

Rapping for Review, Retention, and Recall

In Dr. Diego Arias' BUS 3190 Course, an Active Learning Assignment Grants Students an Opportunity to Demonstrate their Lyrical Stylings and Knowledge of Economic Theories

As educators, we often look for new ways of bringing innovation to our classroom through content, activities, assessments, and assignments. Specifically, many instructors look for innovative modes of active engagement in the classroom as it has been proven as an effective method of instruction.¹ As we look for inspiration, we can often look to the work of our colleagues across the disciplines.

As such, the CETL recently visited Dr. Diego Arias' Ethics, Business Leadership, and Social Responsibility (BUS: 3190) course to observe an innovative assignment that combines contemporary musical expression with critical thinking and creative expression. In the assignment, students are tasked with creating lyrics that highlight the perspectives and key tenets of economic theorists. Then, students must select a spokesperson to represent their team in a rap battle, posing one economic theorist against another, such as Adam Smith versus John Maynard Keynes. Below, Arias, Assistant Professor of Management, Business Ethics offers an overview of how this "rap it out" assignment was developed as well as a step-by-step plan for implementing the assignment in class.

CETL: What are the learning goals for the assignment and can you walk us through its steps?

DIEGO ARIAS: This assignment was designed to deepen students' understanding of the varying economic perspectives of different authors and their views on the concept of work. Here is an outline of the assignment steps:

1. Introduction: The class begins with a concise overview of the authors covered in our chapter. Students are expected to have read the material beforehand.

2. Video Presentation: A video illustrating a fictional rap battle between Keynes and Hayek is shown to the class. You can access the video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0nERTFo-Sk&ab_channel=EmergentOrder



3. Assignment Explanation: I then explain to the students that their task is to select two authors from the chapter and create a song that represents each author's economic philosophy, similar to the video they've just watched. The song should be relatively short, around 30 seconds to 1 minute.

4. Author Selection: Students begin selecting their preferred authors and start to notice the contrasting viewpoints between them.

5. Song Creation: After choosing their authors, students work on crafting their lyrics and rhythm for the song.

6. Performance: Each group presents their song to the class, incorporating their chosen beat. The group that receives the loudest applause earns extra credit points.

CETL: Please explain what the goals or objectives are for this assignment:

DIEGO ARIAS: This assignment serves two primary objectives:

1. Understanding Author Differences: To enable students to comprehend the variations in economic perspectives and concepts of work among the authors covered in Chapter Four.
2. Engagement and Trust: To foster a positive classroom environment by promoting camaraderie, trust, and engagement between students and the instructor.

CETL: How did you develop this assignment?

DIEGO ARIAS: I continually seek innovative ways to reinforce theoretical concepts while building trust and engagement with my students. I encountered the video over a decade ago and realized its potential for my Business Ethics classes. I've been incorporating this assignment into my classes since 2011.



Photo by ANTONI SHKRABA production:

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/close-up-photo-of-woman-singing-while-holding-her-microphone-8043911/>

CETL: What benefits for students does this mode of presenting information have for students and their classmates compared to a more traditional mode of presentation (i.e., a PowerPoint)?

DIEGO ARIAS: I employ a combination of approaches in my class. Students are encouraged to prepare by reading the chapter in advance, followed by a concise PowerPoint presentation during class. This innovative and unconventional activity complements the traditional methods, contributing to the overall effectiveness of achieving the class objectives.

CETL: What has been surprising about this assignment?

DIEGO ARIAS: I have encountered some delightful surprises during this assignment. In one instance, a student who had won several rap battles in high school delivered an incredible performance that earned thunderous applause. On another occasion, a quiet, non-native English-speaking student unexpectedly won the rap battle, delivering both the song



and dance moves, leaving the entire class astonished.

CETL: What are the next steps after this assignment?

DIEGO ARIAS: My class is structured in a way that each topic follows a similar pattern: reading, PowerPoint presentation, test, and a fun activity. We are currently moving on to stakeholder analysis, and I have a distinct and engaging activity planned for each topic to keep the class dynamic and effective.

References:

1. Deslauriers, L., McCarty, L. S., Miller, K., Callaghan, K., & Kestin, G. (2019). Measuring actual learning versus feeling of learning in response to being actively engaged in the classroom. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(39), 19251-19257.