

Cast Your Students as Scholars

Term Length Course

Updated 6/7/19

In a previous position at Mary Baldwin University, I had the opportunity to teach Information Literacy to first year undergraduate students via a credit bearing course. I used the Cast Your Students as Scholars lesson plan as a thematic, overarching assignment for this course.

Time: Multiple 50 min sessions

Audience: Primarily first year undergraduate students

Materials:

Required:

- Computers for research
- Blackboard Discussion Board for Digital Artifact Submission Google Doc / Blackboard Discussion Board combo to allowing students to choose topics
- Explanatory Documentation (see Assignment Description Document)

Artifact

I assigned the Artifact assignment during the first week of the term. I asked students to write 500 words about something they knew and how they knew it. This could be something they had experienced, or something they had learned about. Students submitted this assignment to a Blackboard Discussion board set up for this purpose. Students then had a week or so to consider other student's artifacts, and choose one to research for their course project. Students were not always happy with their chosen artifact. I used this as an opportunity to talk with students about the direction of their research. Students needed to connect their research to their chosen artifact in some way, but they were encouraged to choose a direction that interested them. There were many questions about which artifacts were still available and I used a Google Sheet to help facilitate this process. I wrote an example artifact to help students who might be unclear about the expectations of the assignment.

Searching

Students searched on their topics over a few weeks of classes. We learned about the library discovery service, databases, keyword and advanced searches, citation and intellectual property. Through these discussions, we referenced their topics and research, using sources they found as examples. Students were searching for sources to use for their final project in the class, which required them to find a variety of sources and use them to present what they learned.

Information Literacy Concepts

- Defines Information Need (ACRL, SCOUNL 1&2, ANZIL 1)
- Finds Information (ACRL 2, SCOUNL 3&4, ANZIL 2&4, ANZIL 5)
- Searching as Strategic Exploration (Frame 6)

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to recognize common library database features and how those features affect their search results.
- Students will be familiar with library resources in the topic area of their research.
- Students will be able to determine the initial scope of their assignment or project and modify or adjust their topic to match the demands of their assignment.
- Students will be able to identify the key terms from their research problem or topic.
- Students will be able to use divergent and convergent thinking when searching.
- Students will be able to match search strategies or tools to their information need.

- Students will understand that research is “a process that focuses on problems or questions in a discipline or between disciplines that are open or unresolved.”
- Students will understand that searching is complex, contextual, iterative and strategic.

- Students will value appropriate help, librarians as guide.
- Students will value mental flexibility.

Authority

During the class meeting where we talk about source evaluation, in conjunction with a broader activity on source evaluation (A modified version of Benjes-Small's [Evaluating news sites: Credible or Clickbait?](#)) we discuss authority and explore what that means in relation to the artifacts they wrote and chose. I asked students: How does the artifact written by their peer contribute to their knowledge and fit into the conversation around this topic? What kind of information does it include? When would this be good information to have? When would we want scholarly sources? What kind of authority does their peer have on this topic? Do the other sources they found agree with the artifact? What do you do when you find two sources that disagree?

Information Literacy Concepts

- Evaluates (ACRL 3, SCONUL 5, ANZIL 3, ANCIL 4)
- Authority is Constructed / Contextual (Frame 1)

Learning Objectives

- Students will “develop awareness of the importance of assessing content with a skeptical stance and with a self-awareness of their own biases and worldview.”
- Students will “question traditional notions of granting authority and recognize the value of diverse ideas and worldviews.”

Peer Review / Scholarship as a Conversation

Students presented what they learned by submitting their final projects for the class. Projects were required to include ethically sourced images, a variety of sources, and a design component. The instructions prioritized information sharing and appropriate citation over following the rules of a formal paper.

After students submitted their projects, they were instructed to review the submitted project of the peer who choose their artifact. To accomplish this, students submitted their projects for grading to an assignment drop box and to the discussion board.

Students had time in class to look at their peer's artifact, and we discussed what students learned from their peers. One student wrote about the culture of Turkey where she grew up. The student who choose her artifact to research presented her research on a specific aspect of Turkish culture, drinking coffee. The student who wrote the original artifact reviewed the presented research. It was a great interaction to watch. The students disagreed on one aspect of coffee consumption- and it opened a great conversation about how experiences can differ.

We then reviewed the assignment, and reflected on how the process of the assignment was similar to the scholarly information production process.

Information Literacy Concepts

- Uses Information (ACRL 4, SCOUNL 7, ANZIL 5, ANCIL 8&9)
- Scholarship as Conversation (Frame 5)

Possible Learning Objectives

- Students will "see themselves as contributors to scholarship rather than only consumers of it."
- Students will "recognize they are often entering into an ongoing scholarly conversation and not a finished conversation"
- Students will "recognize that systems privilege authorities and that not having a fluency in the language and process of a discipline disempowers their ability to participate and engage."

Quoted language from learning objectives comes from the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.

Association of College and Research Libraries. "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education." *Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL)*, 9 Feb. 2015, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.