Juanita Colás
27 years old
Lecturer in English, 2 years teaching

“I’m looking for practical content my students can use as references and examples to increase the quality of their work.”

Goals
Engage students to become better writers. Juanita is focused on getting students to practice and develop strong practical skills.

Work with students one-on-one. Juanita knows one-on-one interactions enable the feedback needed to get the most learning and growth.

Continue learning. Juanita has many diverse interests and selects course topics that interest both her students and herself.

As a non-tenure track lecturer in the English department, Juanita spends all her time teaching and does not have the same access to resources as faculty within her department. She has a diverse background and had a number of different careers before becoming a lecturer about two years ago. Though she does not get paid that well, she really enjoys teaching because she likes to see students grow and continue her own learning.

One of Juanita’s regular courses is an undergraduate persuasive writing workshop. The course topic changes every term based on student interest. This term, Juanita selected food issues (production, security, policy, etc.) because it is an interest she shares with the students and an area she has already done a little research in.

To prepare for her course, Juanita sets out to update her course syllabus over the summer. The structure is generally the same, but because the topic has changed, she will need to find new resources. Juanita is very comfortable on the web and does a lot of research on the web from home using Google, Amazon, various news sites such as The New York Times and individual author websites and blogs. She is primarily looking for articles and books on the “current argument” around food issues from multiple different perspectives as well as strong examples of persuasive writing.

She starts her search with browser bookmarks she has previously created in this area. She creates dozens of new bookmarks for relevant content, struggling to keep them organized in the various folders she has created. She also gets frustrated when she starts working on campus more as it gets closer to the start of the semester and she does not have access to her bookmarks from home. She ends up emailing work back and forth to herself to narrow down resources to include in her syllabus. She knows a service such as Delicious would help to alleviate this issue, but she just does not have time to move all her bookmarks over and reorganize them.

Juanita cuts and pastes her syllabus from Word into the Sakai Syllabus tool so it is easier for students to quickly click on all the web links. The syllabus consists mainly of links to web articles to read and reference as well as references to PDF readings uploaded in the Resources area of the course site.

Once the semester begins, Juanita diligently keeps up with the blogs and news sites that she’s bookmarked for new work. If she finds something relevant to the class because it argues a new position well or does a good job expounding on an existing argument she will send it to students using the Sakai Announcements tool. It’s sometimes difficult for Juanita to gauge the impact of these supplementary articles because there is no formal way to get feedback on them.

Juanita believes strongly in feedback throughout the course to ensure her students are becoming better writers. Juanita meets with students one-on-one to review three key writing assignments over the course of the semester. She likes speaking with students about their writing and getting feedback on the course. If students are having trouble finding resources for their particular writing assignment, Juanita will set aside time to find resources that may be of use to them. She also points students to the library though she herself is not well versed in scholarly research or very aware of the library’s various resources and services.