

6-3-2020

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STARS Citation

Thompson, Brenda, "I'm in Paris Today Via an Online Course...Bonjour Mes Amis!" (2020). *UCF Forum*. 407.

<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/ucf-forum/407>

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I'm in Paris Today Via an Online Course...Bonjour Mes Amis!

By **Brenda S. Thompson**
UCF Forum columnist
Wednesday, June 3, 2020

For the next few months, my goal is to devote at least one hour a day online to learn more about the history of the city and continue my remote exploration.



(Photo by Anthony Delanoix at Unsplash)

For many years I've wanted to become a fluent speaker of the French language. While studying French in high school, I was intrigued with the culture of France, especially the cuisine and great works of art. As time passed, I often dreamt of visiting Paris someday.

After completing my doctoral program, I received a faculty appointment at a university in Florida. The position created wonderful opportunities for me in higher education. As I worked to earn tenure and promotion, my interest in international affairs was noticed by others and I was asked to participate in a meeting that ultimately landed me an international assignment. That assignment allowed me to take my first international trip to Europe, and while there I had the opportunity to visit the unbelievable City of Lights.

Over the years I've made several trips to Paris, and with each visit my love of the city deepened. I long to return to Paris to revisit the Louvre, Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, Versailles, Lafayette Square, the Paris Opera House, Moulin Rouge and other notable attractions, but this is not in the cards any time soon, given the current pandemic and its associated health risks.

I have chosen online platforms to accomplish my goals because I know that they can be very effective learning tools when developed properly and delivered using creative modalities.

In order to keep my memories of Paris alive and current, for the next few months I plan to immerse myself in studies of French language and culture via online courses and augment my studies with online language applications. My goal is to devote at least one hour each day to utilizing online platforms in order to learn more about the history of Paris and continue my remote exploration of the city.

I have chosen online platforms to accomplish my goals because I know that they can be very effective learning tools when developed properly and delivered using creative modalities. Most educational institutions have limited face-to-face course offerings these days. As a result, students have found that asynchronous, synchronous and hybrid course options promote effective learning because they are readily available, easy to use, convenient, flexible, encourage and promote diverse learning styles, and can be a lot of fun.

Several years ago I enrolled in an online foreign language course. It was a 16-week semester course that was offered in a six-week format. The course was very interesting and quite good. It included vocabulary and grammar drills, videos, essays, stories, music, pronunciation guides with feedback, practice drills, writing exercises, and written/verbal assignments. Although the pace was grueling, I learned a lot and retained much of what I learned. Below is an excerpt from one of my class projects. It describes my family.

“Je m'appelle Brenda Thompson. Je suis de nationalité américaine et un administrateur de la faculté de l'Université de la Floride Centrale. J'étudie français cet été et maintenant parle un peu de français. Je suis petite et actif. Je joue au tennis deux fois ou trois fois par semaine. Ma famille est très petit, avec huit personnes. Mon frère est Dean, ma soeur est Yvonne, mon beau-frère est Lee, mon fils est Harrison, et ma belle-fille est Darlene. Ma petite-fille est Gabrielle. Elle a douze ans. Mes parents, Evelyn et Ray travaillent dans des écoles. J'ai une famille heureuse. Mes voisins sont vieux, mais sont agréables aussi.”

The above passage is elementary, for sure; however, it represents a joyful accomplishment for me that was facilitated via online instruction.

Online instruction can work for all ages, but it is not without challenges. With persistence and guidance, one can acquire the skills needed in order to master this learning style.

Do you have what it takes to be an online learner? Of course, you do! Enroll in one and see how you, too, can explore new venues, learn about different people and their cultures, and acquire appreciations for their contributions to society, all with just the click of a mouse.

That's what I did...and now, back to my tour!

À Bientôt!

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