In this talk I discuss the challenges involved in designing content-based curricula for foreign language courses. I will illustrate the main concepts by focusing on the example of a first-year Spanish course developed for The Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS), whose Language Studies division follows an exclusively content-based model of instruction. Though I will be speaking about a strict interpretation of content-based instruction (where only authentic target language materials are used), the information presented will be easily applicable to any foreign language learning context where the instructor seeks to incorporate authentic content as part of the curriculum.

In order to plan effectively for a content-based course, it is important to establish and clarify early on a set of guidelines for how the curriculum should be structured. I argue that an understanding of language as expressed through the perspectives of constructivism and connectionism not only lends support to the validity of content-based methodology but also can provide clear directives for the kinds of activities instructors can use to engage students.