Why Aprendo?

In this course, we will be using an online platform called Aprendo. This same platform is implemented in SPA 101, 102, 103 and 107 at Princeton University. Aprendo contains all the information that you will need to prepare yourself each day for class. There are vocabulary lists and vocabulary activities, grammar explanations and activities, and a series of integrated skills activities where you must put your vocabulary and grammar knowledge into action. This platform is created specifically by Princeton professors for Princeton students, and is not available at other universities. In this handout, you will first learn how languages are learned, and will then explore why Aprendo is used to facilitate your acquisition of Spanish at Princeton University.

How are languages learned?
Languages are learned through exposure to the language. In technical terms, this exposure is called *input*, which can be defined as language that a learner hears or sees that is comprehensible and carries some type of meaning. Listening to the radio, reading a magazine or even listening to your instructor are all types of *input*. Of course, languages are not only receptive in nature, they are also productive. Language learners also create *output*, which can be defined as spoken or written language that conveys a message. Writing an email, talking to a friend or classmate in Spanish and singing a song in Spanish to yourself are all examples of *output*. Language learners should be provided with *input* before they are expected to produce *output*. For example, you should see and hear words in context before you are expected to produce them. Likewise, you should see grammatical structures in context before you are expected to produce them yourself. Aprendo helps make meeting this goal a possibility. We’ll explain why below.

How is Aprendo integrated into this course?
The classes that use Aprendo follow a flipped classroom model. In flipped classes, the presentation of material occurs before class, on the Aprendo platform. This means that before you come to class each day, you will study the vocabulary words you need to know, read the grammar explanations and complete any assigned exercises. That way, when you get to class, you will already be familiar with the words and structures and can use them to talk to your teacher and your classmates. Remember that description of *input* and *output*? The language *input* is provided in Aprendo through listening activities, readings, videos, etc. That way, you come to class prepared to produce *output* and interact with your classmates and teachers in Spanish¹. Therefore, you should think of your Aprendo activities as required preparation for your Spanish class time. Each class session begins when you start the Aprendo activities for the day, and ends at the end of class time.

How does Aprendo promote language acquisition?
Aprendo promotes language acquisition in the following ways:

➔ **Aprendo provides you with input.** Aprendo provides you with a lot of input through the activities you complete at home. That way, more class time can be used to produce output and interact with others. You will notice that the input in Aprendo will be varied: you will read

¹ For a more in-depth description of why language instructors would implement a flipped language classroom model to teach languages, check out this article.
different types of texts, watch videos, listen to songs, podcasts, news broadcasts, etc. This will make you familiar with different accents, dialectal differences, different registers, etc.

➔ **Aprendo provides many opportunities for vocabulary acquisition.** Vocabulary is the building blocks of language. After all, without vocabulary, it is very difficult to communicate! *Aprendo* promotes vocabulary acquisition by providing you with a clear list of vocabulary that you need to know, and then by putting that vocabulary in context in reading and listening activities. *Aprendo* also promotes incidental vocabulary acquisition by giving you tons of input: you will find that you will naturally “pick up” words while completing activities in *Aprendo*. Finally, *Aprendo’s* integration with technology allows us to use tools to help you learn vocabulary. You will notice that *Aprendo* contains vocabulary flashcards as well as links to either google images or a dictionary to help you with words that may be unknown to you.

➔ **Aprendo promotes independence in language learning.** Learning a language is a life-long journey, but the time you will be enrolled in our language classes is finite. By putting you in charge of your language learning now, we hope to foster independence in language learning once you leave our class.

Why does Princeton use *Aprendo* and not a traditional textbook?

➔ **Aprendo is better for language acquisition.** *Aprendo* can provide more varied input than a language textbook. Its integration with technology also means that you can receive more auditory input through videos and listening activities in *Aprendo*, something which is difficult to get with a traditional textbook.

➔ **Aprendo is personalized.** *Aprendo* is created specifically for Princeton students by Princeton professors, which makes the activities highly personalized and relevant.

➔ **Aprendo is updated continually.** Unlike language textbooks with are only updated every few years, *Aprendo* can be updated at a moment’s notice. If you see any problems with *Aprendo*, be sure to tell your instructor so that they can be fixed.

➔ **Aprendo is a flexible platform.** Aprendo is flexible not only for the course coordinators, but also for you. *Aprendo* affords you the flexibility to interact with the language as much as you like. You can always reread texts, watch videos again, listen to audio activities again, complete unassigned activities and/or explore related topics online through the links we provide. Unlike a textbook, *Aprendo* is designed to be an inexhaustible resource for students. You will get out of it as much time and effort as you put in!

➔ **Aprendo is free.** Students at other universities often end up paying a lot of money for a Spanish textbook. *Aprendo* is provided to you at no cost.

Do you still have questions about *Aprendo*?
Not a problem! Be sure to talk to your instructor or course coordinator about *Aprendo* so that they can clear up any doubts or questions you may have.