students to hand in their homework, please return it within a day or two. It will lose its ability to help students if it is returned any later. You can also walk around the class looking over students' homework and checking to see if it is completed. **However, the TAS are expected to collect and evaluate the student's homework at least twice a week.** You can pick up homework unannounced to make sure that students are doing it regularly. You can also have students exchange homework and grade it quickly at the beginning of class.
 - Exams: Turn in copies of weekly chapter quizzes, mid term, and final exams ONE week in advance for review by the supervisor. Leave copies in the mail boxes in an envelope or hand to supervisor. All language classes at UNM numbered 300 or lower take their final exams on the same day. **In general, no make-up quizzes or exams are offered to students unless there are exceptional circumstances present.**
 - Evaluations: TA should schedule time to conduct an **anonymous** midterm evaluation in order to get feedback from the students regarding the elements of the class. Results of these evaluations will be given **directly** to the supervisors **by one of the students of the class.** **The supervisor will review the results and discuss them with the TA before giving her/him the students' evaluations.** At the end of the semester TAs will administer the ICES evaluation.
 - End of semester: Supervisors are required to keep final exams, a copy of semester grades, and a copy of final grades for Port. 275 and 276. Turn these documents in to the supervisors at the end of each semester, **the same day your grades are due.**
3. Pedagogy and Resource Materials for Classes
- Database: Please keep copies of your handouts and organize your electronic files so that the supervisors can make CDs of your materials for future classes at UNM. Keep easily identifiable titles on your files such as: "atividades," "gramática," "provas," etc. TAs are encouraged to share their teaching materials with each other.
 - Extra resource materials: Audio-visual materials in the Language Learning Center (over 600 CDs of Brazilian popular music and a large collection of films) that you may use to enrich your classes. TAs can check these materials out for class use, along with a CD player or TV screen and VHS. TAs can also use the Language Learning Center's facilities in order to use power point presentation in class or have students engage in web-based activities.
 - Copies: The office staff will make copies (dittos) of all materials needed for the classroom if you fill out a request 48 hours in advance. Photocopies are more expensive than dittos, but you must request 20 copies to use the ditto machine. You can print out the copies you need for your class on the printer in your office too.
 - Teaching style: The department encourages TAs to develop a teaching style that encourages active and meaningful communication among the students as well as with the teacher. Compare these two models:
 - Traditional- Teacher always in the front of the room, directing the discussion, the center of attention at all times and the authority figure in the room.

- UNM style- Facilitator that guides students in exercises that focus on their learning, encouraging and demanding that students give their best, but also supportive of students' efforts.

Methods for correcting students

Recasts- restate correctly what the student said incorrectly. Then the student hears a correct model.

Clarification- ask student to say the sentence again, or use gestures or words that ask the student to continue speaking in order to make their ideas clear.

- Avoid English: It is a challenge to always use Portuguese, but repetition, simplification, gestures, pictures, body language or asking a student to repeat what you said in Portuguese to the class in English are better than speaking English in the class. Teach students language and gestures that will be useful for getting meaning. Don't ask them "Tudo bem? Vocês entenderem?" because they may not answer. Instead, ask questions or do an exercise to see if they can use what you have taught them. Portuguese is the language of the classroom and this needs to be enforced by you and the students.

- Spanish speakers: Bi-lingual Spanish/English speakers or students who have studied Spanish for many years will constitute a large number in your classroom. You can verify this from the “Student Profile.” Spanish speakers have a big advantage learning Portuguese since the vocabulary and structure of the languages are so similar. The sound system is much more complex in Portuguese and therefore requires additional attention. Spanish speakers will have interference from Spanish when they speak Portuguese and when they write it.

4. Questions & Expectations

- Student requests: If students make requests that do not agree with the information in your syllabus or with the Student Handbook OR you are not sure if their requests are legitimate, please come ask me either directly or in an e-mail. Do not agree to give exams on different days than those already scheduled.
- Absences: Your students are responsible for class assignments even if they did not attend class. It is their job to ask other classmates what they missed and to turn those assignments in to you. If they know they are going to miss class for travel, illness, etc. they should notify you by e-mail or phone AND bring an excuse or proof of their need to be absent when they return. If you have a problem student with behavior issues, too many absences, or other unusual actions, please talk to the supervisors and we will decide what to do.
- Expectations: TAs in Portuguese are paid to do 20 hours of work a week. This represents 6 hours of time in the classroom, 6 or more hours of time preparing class, and 3 hours for meeting with students during office hours. Office hours should be scheduled for 2-3 different days and at different times during the day. TAs are also expected to attend the afternoon bate-papos, staff meetings, and participate in Departmental program events, such as International Day (fall), World Language Day (spring), or presentations by visiting speakers or invited guests. TAs will **also** help recruit new students to Portuguese by visiting Spanish classes at the end of each semester.

5. Supervision

- Staff Meetings: We will meet with you regularly to discuss how your classes are going, to share activities, and to solve problems. Traditionally, we hold staff meetings before the bate-papo. Depending on your schedules and the time for the bate-papo, we will try to have the same regular meeting time.
- Class visits: Once the semester is underway either Prof. Margo Milleret or Prof. Leila Lehen will come visit your classes to provide feedback on your teaching, to make suggestions, and to congratulate you on your work for the Portuguese program. **These visits will be unannounced.**