

Faculty Fellow Project Final Report: Digital Teaching Portfolios

Summary

The College of Arts & Science at CU Boulder is committed to inclusive, goal-oriented, and scholarly teaching. Inclusive teaching supports diverse approaches to learning using a variety of teaching practices. Goal-oriented teaching is guided by clear learning goals and an effort to make visible the achievement of specific learning outcomes. Scholarly teaching makes use of effective, evidence-based, innovative approaches to engage students in learning. These three dimensions of quality teaching, outlined in the A&S Policy on Teaching Quality, require a continued development of educators and ways of sharing teaching practices with others. By making best practices and pedagogical innovation visible, we model commitment to excellence in teaching to our graduate teaching assistants and undergraduate learning assistants. Likewise, they strive to become good instructors/assistants and apply best teaching practices. The digital teaching portfolio project assists graduate students currently teaching German and undergraduate students interested in teaching German at K-12 level to reflect about their teaching approaches, and to visualize their teaching accomplishments. As students put together a teaching portfolio, they are encouraged to assess and refine their teaching objectives, resources, and activities. Making their portfolio available online brings more visibility to their achievements in teaching and prepares them for a highly competitive job market.

The digital teaching portfolio project was integrated into the GRMN 4450/5020 undergraduate/graduate seminar which provides a survey of foreign language teaching approaches and second language acquisition research. The course is required for undergraduate students who desire the recommendation of the department for secondary school teaching positions. The course systematically addressed key components of a teaching portfolio (teaching philosophy statement, materials, and opportunities for professional training) and required students to put these elements into an online portfolio format.

As part of this project, questions regarding the portfolio's content and technology were discussed. Current requirements for teaching portfolios were reviewed and the list of contents was expanded to address inclusivity, accessibility, and diversity. Joy Adams, Teaching and Learning Consultant at ASSETT, was invited to introduce students to Universal Design, a framework that helps teachers create flexible learning environments and learning spaces that can accommodate individual learning differences. Furthermore, aspects of online/remote teaching experience/strategies of student engagement were added to the content to reflect the current reality of German language teaching. Appropriate technology was sought that comes at no cost, is easy to access & navigate, secure, and compatible with multimodal materials of the portfolio. Manny Wayo, IT manager at ALTEC, was contacted to lead a workshop to help students set up their websites, upload their materials, and maintain their portfolios.

Addressed Challenges in the Department

The department set as goal to prepare students for life and careers in an increasingly global world. The development of digital teaching portfolios addresses both the expectations for future careers and a

navigation in a digitally connected world. It assists students in becoming reflective practitioners of German language teaching and contributes to teaching quality among graduate and undergraduate students who aspire a career as language educators. In this regard, the digital teaching portfolio project addresses the department's challenge of recruiting new students and helping existing students in securing teaching positions in a highly competitive job market. Through the process of putting together a teaching portfolio, students practice self-reflection and critically assess their teaching approaches and outcomes. They become committed to inclusive, goal-oriented teaching that promotes the German language and culture in K-12 settings which in return motivates their students to take up a degree in German Studies. The informed and reflective teaching at institutions of primary, secondary, and tertiary education ultimately contributes to students' language and intercultural communication skills to engage with a variety of people and communities.

Desired Results

- reflection on teaching goals, ways of enacting goals (approaches/methods), inclusivity, assessment
- development of sample teaching materials/demos
- familiarity with digital portfolios/appropriate websites & tools
- creation of digital teaching portfolios
- updating digital teaching portfolio/customizing portfolio for respective teaching position

Project Description

With the objective of encouraging graduate teaching assistants and teaching-interested undergraduate students to reflect about diverse approaches, inclusive practices, and goal-oriented instruction, the required content of digital teaching portfolios was revised and appropriate scholarship on teaching and learning was consulted to create a corpus of literature to guide students on their path of creating individual portfolio components. The content of teaching portfolios, especially teaching philosophy statements and sample lessons, are an integral part of GRMN 4450/5020 and revisions of specific content were made to better align the course with aspects of inclusivity and possible modification of the teaching format to allow for technology related integration/discussion.

GRMN4450/5020 with a special emphasis on digital teaching portfolio components was taught in fall 2020. As part of the course, students designed a collection of sample lessons, engaged in discussions on teaching philosophy statements, explored different approaches, and workshopped on inclusive practices. Joy Adams (ASSETT) introduced Universal Design to the course participants and led a discussion on making content and material more accessible and offering students choices for how they demonstrate their knowledge and skill development.

The digital/technological aspect of the portfolio was addressed in a workshop led by Manny Wayo (ALTEC) to help students set up their websites, embed multimedia material, be informed about copy rights, work on a professional image online, and showcase their experience and abilities.

At the end of the semester, students completed their digital teaching portfolios. They received detailed feedback on their teaching statements and sample materials to be revised for possible use in application packages. Students also completed a survey on their experience of working on the portfolio. Based on their feedback, follow-up consultations were scheduled with individual students in spring semester. In these consultation hours, additional revisions were discussed, and adjustments made with regards to particular employment/application purposes. A few students were referred to ALTEC for specific tech support.

Outcome

For the most part, the project objectives and desired results were achieved. As students worked on their portfolios, they were encouraged to reflect on diverse approaches to foreign language teaching. They set specific teaching & learning goals and found creative ways of enacting these goals. Furthermore, their work on the teaching philosophy statement initiated a critical discussion of inclusive practices. Students became aware of their own learner/teacher identities and those of their (future) students. They sought more understanding of the experiences, knowledge, and emotions that impact students' learning and aimed to create a space in their (future) classrooms that allows for a wide variety of ideas and perspectives.

In the survey, students commented on the benefits of the portfolio project:

"The portfolio work helped me organize myself as a prospective teacher. It required me to think about where I put my priorities in teaching and how I can help all my students to be fully included in the classroom and learning."

"It worked really well in allowing us to think about how we teach, why we teach that way and what can we focus on for our individual teaching styles."

"It helped getting continuous feedback on the sample lessons (both from the instructor and other students) to be able to show the best possible teaching ideas-practices in the portfolio."

In their responses to the question about challenges associated with the development of the digital teaching portfolio, students addressed aspects that did not work well and will need to be revised in future semesters. In particular, students mentioned the "time crunch" to complete the portfolio as part of the final project for the course: "Doing this properly during the end of semester stress is difficult." Clear communication on the purpose of the project is needed. Students should be made aware more explicitly that the portfolio is a work in progress and the project as part of GRMN4450/5020 is setting the foundation upon which to elaborate with growing experience and knowledge. One student also commented that they encountered technical difficulties with the website and wished to have a follow-up check with ALTEC. Although Manny Wayo encouraged students to reach out to him after the initial workshop and provided them with appropriate contact information, an additional (optional) tech tutoring hour might be added to the semester schedule for more student support.

The last question of the survey pertained to spring semester workshops/initiatives that would help students to further engage in teaching reflections and assist them in updating the portfolio. All students expressed interest in updating their portfolios. Students were hesitant to propose another workshop (perhaps due to pandemic related zoom fatigue); instead, they suggested individual tutoring or consultation hours to discuss the portfolio and receive guidance in revising their work according to application needs (both for the CCT program and employment opportunities). Individual consultations were scheduled with students in spring semester and students were able to revise their portfolio according to feedback and input.

Experience in the Faculty Fellows Program

The Faculty Fellows Seminar was a very enriching experience that was, unfortunately, cut short due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020. The first two months of in-person sessions served as a good starting point for thinking about teaching/learning/curriculum needs and ways of addressing these needs by means of effective, innovative, and student-centered approaches. The discussions and idea exchanges with faculty from across disciplines was particularly insightful and inspiring. After the initial pandemic shock, it was helpful to receive advice & support from ASSETT staff remotely to adjust the project goals/schedule.

Below a small collection of portfolio excerpts (shared with the permission of participating students):

**Katrin
Sharpe**

Home [About](#) Teaching philosophy: alternate participation, encouragement and partnership
Sample Lesson Plan Grammar Sample Lesson Plan Reading Sample Lesson Plan Listening

About



Education:

Katrin graduated from the University of Colorado, Boulder in 2019. She received a BA in International Affairs and German Studies and a business minor in Entrepreneurship. Currently, Katrin is pursuing a Masters in German and Critical



Kyra Houle

Teaching Assistant at CU Boulder

About Me

I am originally from Germany, from a village near Frankfurt, but moved to Ohio when I was about 10 years old. I received my BA from Cornell University with a major in Philosophy and a minor in German Studies. I'm interested in refugees and how German media speaks of them, and intersections of female and refugee identities. I go back to Germany to visit friends and family whenever I can. I also enjoy the typically German activity of playing polka on her saxophone (and other kinds of music).



Teaching Portfolio

German as a Foreign and Second Language

<< I strive to design my language classroom as a space in which students feel welcomed, safe, and included, and in which they can count on language progress that is characterized by an encouraging, authentic, and empowering learning environment that provides room for their own ideas and respects their individual preferences and learning types. >>

[Home](#) [About](#) [Teaching philosophy: alternate participation, encouragement and partnership](#)
[Sample Lesson Plan Grammar](#) [Sample Lesson Plan Reading](#) [Sample Lesson Plan Listening](#)

Teaching philosophy: alternate participation, encouragement and partnership

Another approach I use to enact my goals is to allow students more freedom in creating their scheduling of responsibilities. I do this for two reasons. This serves to both allow them to be independently motivated and accountable for themselves, while also creating different channels of access for different situations in their personal lives. Students come from all kinds of backgrounds and some deal with more stress, responsibilities or challenges at home than others. They come from different situations and are the most knowledgeable party to be scheduling their responsibilities. If the weekly dates for submissions on assignments creates conflict, I allow the students to come to me and figure out another time for submission that works for both of us on assignments that do not need to be completed synchronously with the other students. I also offer office hours around the clock for students with different time schedules. Beyond that, I know that all students in the classroom come from different circumstances, levels of preparedness, access to resources, backgrounds and identities. By ensuring they are partners in their own knowledge creation, I give them the space to adapt my lessons as needed and come to me for variations that might help



<<When I think back to my own foreign-language classroom experiences, I see myself sitting in first or second row, notebook open, pencil sharpened, eager to jot down any grammatical rules that might be taught today. It was only during my first extended stay abroad that I realized how far apart both worlds were: feeling grammatically confident in the foreign language and being able to undertake real-life conversations.>>

Grammar Unit – *Akkusativ*

Im Möbelhaus - Dialog I

◀ Welche Artikel haben die Möbel? ▶

- Anna: Der Tisch ist super! Er ist so groß. Gefällt er dir?
- Max: Ja, der ist gut. Kaufst du den Tisch?
- Anna: Vielleicht. Das Bild sieht auch toll aus. Es ist so modern!
- Max: Ich sehe das Bild nicht. Ich sehe nur den Tisch. Wo ist es?
- Anna: Na dort drüben! Der Tisch ist links. Das Bild ist rechts.
- Max: Ah, ja! Die Lampe daneben ist auch schön.
- Anna: Das stimmt. Ich kaufe die Lampe und das Bild und den Tisch.
- Max: Also kaufst du alles!

→ definite Artikel



[slideshow Akkusativ](#)

Download

Lesson Listening

