Hello I’m Eric Nelson from the history department. Universal Design is an exciting moment as technology opens up a number of new possibilities. By adopting universal design principles, you give your students the flexibilities to explore material a number of different ways.

In terms of UD one of the critical changes I made to my class was to give my students choices in which assignments they completed. In doing so I tried to give them a mix of assignments; some that required looking at visual evidence, others written evidence. My hope was that a student with a visual or audio impairment would find the assignment within the group that they could complete without the need for special accommodations. What I discovered is that it benefited the whole class. Many students enjoyed the choices that they had to offer, and when they came to class they had different experiences which they could share.

In terms of UD, one critical change I made to my class was to simplify my blackboard site. I use as few buttons as possible. I also use the same format each week so the structure looks the same. Finally, I included checklist each so that students could work through the material in the order that I want them to. I originally did this to help the visually impaired, because it makes it easier to follow through a simple blackboard site, rather than a complex one. However, I have also noticed that my other students have benefited from this as well, as I receive far fewer questions about how the blackboard site works.

As far as the future of UD, for my course I am focused on embedded lectures within my online textbook. What I wanted was short, three to five minutes statements positioned right as the student reaches material I would like to discuss. These lectures have a number of advantages: 1) a student can watch it as many times as they would like. 2) I can include closed captioning and a transcript to further understanding. What I like about these lectures is that they free up class time for more discussion and creative reasoning.

Hello, I’m Eric Nelson from the History Department. For me Course Redesign is all about better prepared students in the classroom. I leverage their outside class activities to create a more dynamic classroom experience.

In terms of CR, one of the courses I spent most of my time on was History 104, a general education course. Here, I have large groups of mixed abilities students inform me what I needed from them before they came into the classroom was not only to have read the textbook, but to digest it and to think about it. To encourage this sort of deeper learning, I set up this series of assessments that needed to be completed before they came to class. These were mastery assessment options. They could retake them as many times as they wanted, allowing mixed ability students to succeed at their own pace.

In terms of my students experience with CR, perhaps the most popular feature was the journal entry. After they completed the readings and all of their assessments each week, I required them to write me a short journal entry telling me what questions they still may have, what they found interesting, or how this fits in to things they learned in other classes. This requires a direct, real-time piece of feedback for me, and direct line of communication each between the students of large classes and myself. I use these
journal entries to design the live class meeting each week, building up on what they’re interested in and what their needs are.

In terms of the future of CR, I am currently experimenting with hybrid discussion groups. These discussions begin online in groups of 8 students. Here, they can discover what others though, and also digest their own thoughts about a topic. They then come to class where we complete the discussion as a large group live. These discussions have a number of advantages. First, all of the students have already expressed their opinions, and me, as the teacher, can read them ahead of time. These allow me to draw quieter students into the conversation. It also allows me to ask groups who came to different conclusions to explain their thought processes to each other.