

Teaching experience during COVID-19 lockdown

Since March 16 we made the jump to online classes using the Zoom platform, due to the health emergency generated by COVID-19 in Chile. Our professors have quickly adapted to the new methodology and have also adapted their classes to find new ways to keep students interested in their subjects.

Some of our students had to return to their countries of origin, but decided to continue their online classes at the UAI: "almost all of them returned to their countries and the truth is that I was happily surprised that they have maintained their interest in learning about our history, despite the time difference in their countries. Almost all of my registered students have attended the classes and participated with great interest. I am pleasantly surprised," says the professor of the course "Encounters and Revolutions: Latin America In The Atlantic World", Andrés Baeza, Ph.D. in Latin American History from the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom.

The compatibility of personal life with online classes has also been an issue for professors during this transition. Maïa Renucci, Professor in charge of Human Rights In Chile in our Specially Designed Courses, tells us that the difficult part has been finding time to prepare classes, "we have been able to accommodate a good space at home to teach online, and so far my 1-year-old daughter has stayed in the bedroom playing with her dad while I teach", she says.

Maïa Renucci and Andrés Baeza are facing for the first time the online class modality with direct interaction of students and both agree that a very pleasant space for discussion and reflection has been generated during these days: "My students have been very participative and respectful in classes, and have managed to have the same rich discussion that takes place in a classroom in a face-to-face way, I highly appreciate this", says Maïa Renucci.

Here you can read the full experience of two of our Specially Designed Courses Professors:

Maia Renucci, Professor "Human Rights in Chile", Campus Viña del Mar:

How has the process of adaptation to the online class mode been?

At the beginning I had my concerns about how the classes would be and the interaction with the students. But, I have been assisted by the workshops that the university has given about online teaching methods and about the Zoom platform, making the adaptation process much easier.

What has it been like to make personal life at home compatible with online classes?

This has been a big challenge for me, as I have a 1 year-old- daughter who requires a lot of attention, so I have to find the moments to prepare the classes. Luckily, we have been

able to accommodate a good space at home for the online classes, and so far my little girl has stayed in our bedroom playing with her dad while I teach.

What do you think are the main challenges for teaching in this modality during the next few weeks?

I think that it is a great challenge for us as professors in order to keep the students' interest during the class, so we have to look for tools that give dynamism to the lesson and also support ourselves with the instruments that the different platforms and in general, the Internet gives us.

How has the reception of the students been during these days?

I have been pleasantly surprised, since my students have been very participative and respectful in classes, and have managed to have that rich discussion that takes place in a classroom in a face-to-face situation that I highly appreciate.

What is your advice for other professors and students in this new era of online teaching?

I think it is very valid and normal not to be familiar with this type of teaching, so I encourage them to educate themselves, to take the virtual courses on the different tools we have and to be proactive, creating new ideas to make the classes more dynamic, both professors and students.

Andrés Baeza, professor "Encounters and Revolutions: Latin America In The Atlantic World".

How has the period of adaptation to the online mode been?

It has been necessarily fast, given the circumstances. But I think it was the right step to take, as it was a sign to the students that we were ready to face these difficulties. In any case, it was simpler than I thought. The available platforms offer many options that have made our work easier and are quite intuitive, so I didn't need any further training apart from watching some tutorials.

What has it been like to make personal life at home compatible with online classes?

It's been the hardest part, since my wife is also a university professor and we have two children at home. I also teach at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, so I have several hours of classes. In fact, there are days when we have to take classes at the same time, which means more effort. Still, I think it's in these situations that we show our ability to adapt, and my kids have understood that there are times when we need to shut ourselves off in order to do our jobs. So far it has been better than I expected.

What do you think are the main challenges for teaching in this modality during the next few weeks?

I think it is difficult to abstract ourselves from the situation we are in, now comes the quarantine for us. The children are already beginning to be affected by the quarantine and

you have to give yourself time to comfort them. In that sense, the challenge is to keep the spirits up, to try to teach at the same level as at the beginning and for our students to also maintain the motivation they have had up to now.

How has the reception of the students been over these days?

It has been incredible. Almost all of them went back to their countries and I was surprised that they have kept up their interest in learning about our history, despite the fact that they do it from their countries. Almost all of my registered students have attended the classes and participated with great interest. I am pleasantly surprised.

What is your advice to other professors and students in this new stage of online teaching?

I would just say that you have to see this as an opportunity to learn something new. I think that this experience has also helped me to learn to use new tools that perhaps because of my training I did not consider so much. For example, I now realize how many tools Webcursos offers. Online teaching is here to stay, there are institutions that work totally in that modality and I think this is a great opportunity to get on that wagon, learn and adapt for what teaching will be like in the future.