ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING GRANT: SUMMARIES OF RESULTS  
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Description of the course embedded assessments used:

The student discussed in groups her/his analysis of how the assigned text related to the socio-historical and literary context. The students answered a series of guided questions in groups of four. These questions looked at one theme or motif in relation to the text and its context. Different questions were assigned for each group, so that and once they were discussed each group could share with the rest of the class. In order to assess their performance, the rubric on Appendix 1 was used.

Attached to this task, there was a series of formal assessment activities. They consisted in: a) identifying and defining certain authors, important works, themes, and placing them in the broader scope of the discipline; and b) writing a 150-200 words essay in the exam, in which they analyzed how one relevant text approaches a given topic, and/or comparing how two or three texts approach a same topic or theme in different manners. These were topics specifically discussed in class.

Also, there was formal assessment in the form of three exams along the semester, where the students were asked to identify specific writers, works, and literary movements within the area of study. This task amounted to 24% of each exam’s grade. Also they had to write a brief essay (250-300 words) answering one question of their choice (students were given three questions, to choose one) that asked them to analyze a specific motif or topic in the works, as well as to contrast them with other US Latino texts that had been discussed in the class. This amounted to 40% of the exam’s grade. In total, the formal assessment constituted 64% of each exam.

The student’s active participation in classroom discussions constituted 15% of the student’s final grade, while each of the written exams will make up 25% of the final grade, for a total of 75%.

Summary of the results:

At the beginning of the semester it was difficult for most students to identify themes, motifs and to draw from experience when approaching textual analysis. To alleviate this, a series of reading comprehension questions were created for the student to approach the themes and motifs on the texts. Once confidence was gained, critical analysis of texts improved dramatically. Students not only were able to identify and interpret key themes and motifs, but they were able to go beyond a literal reading of the text and, in many cases, perceive nuances hidden in the texts. The formal assessments of this task on exam 1 had an average of 82.8%; in exam 2 an average of 87.6%; and in exam 3 an average of 88.9%. In turn, this boosted student perception of class participation. The students rated their class participation an 89% at mid-semester and a 92.7% at the end.
Summary of the conclusions:

The activity directly addressed the expected outcome, since it helped students think both collaboratively and critically about the texts. The learning outcome was attained. Students, however, should be guided (comprehension questions) during the first weeks. As a bonus, this activity created genuine involvement with the texts, students started to create their own questions for the exams. This involvement in textual critical analysis also resulted in better levels of participation, as perceived by instructor and student.