DIGITAL WRITING AND LABOR-BASED GRADING: AN EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO UNDERGRADUATE WRITING INSTRUCTION

ESCRITURA DIGITAL Y CONTRATOS DE CALIFICACIÓN BASADOS EN EL TRABAJO: UN ENFOQUE EQUITATIVO E INCLUSIVO PARA LA ENSEÑANZA DE LA ESCRITURA EN LA UNIVERSIDAD

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Abstract

The tradition of digital writing instructional practices is nearly 50 years old in the US (Handa, 2004). Sometimes, students fully online digital writing courses may fail to engage with and finish the course because they do not feel competent in handling the technologies in the academic context; thus, it is important to find out what equitable practices and what factors influence student success in these courses. Therefore, this study aims to examine digital writing assignments requested in a writing course, with the goal of demonstrating an inclusive and equitable practice: the Labor-based grading contract, in a way that promotes equal and fair grades. This practice is proposed as a solution to the shortcomings detected, since it has been observed that students inexperienced in pre-college education in the delivery of online writing assignments persist in their difficulties with technological educational platforms in college. The creation of a contract between the teacher and the students -at first-, fosters knowledge, motivation, involvement, or engagement with the task; thus, digital writing assignments go from being an unattainable goal to being a feasible task to engage in. Also, the cooperative creation of this online writing with an easy-to-use platform (Eli Peer Review) stimulates them to persist in the following tasks, as they have already reflected on them and have already found out among their peers what they consist of and how to deal with such tasks.

In our research we present a case study of a course based on online writing instruction. Therefore, this study aims to examine a particular course in the United States in which multimedia writing assignments and labor-based grading allowed for deep student engagement and success (Dickson,1974; Inoue, 2019). The data comes from the use of mixed methods that combine qualitative information collected through document analysis (teacher materials: syllabi, guidelines, instructions; student materials: personal research, blog entries, and final letter); classroom observation field diaries and the semi-structured teacher interview, with the quantitative methods of a student survey. The results show that there is a high degree of alignment between the course and the best practices of online instruction, and that the nature of the assignments and the Labor-based Grading Contract (Dickson,1974, Inoue, 2019) appear to play key roles in student engagement and success in the course. Likewise, the most highlighted aspect by the students has been the emotional factor, since the tasks have allowed them to get involved and enjoy writing in the digital support.

The systematic observation of this writing course aims to deeply understand its provenance, objectives, taxonomy and functionality, with the final purpose of highlighting the capabilities of this methodology in order to offer it as a model in other contexts to promote a fairer and more equitable education.

Keywords: assessment, case study, democratization, digital literacy, school performance monitoring.

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Resumen

El propósito de este estudio de caso es explorar la eficacia de un curso de escritura autorregulador enriquecido con tecnología que emplea contratos de calificación basados en el trabajo con el objeto de desarrollar calificaciones

más justas y equitativas. Específicamente, el estudio examina el nivel de eficacia de los materiales docentes a partir de categorías obtenidas de los National Technology Standards. También se valora su eficacia con las percepciones del docente, mediante una entrevista semiestructurada. Por último, mediante un cuestionario y escritos de estudiantes sobre sus percepciones del curso. Los resultados son positivos en cuanto a la adecuación del diseño del curso a los criterios de eficacia. Respecto de las percepciones del docente destaca su implicación con el sistema de calificación para el compromiso de los estudiantes. En cuanto a los estudiantes, por encima de este factor procesual, destacan los aspectos emocionales, por lo que podemos proponer esta práctica como modelo para otros contextos.

Palabras clave: alfabetización digital, democratización, control de rendimiento escolar, estudio de caso, evaluación.

1.Introducción

This paper analyzes a US educational practice based on Online Writing Instruction (OWI). It presents an effective practice that meets the principles of the Committee for Effective Practices in OWI (CCCC, 2013). Among all the principles, the urgency of making this teaching experience known is due to the importance of the first principle in current times: "Online writing instruction should be universally inclusive and accessible." The practice under investigation highlights an assessment methodology that promotes social justice: Labor-based grading contracts (Perelman, 2018). In short, it is a way to "making visible the social roles, power relations, and possibilities for reconstruction and deconstruction of hegemonic literate, formative, and scientific practices in the university." (Navarro, 2021, p.14).

Previous research has made it clear that when students work in online classes there are a number of challenges that they need to overcome; according to a seminal study by Kerr, Rynearson y Kerr (2006, p. 102): "We find that novice students quickly develop requisite computer skills and perform well in the course as long as they possess other qualities such as high self-esteem, reading and writing proficiency, and independent learning." The point here is that students who are new to online learning, often struggle with reading and writing proficiency and a lack of belief in their abilities to use online technology. This certainly rings true to all the teachers who had to move into online instruction during the Covid-19 emergency (González et al. 2020, Karadag, 2021). Many of our students had trouble following through on academic assignments, because of a combination of low writing skills and inadequate mastery of online technologies. However, there is a long tradition in the United States of how to develop a technology-enhanced class. Our study looks at a class that draws on the research and teaching practices of this tradition, and we are particularly interested in how this online class with Labor-based grading contract helped students improve their digital writing and academic writing skills. Our three central research questions are:

QI1: What are efficacious materials to use to engage students in OWI practices?
QI2: Do digital writing activities engage students?
QI3: Does the use of a Labor-based grading contract engage students?

Multimedia Writing Instruction in U.S. Context

The history of computers and composition is almost 50 years old in the U.S. context. This subfield of writing studies began with word processing studies written after the advent of the personal computer and the founding of the journal *Computers and Writing* in 1983, and it has allowed for the development of web-based learning studies (Handa, 2004). Technological advances soon allowed the parallel development of Online Writing Instruction (OWI) studies. This specialization is not about using a word processing program to write, but "occurs by using computer technology to learn writing from a teacher, tutor, or other students and by using it to communicate about that writing, to share writing

for learning purposes, and to present writing for course completion purposes" (Hewett et al., 2015, p.35).

U.S. research explored the potential for learning in web courses by developing criteria for designing rich web-based writing courses, and by analyzing the potential learning benefits for students. Each of these lines of research is presented below.

The Committee in College Composition and Communication (CCCC) is the "world's largest professional organization for researching and teaching composition" (NCTE, 2003). The CCCC created a committee to explore "effective practices" of OWI, and the committee published its findings and recommendations in 2013. The Committee established 15 principles for the design of effective online writing courses. From these 15 principles, we narrowed our focus the five that were most significant for student engagement and learning in academic writing contexts, according to CCCC (2013). The OWI principles used for our analysis are below in Table 1:

Table 1

Five OWI Principles for Effective Practices

1	Online writing instruction should be universally inclusive and accessible.
2	An online writing course should focus on writing and not on technology.
3	Appropriate composition teaching/learning strategies should be developed for the unique features of the online instructional environment.
4	Appropriate onsite composition theories, pedagogies, and strategies should be migrated and adapted to the online instructional environment.
5	Online writing teachers should retain reasonable control over their own content and/or techniques for conveying, teaching, and assessing their students' writing in their OWCs.

Source: CCCC (2013).

Finally, for a practical classroom analysis, Table 2 shows the components of an online writing course that tries to be cognitively enriched (Mills, 2006) should have by employing the three cognitive strategies for information processing in multimedia environments: selecting, organizing, and integrating (Mayer, 2012). The column with the cognitive processing strategies helps the teacher who has to design his or her online-enhanced writing activities.

Table 2

Lesson Plan Template for Web-Enhanced Learning Activity

Componentes	Cognitive process	Description of the components in a Web-Enhanced Learning Activity
Title/ topic	Organizing	State an interesting, attention getting title.
Problem/ task	Integrating	State the problem or task the learner needs to solve or perform.
Curriculum area	Organizing	State the curriculum subject area to which the learning activity relates.
Grade level	Organizing	State the grade level or range for which the learning task is appropriate.
Standards of learning	Integrating	State subject-specific standards and grade-specific technology standards to be addressed by the project.
Objectives	Integrating	State the learning goals, objectives, or purpose of the project relative to the curriculum and technology standards.
Background information	Selecting	Provide orienting or organizing information about the project, including prerequisite learning, facts, concepts, or rules needed to complete the project.
Scenario	Organizing	Develop a context for the project based on a real-world problem or task that will focus attention on the subject matter and generate learner interest in the project.
Procedures	Organizing	Describe the step-by-step procedures the learner should follow to complete the project.
Resources	Selecting	State what web resources are available for the learner to appropriately and successfully complete the project's stated goals, objectives, or purpose. Identify other resources that would enhance the learning experience.
Teaching/ learning strategies	Organizing	Describe the teaching and learning methods used to complete the project (may be included in the procedures).
Assessment	Integrating	State what the learner will do to demonstrate understanding and mastery of objectives (should be directly tied to the objectives). State what assessment process (rubrics) will be used to determine whether learners have understood the material and activities of the lesson.

Credits/ references	Selecting	If the project was adapted from another project or lesson plan, provide credits. If original sources are used in background information list references.

Source: Mills (2006, 14).

An OWI course can enhance learning in three main ways: providing access to a range of learning materials, helping in the development of learner autonomy, and proving more opportunities for collaboration and communication among peers (Jonassen, 2000).

The list below is intended to synthesize what research studies say are some of the benefits of OWI instruction (Camacho et al., 2021; Elkon et al., 2018):

Technological aspects

– Ease of computer technology vs. pencil and paper (e.g., Carter et al. 2004; Li et al. 2012; Sturm and Rankin-Erickson 2002)

– Engaging multimedia resources (Sturm and Rankin-Erickson 2002).

– Immediate and just-in-time accessibility (Carter et al. 2004).

– Teacher proximity (McGrail and Davis, 2011)

– Free choice of topics, genres (Pruden et al. 2016).

Aspects related to the teaching of writing:

-Genres

– Real contextualization (Li et al. 2012; McGrail and Davis, 2011)

– Possible audience (Li et al. 2012, MacArthur, 1988; McGrail and Davis 2011)

-Processual

– Effective instructions and scaffolding of the process (Day et al. 1998; Pruden et al. 2016).

– A recurrent review phase (Collier, 1983).

– Accessible peer feedback (MacArthur, 1988).

– Frequent self-reflection on own writing (McGrail and Davis 2011).

-Sociocultural

– Cooperative work (Li et al. 2012).

– Emergent writing communities (McGrail and Davis, 2011).

Writing Assessment y Grading Contracts

The concept of Labor-based grading contracts is framed within a critical pedagogy that aims to create more just and egalitarian democratic communities in education (Dickson, 1974; Inoue, 2019). To this end, instead of evaluating students according to the social class from which they come, which often is evident in the register students communicate in, an instructor evaluates students according to the

work they perform. In this way, we will stop considering students as: "poorly prepared," "deficient," or "lacking in ability." In a course that uses Labor-based grading contracts, it is understood that students have their own home languages, and they are as important as the language of the academy; also, it is understood that students 'home languages are not inherently the reason for their difficulties writing academic English (Committee on CCCC Language Statement, 1975).

In this way, evaluation is understood as part of the process that is composed of acts of reading, critical judgment, and writing. Thus, students are encouraged to get involved and take responsibility for their learning, considering all aspects of the process: their expectations, their discourses, their processes, their judgments and their products. According to Asao Inoue, who is an important proponent and researcher around Labor-based grading contracts, a Labor-based grading contract assesses final scores in courses "by the labor students completed, not by any judgments of the quality of their writing. While the qualities of student writing are still at the center of the classroom and feedback, it has no bearing on the course grade" (2019, p.3). Ultimately, Labor-based grading allows for the evaluation of the effort put forth by students rather than solely focusing on the final product. This methodology does not exclude discussion about the qualities of writing. It is not about creating a class without discussion of writing and standards (Luri, 2019). Instead, the center of assessment is being shifted towards the work that gets done.

The specific manner in which grading contracts are implemented in a classroom is through agreements made on the first day of class between students and instructors, that set forth the specific terms and conditions for completing course work and receiving a final grade. These contracts, like all agreements, can be open for negotiation, so it is possible to start off working for an A in the class and ultimately end up working for a B, and of course it can work in reverse for students too.

A Labor-based grading contract usually describes the specific assignments a student must complete to earn a final grade, as well as any additional requirements that must be met, deadlines, and ways to monitor the process. The tasks required for different grades are specified. In this way, a student who only aspires to achieve a C will know which tasks must be completed from the first day of the course.

2.Methodology

Research Context

The research occurred at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB). The teacher, one of the co-authors of this piece, is a continuing lecturer in an independent Writing Program. As for the course itself, it was a general education writing course for first-year students. This particular first-year writing class was populated by first generation students, which in American academic parlance are: "students [who] come from families where their biological parents did not complete a four-year college degree" (Center for First Generation Student Success, 2017). It is also worth noting that the ten-week course,

due to the Covid-19 pandemic, started off as a fully online course for four weeks, before starting to meet in a classroom bi-weekly.

The class was themed around the idea of "identity in the 21st century," particularly online identity. The course is governed by a document that the Writing 2 Committee at UCSB created, "Writing 2/2E/2LK Curricular Guidelines," and it is important to note that one of the curricular premises that this document specifically mentions are "blogs," which feature prominently in our case study (2020). The guidelines are below:

1. Rhetorical Knowledge

    1.1. Develop rhetorical knowledge through reading and writing in a variety of genres—which are more than a simple form.

    1.2. Gain understanding of how writing is shaped by readers' and writers' practices, purposes, and contexts. Develop critical awareness of diverse writing technologies and digital and non-digital modes of communication.

2. Research and Reading

    2.1.   Understand and use a process of inquiry to explore meaningful research topics and develop and answer focused research questions.

    2.2.   Locate, evaluate, incorporate, and cite secondary and/or primary sources. Use strategies—such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign—to compose texts that integrate sources with the writer's prior knowledge and ideas.

3. Processes

    3.1.   Cultivate a conceptual awareness of writing as an ongoing process by developing writing projects through multiple drafts.

    3.2.   Develop flexible strategies for reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing.

4. Knowledge of Conventions

    4.1.   Learn about and use conventions in their own writing, i.e. grammar and punctuation. Understand why genre conventions for structure, tone, and mechanics vary.

    4.2.   Practice applying citation conventions systematically in their own work and explore intellectual property issues.

5. Metacognitive Reflection

    5.1.   Use writing as a means for reflection.

    5.2.   Demonstrate their rhetorical awareness as well as an awareness of their writing processes and writerly choices.

    5.3.   Experience reflection as a necessary part of learning, thinking and communicating.

Even a cursory reading of the outcomes makes it clear that students are at the center of Writing 2, that digital and non-digital modes of writing are valued, that reflection is a key part of the class, and that the notion of process-based writing is key to understanding the work of the class. All of these elements are evident in the assignments of the course, its syllabus, and even the construction of the course management system online. (The Course Management System was a Moodle-based system that allowed the teacher to create a webpage of sorts and integrate online tools, like peer review and quiz tools, into the fabric of the course.) A brief description of the classes is provided below.

The course design is shown with 12 tabs:

– First Link: Important resources, documents, and links

– Second to Eleventh Links: links to each week

– Twelfth Link: links for all assignment submissions.

The three main writing tasks for the class are: a Blog, a Self-Study paper, and a Going Beyond *Exhalation* writing project. Student grades were assigned based on a final portfolio of work that was submitted and graded via the Labor-based grading contract in appendix A.

Participants

The instructor of the course, a fifty-five-year-old non-tenured continuing lecturer in the UCSB Writing Program, has been teaching first-year writing courses since 1996. He participated in an email interview.

The 14 students were all first-generation students at UCSB, and ranged in age from 18-21. They participated in the research by doing an online survey and by agreeing to share their work with us. To understand more deeply the students' perceptions, we have selected four students whose profiles are complementary and divergent. Of these four students we will analyze what they explicitly say in their blog post 10 comments and their Dear Reader Letters, which act as an introduction to their individual portfolios. All students will be coded, and non-identifying data will be used to protect their privacy, following the protocol of the approval received by the UCSB Human Subjects Committee.

Instruments

We ran a survey after grading (see Appendix B for details) that collected student responses to questions about their experience writing in this course. All but three of the questions were multiple choice questions. We present aggregate data, and do not identify any of the students, under the conditions approved by the Human Subjects Committee. Also, the instructor of the class was interviewed after grading and before reading the students' answers, and the questions can be read in full in Appendix C.

Procedure

First, we obtained the following categories to evaluate the effectiveness of the course and assignments for engaging students in OWI practices. The selection of analysis criteria was made considering that we wanted to test the effectiveness of the educational practices designed in this course. To this end, we have used the first five principles for Effective Practices for teaching writing online to analyze the course design (see Table 1). These principles are complemented with the features selected by Blair (2015) about the characteristics that a course must have to be effective.

In respect to the analysis of 3 assignments and the portfolio, the relevant components for these assignments have been selected drawing on Table 2 (Mills, 2006). Mills table includes the categories we used: title, problem, learning standards, objectives, procedures, resources, learning strategies, and assessments. In addition, to match the components of the "Writing 2/2E/2LK Curricular Guidelines," the following elements have been adapted: "learning standards," "objectives," and "outcomes". Finally, we used Atlas.ti to help in the analysis of documents we looked at.

3. Results

The results are presented in two parts. First, to answer the first research question (QI1: What are efficient materials to engage students in OWI practices?), we will present the results after analyzing the materials. Then, to answer questions 2 and 3 on how digital writing activities and the Labor-based grading contract engaged students, we will describe the responses to the semi-structured teacher interview and to the student survey and our analysis of the documents the students provided us.

Efficacy of materials

In this section, the specific principles of the online writing course model are presented first. This is followed by the specific criteria for online writing assignments.

Related to OWI Principle 1 (see Table 1), we can observe that the course takes into account the diversity in the classroom by the approach it takes to grading. The Labor-based grading contract is the evaluation backbone of the entire course, and it allows us to measure the performance of students not by their personal qualities or previous learning, but by the work and effort they made during the course. In this way, everyone has an equal opportunity work towards the grade they want. In addition, among the principles of universal design (Burstable y Cory, 2008), we highlight the first principle: equitable use. All students have access to the course requirements, since the instructor posts the readings in the course management system, and, in the case of the book they must read, the students received free copies of the required book, *Exhalation*, from the UCSB Library. Drawing on Burgstahler y Cory (2008), we highlight the second principle of universal design: flexibility of use. Each student has many options to complete assignments, especially they have freedom to choose the topic they want to do their research on. Thus their own skills and preferences as writers can be developed. Finally

there is the 7th principle outlined by Burgstahler y Cory (2008): size and space for focus and use. The course CMS has 12 tabs, which make it easy to visualize the course structure in a clear and orderly manner.

OWI Principle 2 states that the course should be writing-centered. In the CMS is a section of "Important Links and Resources" that the students use throughout the class. Table 3 shows the classification of these resources, with a brief practical explanation accompanying each.

Table 3

Classification of the resources recommended by the teacher

List of Links with brief descriptions	Type of resource
1. Eli Peer Review Overview	Technology
2. Eli Peer Review: *How To Make A Revision*	Technology
3. Interact: An Online Quiz Maker To Make Web-Based Quizzes	Technology
4. Kahoot: An Online Quiz Maker	Technology
5. MLA Citation For Our Reader: The Basic Format For How To Create A Works Cited Entry	Quote
6. MLA On The Purdue OWL: A Collection Of MLA Resources	Quote
7. Noodle Bib Express: An Online Works Cited Tool	Quote
8. A Collection Of Online Pieces Published In *Starting Lines*, A Student Publication	Information
9. Our Discussion Rules For Our Class	Collaborative writing
10. Purdue OWL: The Online Source For Grammar And Usage Information	Grammar
11. Sentence Patterns: A Real List Of Sentence Types	Grammar
12. Statista: A Statistical Websearch	Information
13. University Library Homepage: The First Place To Go To For Doing Collegiate-Level Research At The University	Information

OWI Principle 3 calls for practices to develop strategies for unique online features in a way that reinforces the technological aspect of teaching writing. In this course, students are asked to create their own quizzes for discussion of the shared text, *Exhalation*. In this way, the mastery of a technological tool is developed with the aim of producing a higher performance in the reading discussion activity.

One of OWI's main concerns is to fix body/phase/voice issues so that they do not affect the interaction between teachers and students. Although this course was hybrid, the teacher created a video presentation of the course, with clear instructions for using the CMS. Thus, it can also be said that it fulfills the principle of reinforcing the technological component that affects the improvement of the teaching of writing.

Principle 4 of the OWI refers to the importance of practices developing the pedagogy of composition and adapting it to the environment. This principle is evident throughout the course, and finds its best expression in the final portfolio, which includes reflection and writing about the experience of doing the work of the class. Also, each week the teacher sent an email that outlined the work to do in that class. Also, the instructor posted and email blog prompts each week that focused on reflection about the work of the class. A good example of this is the final email the instructor sent out:

> Week Ten Blog Prompt
>
> This is our final blog prompt for the quarter, so I want you to reflect on the class as a whole, your research process, and what this quarter was like for you in a general sense. Also, any feedback you have for me, your instructor, would be welcome. To help you write 300+ words you can use some of the questions below—you do not have to answer all or even any of the questions: they are simply prompting questions to help you write:
>
> – What were some activities and readings that you enjoyed doing in the class?
> – What were some things you hoped to learn in this class? […]

Finally, regarding OWI Principle 5 on the balance between contents and techniques used by the teacher to promote the autonomy of experienced teachers, we can state that this course has the perfect balance since the teacher has been teaching this course for about 30 years. We can see in the calendar how all the assignments are perfectly adjusted. At the same time, the syllabus follows the standards required by the Writing 2 Curriculum Guidelines.

In summary, all the design effectiveness principles that have been developed by the subject teacher, along with Sloan-C's principles of best practices, are met in this proposed model course. Therefore, the specific criteria of the online writing assignments are as follows: 3 assignments (the Blog, the Self-Study paper, and the Going Beyond *Exhalation writing project*) and the final portfolio. Our research used the Lesson Plan Template (see Table 2) to assess the extent to which a given activity actually

develops enhanced online learning. Also, we used Blair's (2015) criteria for evaluating effectiveness of
each task from Table 1.

The first assignment

In the blog assignment, all the principles of effectiveness proposed by Blair (2015) have been detected.
Both the problem and the outcomes (see Table 4) tell us about the balance achieved between content
and writing techniques. It offers a possible way to work academic writing through multimedia writing
via blogs. This achieves a perfect balance between research writing necessary to develop the skills
required at the academic level and the mastery of multimedia writing. In terms of results, it allows
students to develop the five areas to be worked on in this course. In the first bog post they must write,
the teacher explains how to introduce images and encourages them to use all the multimedia
resources they wish.

Table 4

First assignment

Title	Group´s Blog Post/ Response
Problem	Students must use reading and writing skills in their work without prior practice at the high academic level.
Outcomes	1.2, 2, 3, 4.2, 5.3
Procedures	Following participation in class discussion, writing informal reflections to build a collaborative blog and participating in peer review activities.
Resources	Articles, book chapters, static page links, UCSB Library link, peer review sheet for self-study, questions for reflection.
Learning strategies	Understanding and practicing with genres Developing analytical skills Synthesizing multiple sources Developing critical inquiry reading and writing strategies Editing Doing peer review Focusing on the entire writing process
Assessment	Assessed by the number of blogs posted: A student working toward a C grade will write seven blog posts and respond to seven other blog posts and a student working towards an A will post ten out of ten times and respond to ten peers' posts.

The blog assignment is a group activity carried out throughout the ten weeks of the course. Each student must post and comment once a week, but the topics that are commented on (see Table 5) usually derive from prior group discussion in class, and, in any case, the weekly comment must be on a post by a classmate. In this way, the blog resource is perfectly integrated into the development of the course.

Table 5

List of the topics for the Blog

Week	Topic	Learning strategies
1	Critical Selfie Blog post: students include four images (a Facebook profile photo, a professional photo, a photo sent to a close friend, and photo that you would post to Instagram that shows your life in 2021-22) and explain their choices. Reading: Critical Selfies Assignment, From Liz Losh	Investigation and critical thinking of self-representations
2	Essay on the use of data (draft Self-study Assignment)	Critical inquiry and thinking about one's actions
3	Two or three questions that you have about your paper and fill out Peer Review Sheet for the Self-Study	Peer-review Writing process
4	A Blog assignment reflecting on the stories below from *Exhalation*: - "The Lifecycle of Software Objects" - "Dacey's Patent Automatic Nanny" - "What's Expected of Us"	Reading questions
5	Plan to lead group´s discussion of *Exhalation*	Student-led discussion Oral presentation
6	Choose and comment a quote for the Beyond *Exhalation* Assignment	Research and critical reflection of the readings
7	Reflect on your actions as a student, person, researcher, and writer in Writing and in other subjects	Reflection on writing and other activities Critical awareness of processes

8	Read feedback for 2 writings (Self-study and Going Beyond *Exhalation*) and plan to revise and edit	Reflection on the process of writing
9	Select a paragraph in your final portfolio and review and edit it	Reviewing and Editing
10	Final reflection on the class, the research process, and the quarter	Reflection on the learning process

In terms of resources, there are multiple resources offered each week, specifically for the development of blog writing, so that the focus on writing is not lost. Finally, it is interesting to comment on the evaluation of this assignment which requires 7 weeks 'worth of blogs to be written to obtain a C. The fact that only 2 omissions are allowed is understandable because the blog is conceived, by the instructor, as being "central" to the class. In addition, at least 7 of the required 10 blog posts relate to the other two assignments. So, the flexibility for catering to diversity in this case is seen in that students have 3-4 days to write the 300 (post) and 100 (response) words, which is quite reasonable.

The Second Assignment

The self-study of your life on and offline is one of the two papers. Faced with the difficulty of writing and researching at the university, students are provided with an attractive proposal in which the object of study will be themselves. They will be able to use multimedia elements, which are highly recommended by the teacher (see Table 6). On the other hand, students are provided with the outlines to complete the expected aspects of the essay. Therefore, we can see that there is a balance between writing techniques and content elements in this activity.

Regarding the process, there is a perfect integration of the document submission in the blog and in the CMS tasks. Ultimately, the strategies developed in this assignment cover practically the entire writing process: finding sources, analyzing sources, synthesizing sources, revising writing, and editing writing. Thus, the second assignment addresses all of the key elements of any writing class at the college level.

Finally, the assessment of student writing also shows flexibility. To obtain a C or B students must write first and final drafts of The Self-study and Going Beyond *Exhalation* assignments and rewrite one of those assignments for the final portfolio. However, if the student is working towards an A, then he or she will have to rewrite both of those assignments for the final portfolio. This sort of assessment practice promotes student agency and diversity—students choose what grade to work toward.

Table 6

Second assignment

Title	A Self-Study of Your Life On and Offline
Problem	Writing about theoretical or abstract research is difficult. But with each student being the object of their research and giving them the possibility to make connections between observations about their life and readings that deal with references such as life or the web, such research becomes easier and more engaging.
Outcomes	1, 2, 3, 4, 5.1
Procedures	Write a first draft. Submit it for peer review. Write a final draft. The teacher will read it and give feedback. Choose whether to rewrite the "final draft" for the final portfolio.
Resources	Outline for essay prompts, thesis handout, Google Docs of proposed writing topics, link to online resources, PowerPoint on constructing an argument, questions to reflect on readings, photos, and memes.
Learning strategies	Understanding and practicing with genres Developing analytical skills Developing rhetorical knowledge through a variety of genres. Synthesizing multiple sources Developing critical inquiry reading and writing strategies. Reviewing for clarity of style Doing peer review Focusing on the entire writing process
Assessment	C and B: first draft, final draft with requirements, one revised and edited piece; A: two revised and edited pieces.

The Third Assignment

The second essay assignment, Going Beyond the *Exhalation* has very similar requirements to those of the first essay writing project. But in this case the topic is about a novel (see Table 7). Students have to discuss something related to the novel in one of a number of genres. One of the ways may be to create a piece of writing in a non-academic genre, like a comic or a video. In this way, we find a perfect balance between writing techniques and content components.

The procedures show a more integrated online assignment. For peer reviews on this assignment a computer-based tool is used: Eli Peer Review. In addition, the students themselves use another application to involve their peers in the readings (Kahoot). All learning strategies show how this writing task responds to pedagogical theories. The resources focus on the writing they must fill in. In fact, the teacher gives some instructions on how to use the new app: Eli Peer Review.

The last criterion refers to flexibility in assessment. Like the previous assignment, student the need to go the extra mile if they want to get the A.

Table 7

Third assignment

Title	Going Beyond *Exhalation*
Problem	Reading about theoretical or abstract research is difficult. But reading a novel in which the topic can be the subject of research is a way to give them a chance to make connections between the plot and their readings, to offer them an easy way to engage with and reflect on the research process.
Outcomes	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Procedures	Write a first draft. Submit for peer review. Write a final draft. Teacher will comment on all submitted pieces. Choose one piece for the final portfolio.
Resources	Outline for essay structure, link to blog articles and other resources (Library website, Citation, Statistics, etc.), PowerPoint on citation, questions to reflect on readings, reading activity (Kahoot) and review app (Eli Peer Review).
Learning strategies	Understanding and practicing with genres Developing analytical skills Develop rhetorical knowledge through a variety of genres Synthesizing multiple sources Developing critical inquiry writing and reading strategies Revising for clarity of style Creating feedback on writing Focusing on the whole process of writing
Assessment	C and B: first draft, final draft with requirements, one revised and edited piece; A: + two revised and edited pieces.

Final assignment

The portfolio is recommended to be delivered in separate documents. It is a practice that reinforces learning at the end of the course, thanks to the collection of work and reflection on it (see Table 8). It can be stated that it integrates a perfect balance between writing techniques and content elements. The procedure is carried out entirely online, so the assignment meets the need to integrate computer technology. As for our assessment of the pedagogical aspects of this assignment, we observe it in the learning strategies adopted.

The resources of this practice also show us how it is focused on writing, since the teacher provides several handouts and aids for the correct writing of the last reflections on the course. Finally, the adaptation of required writing speaks to the flexibility of the course that allows all students to achieve an A, if they make an effort and try to improve by practicing their writing.

Table 8

Final assignment

Title	Final Portfolio
Problem	Metacognitive reflection is sometimes hard, but it helps a lot in the learning process. With this portfolio you will reflect on your writing and be able to notice your improvements.
Outcomes	1.1, 3, 5
Procedures	To compile all the papers and reflect on them, they should write a "Dear reader Letter."
Resources	Checklist, "Dear reader Letter" outline, rhetorical handout.
Learning strategies	Develop rhetorical knowledge across a variety of genres. Focus on the entire writing process. Reflection on their work and learnings.
Assessment	C, B: "Dear reader Letter", 1 final draft, 3 blog post or responses; A: "Dear reader Letter", 2 final drafts, 3 blog post or responses, 5 *Starting Lines entries.*

Finally, we have verified how all the assignment in their approach, and in their classroom development, fulfill the OWI Principles for Effective Practices. First, is remarkable that there is a perfect balance between the writing techniques and content aspects of the assignments (see Table 9). As for their procedures, they perfectly integrate online writing. The presence of learning strategies shows us the importance of adopting the principles of pedagogy in the design of assignments. The resources

delivered by the teacher show how the main focus of the course is writing. The Labor-based grading contract allows for the flexibility of the assignments and the diverse nature of the student body. Thus, to answer the question about the students' preference for the Labor-based grading contract, it can be seen in the positive evaluations of the students towards the course, especially the pass rate, since all of them have been able to develop the course and achieve the objectives in a satisfactory manner.
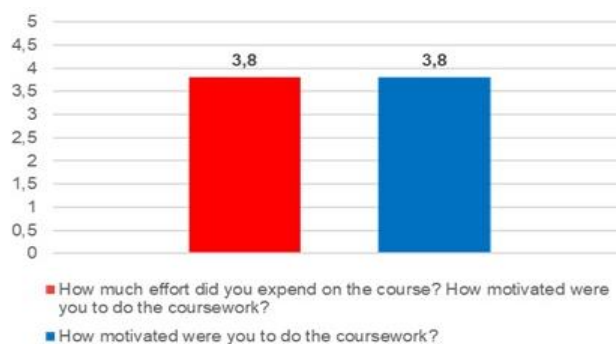
Table 9

Criteria of assignments´ effectiveness

	DIVERSITY	WRITING FOCUS	ONLINE STRATEGIES	ADAPTED PEDAGOGY	BALANCE
Title					X
Problem					X
Outcomes					X
Procedures			X		
Resources		X			
Learning strategies				X	
Assessment	X				

Engagements and Benefits for the Students

This section analyzes the students' responses to the course design from the surveys and their evaluations in the documents. As can be seen in Figure 1, the answers to the survey indicate that the level of effort and motivation coincide with a 3.8 out of 5. No student values are lower than 3.

Figure 1:

Answer of students about their level of effort and motivation.

■ How much effort did you expend on the course? How motivated were you to do the coursework?
■ How motivated were you to do the coursework?

In Figure 2, it is possible to observe the degree of satisfaction in their learning, since all of them believe that their competencies have improved. Although they consider themselves more proficient in their digital writing competence (3.8), the amount of growth is higher (0.6) in their writing competence than in their digital writing (0,2), so the main objective of the course is fulfilled.

Figure 2:

Answer of students about their perceptions about their competences.
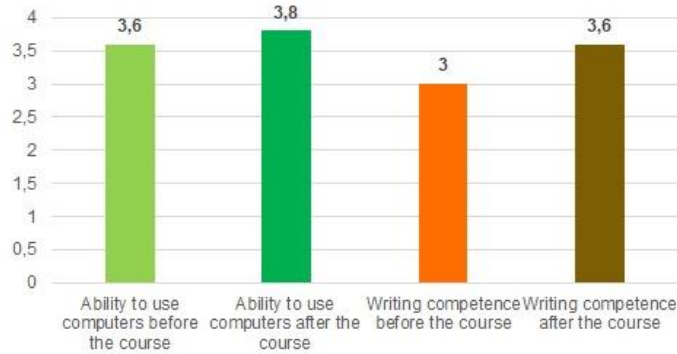
Based on content analysis of the documents, we found two categories with 31,3% that were not present in the literature reviewed: process approach (learning, personal voice, writing identity) and emotional learning (anxiety, blocks, confusing resources, enjoying) (Figure 3 and 4).

Figure 3:

Categories of benefits and disadvantages of digital learning from students ´writings.

If we contrast these results with the teacher interview, we find alignments between the two. Specifically, the list of five aspects highlighted by the teacher is related to the students´ categories in the following percentages: A is related with the genre, in the figure above (4,1%); B, is linked to sociocultural aspects (4,8%); C, is linked with technological aspects (12,9%); D, is linked with emotional aspects (31,3%); and E, is linked with cognitive aspects (15,6%) and process (31,3%).

A. Assignments are open and inquiry-based.

B. The classroom is dialogic and rarely lecture-based.

C. Students have freedom when writing in the blogs.

D. The class prioritizes student engagement.

E. The course offers a variety of writing assignments and educational experiences.

We would like to highlight the predominance of emotional comments in students final reflective work in the "Dear Reader Letter." Many of the students mentioned "enjoying" the work of the class with 20,4%. Secondly, it is important to point the second category related to the process: "self-reflection" (14,5%) and "recurrent revision" (8,6%) show us the role of thinking for the writing and the necessity of developing critical attitudes.

Figure 4:

Benefits and disadvantages of digital learning from students´ writings.
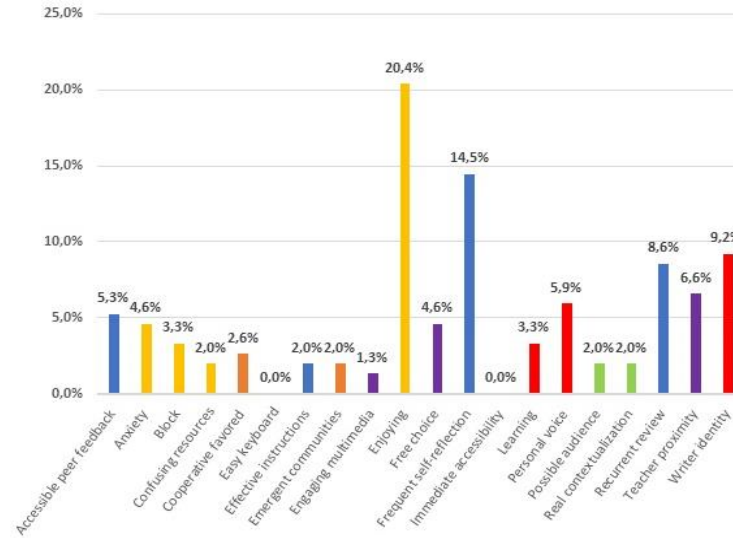
4. Discussion and Conclusions

As shown in the results, the materials meet all the conditions to attract students (QI1), and the activities proposed in the course engaged students (QI2), because these are beneficial. In terms of engagement via Labor-based grading (QI3), it is clear that this approach helped students engage in complex multimodal writing. Our case study provides good qualitative evidence for the efficacy of an approach to the teaching of writing that helps student master multimodal writing (as evidenced in the blog work in particular) while still focusing on integral skills of academic writing (use of sources, revision work, and editing), both achievements as a result of teacher's high commitment to carry out practices that prepare students to develop their 21st century multimedia writing (OECD, 2017). Although the professor asserts that he is still working to ensure that students have a clear understanding of what Labor-based grading contracts are; particularly since such an approach to grading can be seen as "radical" (Q3).

While there were notable successes in student engagement, and indications that student writing was improved, but we need to remember, as Krogh and Jakobsen (2019) point out, that we could be focusing solely on positive aspects of the course unintentionally. To that end we need to think about ways to improve upon this model of instruction (Krogh and Jakobsen, 2019).

There are of course limitations to our work. First of all, we focused on one first-year writing class with a small enrolment. However, the student responses to the survey do align with the finding of other studies that looked into issues of student writing competence and engagement (Riggs y Linder, 2016; Aldaghri and Oraif, 2022). For instance, Nepomuceno (2011) points out that blogging, a key assignment in the class we studied, can lead to both increased student engagement and skill in their own writing.

Another limitation is that this our piece is largely a case study, looking at one particular class and the way that it integrated both multimedia composition and Labor-based grading into a given class. That said, there is a long tradition of using case studies as a methodology in writing studies literature, and our goal is to present a possible model that could be of use outside of the U.S. context (Pande y Mythili, 2021; Gameel, 2017; Ghaderizefreh y Hoover, 2018).

Our modest hope is to provide a model that can be freely adapted to teaching writing that is engaging and effective via multimodal assignment design and Labor-based grading instead other more traditional means of student assessment (Navarro et al., 2019). It is a promising model in need of more research, particularly outside of the U.S. context, and it is suggested as a future line of research to deepen its possibilities of adaptability and functionality in other contexts.

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Appendix A. Writing 2 ACE Labor-based Grading Contract Checklist for the Final Portfolio

Appendix B. Survey on Multimedia Writing

1. I give my consent for the information from this survey to be used for research on issues of student engagement and multimedia writing use.

2. I give my consent for the researchers to use my writing from the final portfolio in Writing 2 for research on issues of student engagement and multimedia writing use.

3. How much effort did you expend on the course?

4. How motivated were you to do the coursework?

5. Before the course my ability to use computers for both "normal" and "digital writing" was:

6. After the course my ability to use computers for both "normal" and "digital writing "was:

7. Before the course my writing competence was:

8. After the course my writing competence is:

9. Which set of skills do you feel you worked more in Writing 2? (Multimedia writing/ academic writing)

10. With which set of skills do I feel most confident in Writing 2?

11. After the course, what digital writing skills do you still want to develop and why do you want to develop them?

OPTIONAL

12. After the course, what academic writing skills do you still want to develop and why do you want to develop them?

13. Is there anything else you want to let me know about your experience in Writing 2 in the Winter of 2022?

Appendix C. Questions for the interview for Dr. Christopher Dean, Writing 2 Teacher