

# Handbook for Graduate Teaching Assistants in the Lower Division Language Program

Revised June 2025

Be sure to thoroughly read the current [Teaching at the University of Florida: Teaching Assistant Handbook](#) in addition to this department-specific handbook.

There are additional [GTA resources](#) available through [the Center for Teaching Excellence](#).

*Department  
of Spanish  
and  
Portuguese  
Studies  
(SPS)*

# Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. GOALS OF THE LOWER DIVISION LANGUAGE PROGRAM .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1. Mission Statement .....	3
2.2. ACTFL Standards for Foreign Language Learning.....	4
2.3. ACTFL “Can-Do” statements for language learners .....	5
<b>3. PROGRAM INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1. Division of responsibilities .....	6
3.2. Degree Requirements.....	6
3.3. Placements.....	7
3.4. LDLP Courses .....	7
3.5. Hybrid Courses / Flipped Courses .....	9
<b>4. TEACHING MATERIALS.....</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1. Principal Course Materials .....	9
4.2. Online Platforms .....	10
4.3. Course Syllabi .....	10
4.4. Other resources .....	10
<b>5. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES AND RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>11</b>
5.1. Professionalism and Job-Related Duties.....	11
5.2. Harassment .....	13
5.3. Limited Teaching on Zoom .....	14
5.4 Substitution Policy .....	14
<b>6. CLASSROOM and PEDAGOGICAL INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>16</b>
6.1. Class Observations .....	16
6.2. Materials Creation .....	22
6.3. Final Grades .....	22
6.4. The Manual for Teaching in the Lower Division Language Program.....	22
<b>7. Letter from the Chair &amp; the Director of Language Instruction .....</b>	<b>22</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Welcome to the Lower Division Language Program of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies!

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with the information you need to carry out your duties as an instructor in our department. Here you will find information about the administrative policies of the program, the materials at your disposal, and other information related to your duties and responsibilities. At the beginning of each term, you will be provided as well with copies of the course syllabus, placement form and other materials that you will need for the course you will be teaching. The materials in this handbook deal primarily with the first- and second- year Spanish courses, as it is generally those instructors new to the program and/or with less experience that will need this resource. **Nonetheless, the general administrative policies and duties apply to anyone teaching in the Spanish and/or Portuguese programs.**

Ours is a large program, involving many instructors whose work needs to be coordinated in order to provide consistent quality across the different course sections. That is why we all need to follow a set of common guidelines while developing our individual personalities as language teachers. This handbook sets those policies out in writing for you and provides information on the structure and goals of the program. Please read these documents carefully and keep the handbook available for reference as long as you are a member of our program.

The Lower Division Language Program in Spanish in particular is in charge of providing instruction to over 2,500 students each year. Many of these students enroll in our 1000-level classes to fulfill a two-semester foreign language requirement, although some of them may choose to pursue their studies in Spanish beyond the first year. In any case, our task is to provide them with instruction in the language as well as to try to develop in them an understanding of some aspects of the cultures and ways of life of the different Spanish-speaking countries. There is a limit to what we can offer our students in the course of a few semesters, but it is important to make the effort to provide them with the tools and the motivation to be intellectually challenged to explore what lies beyond their own languages and cultures.

## 2. GOALS OF THE LOWER DIVISION LANGUAGE PROGRAM (LDLP)

### 2.1. Mission Statement

Students completing the LDLP should be able to **communicate** effectively in Spanish or Portuguese, understand **cultural** products, practices, and perspectives of the Hispanic or Luso-Brazilian world, **connect** the study of foreign language with their other university studies and their world beyond the university, make informed **comparisons** of language and culture as a whole, and participate in a larger **community** of Spanish and/or Portuguese speakers.

#### Objectives:

- Introduce students to the language and culture of the Spanish-speaking/Portuguese-speaking world
- Promote the development of their communicative competence in the Spanish/Portuguese language
- Develop intercultural understanding and social consciousness of problems that affect this cultural complex

#### With these goals and objectives in mind, the LDLP...

- ... assumes that language is a social activity and that the primary goal of language is communication.
- ... supports an integrated approach to the five goal areas (“the 5Cs”) established in the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (*see next page*): **Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities.**
- ... allows students to practice and apply the skills they are studying.
- ... teaches all courses in Spanish/Portuguese ([target language usage = 90% and higher in every class \[link\]](#)).
- ... expects students to communicate utilizing newly acquired structures.
- ... encourages students to become involved in their own learning process and to be active constructors of their own knowledge, both on their own and with the support of their peers and instructors.
- ... **expects that language knowledge is mediated by cultural artifacts from the target culture as well as active exposure to and use of the language.**
- ... **takes communicative principles as its main foundations for instruction, with a focus on [content-based and task-based teaching](#).**
- ... requires students to communicate using the different skills of speaking, listening, writing, and reading, both inside and outside of class.
- ... focuses primarily on communication and meaning, but also makes provisions for the metalinguistic analysis of particular aspects of the language *as needed*. That is, **language is the arrow, not the target!**
- ... incorporates cultural artifacts reflecting different settings and dialects in the Spanish-speaking / Portuguese-speaking world.
- ... **creates opportunities for students to further develop 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills [\[link 1 / link 2\]](#) in Spanish / Portuguese.**
- ... evaluates student performance based on these teaching practices and therefore reflects not only what students know about the language (an emphasis on the discreet) but more importantly what students can do with / in the language.

## 2.2. ACTFL Standards for Foreign Language Learning



# World-readiness standards for learning languages

(<https://www.actfl.org/uploads/files/general/World-ReadinessStandardsforLearningLanguages.pdf>)

Goal Areas	Standards		
<p><b>COMMUNICATION</b></p> <p>Communicate effectively in more than one language in order to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes</p>	<p><b>Interpersonal Communication:</b></p> <p>Learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions.</p>	<p><b>Interpretive Communication:</b></p> <p>Learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.</p>	<p><b>Presentational Communication:</b></p> <p>Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers.</p>
<p><b>CULTURES</b></p> <p>Interact with cultural competence and understanding</p>	<p><b>Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives:</b></p> <p>Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the cultures studied.</p>	<p><b>Relating Cultural Products to Perspectives:</b></p> <p>Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the products and perspectives of the cultures studied.</p>	
<p><b>CONNECTIONS</b></p> <p>Connect with other disciplines and acquire information and diverse perspectives in order to use the language to function in academic and career-related situations</p>	<p><b>Making Connections:</b></p> <p>Learners build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines while using the language to develop critical thinking and to solve problems creatively.</p>	<p><b>Acquiring Information and Diverse Perspectives:</b></p> <p>Learners access and evaluate information and diverse perspectives that are available through the language and its cultures.</p>	
<p><b>COMPARISONS</b></p> <p>develop insight into the nature of language and culture in order to interact with cultural competence</p>	<p><b>Language Comparisons:</b></p> <p>Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.</p>	<p><b>Cultural Comparisons:</b></p> <p>Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.</p>	
<p><b>COMMUNITIES</b></p> <p>Communicate and interact with cultural competence in order to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world</p>	<p><b>School and Global Communities:</b></p> <p>Learners use the language both within and beyond the classroom to interact and collaborate in their community and the globalized world.</p>	<p><b>Lifelong Learning:</b></p> <p>Learners set goals and reflect on their progress in using languages for enjoyment, enrichment, and advancement.</p>	

### 2.3. ACTFL “Can-Do” statements for language learners

ACTFL’s Can-Do statements are designed to help instructors and learners assess what students *can do* with language in the various communication modes *consistently over time*. These statements help guide instructors in program and lesson design and ongoing formative assessment. We will discuss Can-Do statements in practice when we discuss specific course / chapter goals.

	Novice Low	Novice Mid	Novice High	Intermediate Low	Intermediate Mid
<b>Interpersonal Communication</b>	I can communicate on some very familiar topics using single words and phrases that I have practiced and memorized.	I can communicate on very familiar topics using a variety of words and phrases that I have practiced and memorized.	I can communicate and exchange information about familiar topics using phrases and simple sentences, sometimes supported by memorized language. I can usually handle short social interactions in everyday situations by asking and answering simple questions.	I can participate in conversations on a number of familiar topics using simple sentences. I can handle short social interactions in everyday situations by asking and answering simple questions.	I can participate in conversations on familiar topics using sentences and series of sentences. I can handle short social interactions in everyday situations by asking and answering a variety of questions. I can usually say what I want to say about myself and my everyday life.
<b>Presentational Speaking</b>	I can present information about myself and some other very familiar topics using single words or memorized phrases.	I can present information about myself and some other very familiar topics using a variety of words, phrases, and memorized expressions.	I can present basic information on familiar topics using language I have practiced using phrases and simple sentences.	I can present information on most familiar topics using a series of simple sentences.	I can make presentations on a wide variety of familiar topics using connected sentences.
<b>Presentational Writing</b>	I can copy some familiar words, characters, or phrases.	I can write lists and memorized phrases on familiar topics.	I can write short messages and notes on familiar topics related to everyday life.	I can write briefly about most familiar topics and present information using a series of simple sentences.	I can write on a wide variety of familiar topics using connected sentences.
<b>Interpretive Listening</b>	I can recognize a few memorized words and phrases when I hear them spoken.	I can recognize some familiar words and phrases when I hear them spoken.	I can often understand words, phrases, and simple sentences related to everyday life. I can recognize pieces of information and sometimes understand the main topic of what is being said.	I can understand the main idea in short, simple messages and presentations on familiar topics. I can understand the main idea of simple conversations that I overhear.	I can understand the main idea in messages and presentations on a variety of topics related to everyday life and personal interests and studies. I can understand the main idea in conversations that I overhear.
<b>Interpretive Reading</b>	I can recognize a few letters or characters. I can identify a few memorized words and phrases when I read.	I can recognize some letters or characters. I can understand some learned or memorized words and phrases when I read.	I can understand familiar words, phrases, and sentences within short and simple texts related to everyday life. I can sometimes understand the main idea of what I have read.	I can understand the main idea of short and simple texts when the topic is familiar.	I can understand the main idea of texts related to everyday life and personal interests or studies.

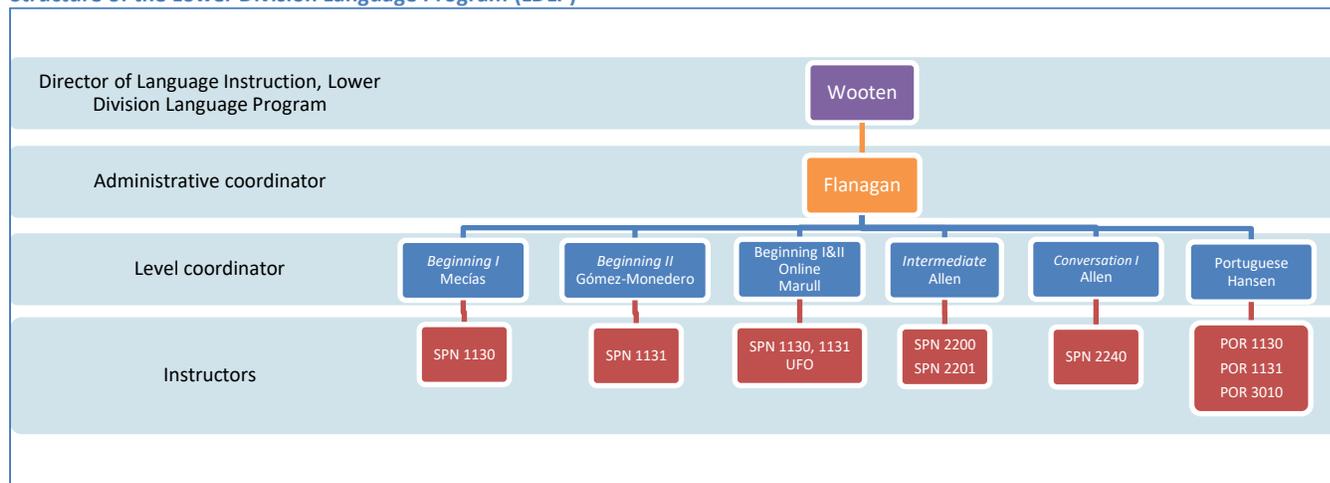
(We will discuss the recently revised Can-Do statements, which now also include statements for intercultural communication. See this page for much more information: <https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/nccsfl-actfl-can-do-statements>)

### 3. PROGRAM INFORMATION

#### 3.1. Division of responsibilities

Your role and responsibilities as an instructor are detailed in this handbook and will also be discussed throughout FOL 6943: Teaching Methods (a 3-hour class required of GTAs new to the department), in addition to regular meetings with your coordinators and other staff. Although everyone works together, you will most often work closely with the coordinator for your level and the Administrative Coordinator.

#### Structure of the Lower Division Language Program (LDLP)



In general, the responsibilities for each member of the LDLP are as follows:

Director of Lang Instruction	Administrative Coordinator	Level Coordinators	Lead Instructors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Select textbook/program</li> <li>Design syllabi</li> <li>Train instructors</li> <li>Approve evaluative materials</li> <li>Observe and evaluate classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with placement, advising, registration</li> <li>Order textbooks</li> <li>Liaise with Target Copy / printing</li> <li>Liaise with the Disability Resource Center</li> <li>Deal with student problems/issues</li> <li>Observe and evaluate classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create evaluative materials (in conjunction with the TAs)</li> <li>Meet with TAs, divide tasks</li> <li>Establish deadlines</li> <li>Finalize materials and transmit to Director of Language Instruction and Administrative Coordinator</li> <li>Observe and evaluate classes (informally and formally)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet regularly with the Level coordinator to help monitor / evaluate ongoing course activities.</li> <li>Create / revise course materials</li> <li>Liaise with instructors</li> <li>Informally observe instructors to provide feedback prior to formal observations</li> </ul>

#### 3.2. Degree Requirements, or which SPN/POR class is required to graduate

Students who wish to demonstrate proficiency in Spanish in order to meet the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), College of Journalism and Communications (JM) or BA in Fine Arts (FA) degree requirements must do one of the following:

- Complete SPN1131, the terminal course in the Beginning Spanish sequence or a higher-level class with a passing grade (a grade of C or higher or a grade of Satisfactory);
- Take and earn the required minimum score on UF's Foreign Language Proficiency Exam; or
- Earn sufficient scores on an AICE, AP, CLEP or IB exam (see "Student Placement Information" chart below).

### 3.3. Placements, or how students determine which SPN/POR class to take

As of Fall 2015, there are no formal prerequisites for **SPN 1130 or 1131**. Instead, students are strongly encouraged to take [the WebCAPE Placement Exam](#) to make the best choice for which Spanish course to take.

If students want to go back to the very beginning and start over with SPN 1130, they may do so. If they would like to take SPN 1131, that is also allowed. If they believe they are ready to take 2200 (which isn't advisable without AP or IB scores; see below), they may do so. This policy places more power in the students' hands, trusting them to make the decision with which they are comfortable.

Students who are native or heritage speakers of Spanish or grew up speaking Spanish with family and friends **must** consult with the faculty in the Heritage Language Program ([Dr. Diego Pascual y Cabo](#) or [Dr. Víctor Jordán](#)) in order to remain in any SPN 1000- or 2000-level course. There is a special track of courses designed to meet their specific needs.

Students who have studied Spanish in any setting and have an intermediate to advanced command of Spanish (including those who have taken 3000 level courses and/or are native or heritage speakers of Spanish) may not take **POR 1130 or 1131**. They should enroll in POR 3010. Other students who should enroll in **POR 3010** include: those with experience and/or formal training at the intermediate-high (3000) level in French or Italian and no previous knowledge of Portuguese; or those who passed POR 1130 with an A or A-. If students have had previous training and/or are a native speaker of Portuguese must be evaluated by [Dr. Quinn Hansen](#).

#### 3.3.1. WebCAPE TEST DESCRIPTION (an online test available via the department's webpage to help students decide which class to take)

The test is multiple-choice and covers grammar, reading, and vocabulary. It is an adaptive test, which means that the question difficulty will vary depending on how the student responds. The test costs \$10, payable upon registration, and should take only about 20-25 minutes. Students can take the test online, on their own, at via the link provided on <http://spanishandportuguese.ufl.edu/undergraduate-programs/lower-division-spanish-program/spanish-placement/>. See the next page for information on test scores, completion of language requirement, and placement issues.

### 3.4. LDLP Courses

The courses that make up the Lower Division Language Programs are:

- **SPN 1130: Beginning Spanish I** (MWF) [5 credits / hybrid]
- **SPN 1131: Beginning Spanish II** (MWF) [5 credits / hybrid]
- **SPN 2200: Intermediate Spanish I** (MWF) [3 credits / flipped]
- **SPN 2201: Intermediate Spanish 2** (MWF) [3 credits / flipped]
- **SPN 2240: Intensive Communication Skills in Spanish** (MWF) [3 credits / flipped]
- **SPN 3300: Spanish Grammar and Composition** (MWF) [3 credits / flipped]
- **POR 1130: Beginning Portuguese I** (MWF) [5 credits / hybrid]
- **POR 1131: Beginning Portuguese II** (MWF) [5 credits / hybrid]
- **POR 3010: Introduction to Portuguese and Brazil** (MWF) [5 credits / hybrid]

# Student Placement Information

\* = These scores successfully satisfy the CLAS, JM and BA in Fine Arts language requirements.

\*\* = Please consult with Dr. John Flanagan for assistance in these cases.

WebCAPE Spanish placement test		
If your score is ...	you should enroll in ...	Notes
Below 270	SPN 1130	WebCAPE is only a placement exam. Scores on WebCAPE are used to place students into the correct class but <i>NOT</i> to satisfy language requirements.
270-345	SPN 1131	
346-427	SPN 2200	
428+	SPN 2201	

SAT II (Spanish subject test)		
If your score is ...	you should enroll in ...	Notes
Under 340	SPN 1130	The SAT II test will no longer be offered via UF as of Summer 2018. UF has begun to offer the FLATS exam in 2018-2019 to replace the SAT II. More information regarding the FLATS scores and equivalencies is forthcoming.
350-420	SPN 1131	
430-560*	SPN 2200	
570-690*	SPN 2201	
700+*	SPN 2240 or SPN 3300**	

College Level Examination Program (CLEP)		
If your score is ...	then you have credit for...	and should enroll in ...
50	SPN 1130	SPN 1131
63*	SPN 1131	May enroll in SPN 2200.

Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE)		
If your score is ...	then you have credit for...	and should enroll in ...
UNGRADED/NOGRADE (0)	--	SPN 1131
A-E (A level) *	SPN 2200 and SPN 2201	SPN 2240
A-E (AS level) *	SPN 2200	SPN 2201

Advanced Placement (AP) [Language or Literature]		
If your score is ...	then you have credit for...	and should enroll in ...
1	--	SPN 1131
2	--	SPN 1131 or SPN 2200**
3*	SPN 2200	SPN 2201
4*	SPN 2200 and SPN 2201	SPN 2240
5*	SPN 2200 and SPN 2201	SPN 2240 or SPN 3300**

International Baccalaureate (IB)		
If your score is ...	then you have credit for...	and should enroll in ...
3	--	SPN 2200
4*	SPN 1131	SPN 2200
5*	SPN 1131 and 2200	SPN 2201
6*	SPN 1131 and 2200	SPN 2201
7*	SPN 1131 and 2200	SPN 2201

### 3.5. Hybrid / Flipped courses

“Hybrid” classes – often used synonymously with “flipped” or “blended” classes - are classes where students prepare extensively for class via computer-based or online activities (including reviewing tutorials and doing mechanical exercises) so that face-to-face time in class can be dedicated to communication.

Though “hybrid” and “flipped” are often used interchangeably, we differentiate them somewhat here in SPS. Students in in-person SPN 1130/1131 and POR 1130/1131/3010 earn 5 credits for class while attending only 3 50-minute classes per week. Students in those classes, then, earn the other 2 credits through extensive work on Connect/MPL. Students in SPN 2200/2201 earn 3 credits for class, meaning that their work on Connect is strictly “preparation” (they receive no additional credits).

In other words, students regularly engage in Spanish/Portuguese inside *and* outside of the classroom:

#### AT HOME

- Grammar tutorials
- Vocabulary presentation and practice
- Mechanical (incl. grammar) practice
- Preparation for class activities

#### DURING CLASS

- **Engage in communicative activities to use language and explore cultures in context**
- Review questions
- Interact with peers and instructor

## 4. TEACHING MATERIALS

A variety of materials are available to you to help you create and administer your lessons.

### 4.1 Principal course materials

This is the main resource that will help you work with your students daily. As you become familiar with the text, you will be able to choose what activities best serve the objectives for each lesson, in concert with the guidelines provided by your coordinator and in the syllabus. Remember that the textbook is a tool for you to use, not something that controls every aspect of your teaching!

The textbooks in use for the LDLP courses are as follows:

- SPN 1130 & 1131: *Contraseña* (LingroLearning)
- SPN 2200 & 2201: *Contextos* (McGraw-Hill Education)
- SPN 2240: *Revista* (Vista Higher Learning)
- SPN 3300: *Taller de escritores* (Vista Higher Learning)
- POR 1130, 1131 & 3010: Instructor-created materials available via Canvas

The digital products and textbooks we have adopted have been chosen because they foster communication, cultural knowledge, critical thinking skills, and strategies for learning. They were written in accordance with the World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning (“the 5Cs”), referenced on p. 4 of this handbook, and therefore the textbooks themselves help us work towards meeting the goals and objectives of our language program. You are strongly encouraged to read the instructor preface to your textbook, as it provides a great deal of information on the theory behind and the best methods for using the materials.

Know, though, that no textbook can fully represent the breadth and depth of Spanish and Portuguese and the cultures of those who speak them! **Consider regularly what additional information, texts (written, audio, video), and experiences you can use in the classroom and beyond to help your students become more linguistically and culturally competent. See 4.4.2 below to learn how to incorporate “outside” materials.**

## 4.2 Online platforms

### 4.2.1 Online platforms that accompany our textbooks

The digital product for SPN 1130 and 1131 is *Contraseña*. SPN 2200 and 2201 uses *Contextos*, which is packaged with the online platform *Connect*. Students in SPN 2240 use the textbook *Revista*, which is accompanied by *SuperSite*. *Contraseña*, *Connect*, and *SuperSite* are powerful resources, and instructors teaching SPN or POR courses will receive detailed training on their use prior to the first day of classes. As you become more comfortable with your course's platform, you will be able to take fuller advantage of everything it offers.

For the most part, the activities in *Connect* and *SuperSite* are pre-assigned (principally by the level coordinators) so that you do not have to decide which exercises students will do prior to coming to class each day. When students log on to *Contraseña/Connect* (or *Canvas*) / *SuperSite* they will automatically see which activities have been assigned and when they are due. **Contraseña/Connect/SuperSite activities are due every day that there are textbook pages/program sections assigned!**

### 4.2.2. Canvas

*Canvas* is the Learning Management System that UF uses (similar to *Blackboard* or *Sakai* in other universities). Currently, *Canvas* is used in SPN 1130/1131/2200/2201/2240 to share materials with students (including the student preparation documents for all assessments), to provide direct access to a calendar of daily work, to send important updates to students, and to make student performance visible via the gradebook. Instructors will receive training on using *Canvas* as an instructor (which will also be helpful to GTAs taking courses with graduate faculty who use *Canvas* in their courses).

## 4.3. Course Syllabi

You will be provided with the current version of the syllabus for the course you are teaching as well as all materials you are required to distribute in class (i.e., placement form, assessment rubrics.). Syllabi are also provided online [via Dropbox](#).

## 4.4. Other resources

### 4.4.1. Using sample materials created by SPS

Sample PowerPoints (which function as complete lessons or samples of activities) are available for each unit of *Contraseña* and chapter of *Contextos* in our Lower Division Google Drive. Instructors will receive the link to their program's folder in the Google Drive prior to the start of the semester, and the course coordinator will discuss ways to use the materials on Google Drive effectively.

In order to continuously build our resource base, please upload any materials (lesson plans, PowerPoints, guided readings, images, activities) you create to the "Additional activities" folder in the specific chapter folder for your textbook on the Google Drive.

### 4.4.2. Using authentic materials ("real-world" materials)

There are of course a variety of options available to you in planning your lessons, ranging from the digital program or textbook itself, to *Contraseña/Connect*, to the internet, etc. While it is your responsibility to follow the syllabus and to cover the assigned topics on the assigned days, we also encourage you to bring in authentic materials - like images, infographics, texts, short videos, songs, etc. - from other sources to meet the objectives for lessons!

While you are still learning the ropes of the textbook and of teaching in general, we suggest you take advantage of the many resources available through the text itself. **When you choose to incorporate outside materials, however, please confirm:**

- a) your materials aid you in accomplishing your linguistic and cultural objectives for that day (that is, there is a direct link to the theme of the chapter – and ideally any countries/groups under study – and the vocabulary and grammar that has been taught to that point);
- b) your materials are appropriate in language and content and could not be considered offensive to anyone (if you have any doubt, ask your course coordinator!);
- c) your materials help you fulfill at least one of the Cs (Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities) in addition to Communication; and
- d) you make the materials accessible by creating activities that are pedagogically appropriate (including activities with pre-reading/viewing, during-reading/viewing, and post-reading/viewing steps)

If you cannot be sure that these four points are met with your materials, please check with your course coordinator and/or with Dr. Wooten **before** using them.

## 5. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 5.1 Professionalism and Job-Related Duties

Most of the instructors in the first-year language program play a dual role in our department. On the one hand, you are graduate students and need to attend to your academic duties as students. On the other hand, you are language instructors, and that position carries specific responsibilities. **As an instructor, you represent our program, our department, and our university.** For many of our students you are going to be one of their initial contacts with our university. It is very important that you project to your students a sense of professionalism in terms of your interaction with them, the quality of your work, your attitude, and your appearance. The following subsections detail the basics of your job-related duties and professional considerations.

#### Instruction

You are fully responsible for the day-to-day instructional activities in your class, following the general guidelines established in the syllabus shared by all sections.

#### Administrative matters

**It is crucial that you comply with all requests from the Director of Language Instruction and Course Coordinators as accurately and promptly as possible. When given a checklist, go through it step by step to avoid forgetting important duties. When you receive an email, read it carefully and take note of any action steps and/or deadlines it contains. This is especially vital during the first week of the semester and around the dates for assessments. You are expected to check your UF email at least once daily,** as well as to check your mailbox in Dauer every day that you are on campus.

#### Office hours

**You are required to schedule three office hours (180 minutes) a week, on at least two different days in the office assigned to you (not a coffee shop or other location). Office hours should not be at the same time each day.** Office hours should be held between 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. You may have up to one office hour (60 minutes) per week on Zoom. If you choose this option, include your link in your instructor module on Canvas in addition to the days/times of your office hours.

These scheduling guidelines are not only for your students, so that they are able to attend, but also so that you will not have to schedule alternate meetings on a regular basis. Inform your students of your schedule

throughout the course and post it on your office door and your instructor module on Canvas. If you need to change office hours during the semester, tell your students, the Course Coordinator, and Ms. Tania Fleming (taniayf@ufl.edu).

### Evaluative materials

You will work with your level coordinator to establish assessment materials (see Section 6.2 for further information). **All members of the program must strictly adhere to the procedures for tests and other evaluative parts of the course!** (Any other short in-class assignments that you implement can be considered part of the participation/preparation grade.) **Your feedback and your innovative ideas are greatly appreciated for future development of the program, but you CANNOT decide for yourself to change the way grades are assigned or how and when assessments are given.** That includes make-up assignments for students who were absent; please consult your Course Coordinator and Dr. John Flanagan about if/how students will make up an assessment.

### Classrooms

If your classroom is unacceptable for pedagogical or, occasionally, logistical, reasons, please speak to staff in Dauer 170 immediately to see what can be done to remedy the situation. Classroom space is at a premium, though, and it is unlikely that any changes can be made. Regardless, the meeting place for your class is the assigned classroom or the labs. Places such as restaurants and cafes are **not** appropriate meeting places for your classes. Prior to the start of any semester, you can always see what your classroom looks like using the Classroom Info resource (<https://www.at.ufl.edu/service-teams/classrooms/pictures-and-information/>).

### Time management

You are expected to be on time to your classes. In addition to being unprofessional to arrive late, if you are not on time your students will not see the need to be on time themselves. Nor should you keep your students in class past the regular time. Many may have to run across campus to their next class. On the other hand, if you complete your lesson plan before the end of the period, do not end class early. You should always have a back-up activity or conversation ideas, or even review activities, on hand in case you end up with extra class time. If your lesson plan requires a few minutes to set up, arrive early so that you don't spend class time setting up. If the instructor in the class previous to yours lingers too long, politely indicate that you need to prepare your classroom for your lesson.

### Office security

You will be sharing office space with several of your fellow instructors. In addition to your personal belongings, the offices contain computers. It is extremely important that you always lock the door when you leave if there is nobody else in the office, even if you just step out for a minute. There have been break-ins and robberies on campus, and we need to do everything we can to maintain a safe environment.

### Photocopying

DUE TO BUDGET CUTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS, GENERAL PHOTOCOPYING IS NOT AVAILABLE. Fortunately, however, the textbook/program, our Google Drive, LingroHub/Connect/SuperSite, and Canvas offer plentiful resources for teaching, and you should rarely need to make any copies. When lesson planning, consider these options to paper copies: PowerPoint; the electronic textbook projected in the classroom; students' writing answers in their own notebooks; etc.

Should you need to make copies (aside from assessments and rubrics, which are provided to you by the department), you will be responsible for paying for the copies on your own. In this case, please make sure that the original is in perfect condition (spelling, grammar, no typos, etc.) and is appropriate for class (see above discussion in 4.4.2 Using authentic materials).

## 5.2 Harassment

HARASSMENT includes, but is not limited to, acts of verbal or written abuse, threats, intimidation, coercion, and/or other conduct which creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment, including racial and sexual harassment and stalking. (Rule 6C1-4.016(1)(s), F.A.C.) This includes conduct that unreasonably interferes with a teacher's, fellow student's or class's academic performance.

Harassment can be exemplified by conduct that includes, but is not limited to:

- Notes, essays and other written materials, including e-mail and computer messages.
- Telephone calls.
- Inappropriate display of photographs, videos, computer images, slides, graphics, cartoons and drawings in a class.
- Insulting or disruptive sounds or body language in class.
- Disruption caused by humor and/or jokes that denigrate the teacher or fellow students.
- Implicit or explicit spoken or written threats to the teacher or fellow students.
- Nonconsensual grabbing, hitting of the teacher, or of fellow students in classes or conferences.

**Sexual harassment** has been defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as a form of sex discrimination. The University policy on sexual harassment states:

It is the policy of The University of Florida to provide an educational and working environment for its students, faculty and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. In accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment. Sex discrimination and sexual harassment will not be tolerated, and individuals who engage in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. The University encourages students, faculty, staff and visitors to promptly report sex discrimination and sexual harassment.

The definition of sexual harassment adopted by the University of Florida with regard to both employees and students, including GA-T (<https://hr.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ARTICLE-11.pdf>) includes: “unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when . . . such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or educational environment.” Any of the following may constitute sexual harassment:

- Suggestive or inappropriate written communications
- Suggestive or inappropriate photographs, videos, computer images, slides, graphics, cartoons or drawings
- Sexual innuendo or comments
- Comments about a person's clothing
- Whistling in a suggestive manner
- Humor or jokes about sex
- Sexual invitations, propositions, or pressure for sexual activity
- Implied or overt sexual threats
- Suggestive or obscene gestures
- Patting, pinching or other inappropriate touching or brushing against the body
- Implied or overt sexual threats
- Suggestive or obscene gestures
- Attempted or actual kissing or fondling
- Coerced sexual intercourse
- Sexual assault

HARASSMENT in the classroom context can happen in two different, albeit sometimes related ways: Disrupting the teaching context and sexual harassment of a teacher or student. The following policy is designed to minimize the difficulties dealing with such potential problems in your classroom. UF maintains a UF Student Conduct Code, which explains the scope and nature of violations, and spells out procedures and resolution options. Refer to <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/> for further information.

In general, harassment problems can be best addressed following these two principles:

1. Stop the harassment at the earliest possible time.
2. Resolve the harassment at the lowest possible, least formal level.

#### Steps to curtail, interrupt, halt and prosecute harassment

1. Upon identifying a potential harassment problem, the instructor should communicate disapproval and explanation to the student in conference, in writing, or both. In taking this action the instructor may benefit from advice from the Program Coordinators.
2. Document all instances of problems. Keep copies of written materials, maintain a dated journal of interactions, and have witnesses present at conferences. At any time in which sexual harassment of the instructor is involved, report the problem to Dr. Flanagan.
3. If the student continues to be disruptive, report the problem to the Dr. Wooten. If you feel threatened, do not hesitate to contact the University Police Department. If sexual harassment is involved, there are specific guidelines to be followed, including mandatory reporting of the problem to the Dean and the Office of Affirmative Action. If any danger seems likely, these officials shall immediately contact the appropriate Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Director of Student Judicial Affairs, in order to move the student into some other learning context in which the instructor is not endangered.

**Any suspected violations of the Student Honor Code (i.e., behavioral issues, academic dishonesty) should be reported to the Course Coordinator immediately in order to ensure proper procedures are followed.**

For more information on UF's policy on harassment, as well as online brochures, forms and training opportunities, please refer to UF's Human Resources Department (<http://hr.ufl.edu/>).

### 5.3 Limited teaching on Zoom

In the rare case an instructor is not able to go to campus but is able to teach (slight illness, traveling), the instructor may teach classes for one day during the semester via Zoom rather than ask a colleague to fill in to teach the class. The instructor must first consult Dr. Flanagan at least 72 hours in advance. Once Dr. Flanagan approves that class can be taught via Zoom, the instructor must notify students at least 24 hours in advance via the class listserv on ONE.UF and via a message to the section on Canvas to tell students that the class will be on Zoom on that specific day and to share the link (which should also be included in the instructor's module on Canvas). The instructor must also notify their course coordinator that the class will be taught on Zoom.

If the instructor cannot consult Dr. Flanagan and notify students and the course coordinator about teaching the class on Zoom at least 24 hours in advance, they must have a colleague fill in to teach for them.

### 5.4 Substitution Policy

You are expected to be present and teach your class every scheduled class meeting of the semester. However, it is understood that occasionally things happen to prevent this. The most important thing to remember is that, no matter what the circumstances, **classes must NEVER go untaught**.

In general, there are *three* and **only** three acceptable reasons for not teaching your class:

1. Personal or family emergency, including illness
2. Professional meeting or workshop attendance
3. Comprehensive or qualifying examination

In all cases, whether planned or spontaneous, instructors are responsible for finding a suitable substitute via the LDLP Sub List (filled out during the first week of classes each semester / requires login with UF credentials) and providing a detailed lesson plan and any supporting materials. In addition, the instructor must notify their level coordinator **AND** Dr. Flanagan of the following information: course and section number, meeting time/place, substitute, reason for absence, dates of absence. If the substitution is pre-rearranged, this information should be conveyed and approved at least *one week prior* to the absence. In the case of emergency, the information must be submitted as soon as possible.

## 6. CLASSROOM and PEDAGOGICAL INFORMATION

### 6.1. Class observations

**[Returners may be observed in the fall or the spring while new GTAs are formally observed in the Spring semester as described below.]**

You will be informally observed during the fall semester by Dr. Wooten, your Course Coordinator, and/or the Lead Instructor of your course. The informal observations are often short (20 minutes), and the observer will share what worked in the portion of the class they observed (BLESS) and 1-2 things you might do going forward to improve teaching (PRESS). Plan to briefly meet with the observer that day or within 3 days at the latest to have a short conversation about the informal observation and teaching in SPS in general.

You will then be formally observed by Course Coordinators, Dr. Flanagan, and/or Dr. Wooten once per year, though your Course Coordinator, Lead Instructor of the course, and/or Dr. Wooten may also observe your teaching informally to provide you feedback (especially those new to the department and/or new to teaching the level). The purpose of these evaluations is to help you continue to grow in to the best instructor you can be. Observations are part of the constant process of evolution and improvement that goes along with teaching in the classroom. It is often only through evaluation that as instructors we realize what our potential classroom weaknesses are. Further, you can take these opportunities to ask your coordinators for advice or feedback on particular areas. We urge you not to dread the observations but rather to look forward to them as a chance to show your strengths, to seek guidance on your weaknesses, to reflect on your own ongoing development as an instructor.

You will be notified of a two-week period in which you will be observed, but you will not be given the specific date of the visit. This is for three reasons: first, there are so many people to observe that it would be challenging to schedule everyone well in advance; second, we don't want you don't spend an inordinate amount of time worrying about one specific lesson plan; and third, the hope is that since it is (almost) impossible for you to stress out for two or three full weeks, the class that is ultimately observed will closely resemble a 'normal' class for you. In the long run, it is in your best interest to have a 'normal' class observed, so that you can get the most valuable feedback possible.

There are three primary documents associated with the observation process (see pages that follow), and these compose the official Observation packet:

- Pre-Observation form: You answer the questions on the Pre-Observation form and submit it prior to the visit so that your observer will be prepared before going to your class. Respect the deadline established by the observer when s/he contacts you about the observation process!
- Observation form: Review the Observation form here so that you know what will be assessed during the evaluation. The person who observes your class will complete the Observation form and review it with you.
- The Post-Observation form: About 24-48 hours after the observer has visited your class, complete the Post-Observation form to reflect on the experience and the specific class visit and to offer any additional insight. Submit the form to the observer.

After the class visit, your observer will provide you with feedback (the completed Observation form) and arrange for an in-person discussion of the evaluation (required). You will both sign the form after discussion. **The completed and signed form – along with the Pre-Observation form and Post-Observation form – will become part of your professional teaching file.** If for whatever reason you are dissatisfied with your observation, feel it does not reflect your classroom environment or feel you were unfairly evaluated, let Dr. Wooten know immediately.

## Lower Division Language Program: Pre-Observation Information

Please email this completed form to your observer at the start of the observation cycle (specific date provided by observer).

**Instructor:**

**Courses taught this semester:**

1. Tell me about your approach to second language teaching. What is your lesson planning process (including how you keep what will interest/be relevant to students in mind, incorporate authentic materials and tasks, vary the types of experiences students have, work towards the goals of Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities, etc.).

2. What do you see as your strengths as a Spanish/Portuguese educator? That is, what do you believe you do particularly well?

3. What specific pedagogical goal(s) are you working on this semester/year? What strategies have you used / are you using / will you use to meet your goal(s)? How will you know that you've met your goal(s)? How have you done in meeting your goal thus far?

4. Would you like specific feedback on any particular aspect of your class?

5. Is there anything else you would like me to know about your teaching / your classes / your students before my visit?

## Lower Division Language Program: Classroom Observation (adapted from [Teacher Effectiveness for Language Learning \(TELL\)](#))

Instructor:

Date:

Course/Section:

Room:

Number of students:

Observed by:

### Description of class organization / activities

TIME	ACTIVITY

### Class Evaluation

*Fully Observed (FO) = Ample evidence (YES!) / Partially Observed (PO) = Some evidence / Not Observed = No evidence*

Starting the lesson	FO/PO/NO
1. The instructor makes the purpose of the lesson clear to students. That is, students know what they will be able to do as a result of the lesson. (May be shared orally or posted in the classroom.)	
2. The instructor engages students in a warm-up activity that is related to and appropriate for the lesson.	
<b>Comments / feedback:</b>	

Classroom Communication	FO/PO/NO
3. At least 90% of what the instructor says and the materials the instructor shares with the students are in the target language.	
4. The instructor uses a variety of strategies (e.g., texts, visuals, gestures, concrete objects, hands-on experiences) to make language comprehensible to students throughout the lesson.	
5. The instructor clearly expects and encourages students to use the target language throughout the period (arrival to departure).	
6. The instructor frequently checks for student understanding throughout the lesson.	
<b>Comments / feedback:</b>	

<b>Learning Activities</b>	<b>FO/PO/NO</b>
7. The lesson is coherent (meaning that activities explicitly relate to and build on one another), and there may even be a specific context used throughout the lesson.	
8. Students are actively engaged in activities designed to help them meet the stated objectives of the lesson.	
9. There are a variety of activities in the lesson that allows students to interact with language and content in different ways (for example, with whom students interact - individual/pairs/groups/whole class; what they do – reading authentic texts / listening to or viewing authentic materials /writing /speaking /acting/drawing/etc.)	
10. Students are engaged in cooperative language tasks (i.e., pair and/or small group activities) that provide clear connections between language forms AND communicative functions of the target language.	
11. SPN 1130/1131/2200/2201: Activities help students work towards at least two 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Skills in addition to Communication (interpersonal, interpretive, presentational). SPN 2240: Activities help students work towards at least one “C” (Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities) in addition to Communication (interpersonal, interpretive, presentational).	
12. The instructor uses smooth and efficient transitions to facilitate learning throughout the class period.	
13. The instructor makes good use of instructional time.	
<b>Comments / feedback:</b>	

<b>Assessment and feedback</b>	<b>FO/PO/NO</b>
14. The instructor elicits and builds on students’ responses so that students can develop communicative proficiency and make connections between language functions and forms in specific contexts. That is, the instructor generally asks follow-up questions, asks students to expand on responses, encourages students to comment on another’s comment, etc. rather than only saying evaluative statements like “Good.”	
15. The instructor monitors student performance throughout the lesson (i.e., there are multiple forms of formative assessment) and provides students feedback (including error correction) effectively.	
<b>Comments / feedback:</b>	

<b>Learning environment</b>	<b>FO/PO/NO</b>
16. The instructor encourages a positive classroom community atmosphere by modeling respectful behavior (e.g., using positive words, looking students in the eye, listening actively) and demonstrates rapport with students.	
17. The instructor clearly expresses expectations (including when giving clear directions for class activities) and holds students accountable for following classroom procedures and staying on-task.	

**Comments / feedback:**

<b>Closing the lesson</b>	<b>FO/PO/NO</b>
18. The instructor returns students' attention to the targeted learning objective(s) to affirm what they can do now that they couldn't do at the beginning of the class and previews the next lesson.	
<b>Comments / feedback:</b>	

<b>Commendations</b> (What did the instructor do especially well?)	<b>Recommendations</b> (What can the instructor work to improve? How might s/he do so?)	<b>Next steps (complete with instructor).</b> (What will the instructor do to continue to progress as an educator? Goal / Steps and strategies / Measures)

**Based on this observation, the instructor's performance...**

<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Good work / On-target</b>	<b>Fine but area(s) for improvement</b>	<b>Remediation required</b>
<p>The instructor deftly and consistently employs best practices for teaching Spanish/Portuguese.</p> <p>The instructor's performance suggests that s/he is deserving of being nominated for a departmental/university teacher award.</p>	<p>The instructor generally employs best practices for teaching Spanish/Portuguese and is an effective educator.</p>	<p>The instructor uses some best practices for teaching Spanish/Portuguese but may do so inconsistently. The instructor will benefit from continuing to learn more about the art and science of teaching (please conference with Dr. Wooten).</p>	<p>The instructor struggles to employ best practices for teaching Spanish/Portuguese and is in need of professional development. Please see Dr. Wooten to create an action plan.</p>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Instructor signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Observer signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Lower Division Language Program: Post-Observation Form

Please email this completed form to your observer 24-48 hours after your class was observed.

**Name of Instructor:**

**Course/Section:**

**Date observed:**

**Observed by:**

1. What were the main objectives of your lesson? That is, what did you want students to be able to do as a result of the lesson?

2. Do you think learners met the objective(s) of the lesson? If so, what specific and observable evidence demonstrates they did?

3. What were the most effective parts of the lesson (review and self-evaluate the categories in the Observation form and note 1-2 where you did well)? Why?

4. What were the least effective parts (review and self-evaluate the categories in the Observation form and note 1-2 where you might improve)? Why?

5. Based on this lesson, how will you work to improve your teaching? That is, what is your goal (will you continue to work on your established goal and/or add a new goal)? What steps/strategies will help you meet your goal? How will you know you've met your goal (what does success look like)? *[This is a draft for the "Next steps" section of the Observation form, which you'll complete with your observer.]*

## 6.2. Materials creation

Part of your responsibility as an instructor is to assist in the creation of pedagogical and evaluative materials, in conjunction with your level coordinators and your fellow instructors, and to evaluate student performance on those assessments.

Your Course Coordinator will explain exactly how to administer and evaluate the assessments, but it's important that you understand what the assessments are like prior to begin planning lessons for a chapter.

Make sure to review to review the information for each assessment on the syllabus, read any students preparation documents in the Evaluaciones folder on Canvas, and see the assessments in Assignments on Canvas (*never* tell students what specific questions/texts/themes are on the assessments!). See the rubrics for assessments in the Rubrics tab on the menu on the left of your class's Canvas page.

**IMPORTANT: Instructors may NEVER share assessments – in whole or part – with students!**

**Students have specific information about the purpose, logistics, and preparation of all assessments via the syllabus, the documents in the “Evaluaciones” folder, and/or Canvas Announcements or Assignments.**

**After you have graded an assessment, you'll return it to students to review for a short period of time during class and/or in your office. You will not allow students to keep any part of an assessment; they will have access to the rubrics with your feedback on Canvas. You will securely store all assessments in your office.**

## 6.3. Final grades

**(Follow all end-of-semester procedures as outlined by Dr. Flanagan and Dr. Wooten)**

Final grades must be submitted on time, without exception! **Grades for Lower Division courses are due by 9:00 a.m. on the Monday after the last day of exams** (or the last day of class in summer sessions).

## 6.4. The Manual for Teaching in the Lower Division Language Program

Each semester, the LDLP team updates the Manual for Teaching in the Lower Division Language Program to include more specific details about the day-to-day activities in LDLP classes (including sending the Welcome email, evaluating Background forms, guiding and evaluating specific assignments and assessments, etc.).

**Read the Manual carefully when you receive it** – often about 7-10 days before classes start – and refer to it and this handbook before asking your Lead Instructor or Course Coordinator a question.

## 7. CONCLUSION

It is our sincere hope that you will find your teaching experience in our department to be exciting and rewarding.

Most of you will be combining your teaching duties with those pertaining to your graduate studies. Please keep in mind that the experience you gain from your work in our program will serve you well in your future endeavors after graduation. **Think of your teaching as a constant learning experience, and remember that the more you learn, the more you will be able to share with your future colleagues and students.** It can undoubtedly be a struggle to balance your graduate coursework with your classroom responsibilities, but the more experience you gain the easier this will be!

Please remember that we are here to answer any questions and offer any guidance we can. Also, don't hesitate to ask for advice or materials from the other instructors in our program – we are all stronger the more we help each other. We strongly encourage you all to take the time to observe other instructors – your coordinators and other peers. There is so much we can learn from each other, and seeing how others handle the same material is always illuminating. There will undoubtedly be issues or questions that arise that are not dealt with in this handbook, and in those cases it is always best to ask *first*, not after the fact.

Dr. Wooten teaches the FOL 6943: Teaching Methods class during select fall semesters, and all GTAs teaching in the Lower Division Language Program attend meetings with Dr. Wooten and/or course coordinators semester to progress as language educators through their work with department staff during their career here at UF. Dr. Wooten and Dr. Alvarez-Castro, along with Course Coordinators, consider it our responsibility to help each and every one of you adjust to your life as instructors and, in many cases, graduate students, and to help you be the best possible teachers you can be. We are always happy to discuss with you any specific aspects of your contribution to this program, your development as a language teacher, or your role in our program and/or our department. Our doors are always open to you!

We wish you the very best of luck with this and future semesters. May the new school year bring us all many rewarding experiences!



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Chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies



Jennifer Wooten  
Director of Language Instruction, Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies