

First Year Course Programmatic Assessment

Final Essay Information Literacy Analysis

Washington State University recently launched a new general education system with a foundational first year course called *Roots of Contemporary Issues*. *Roots* features a set of library research assignments and a culminating final essay, jointly developed and maintained by *Roots* instructors and librarians. A group of *Roots* instructors and a WSU librarian conducted a study to assess the achievement of the information literacy, and critical and creative thinking student learning outcomes associated with the research project. The group found that students were proficient at the first year level in terms of utilizing scholarly materials and source attribution. The students were less successful concerning argument building and source analysis; they struggled most with thesis development. Adjustments to the assignments were made in light of these results and the findings contributed to the larger university-wide assessment program.

In 2009, Washington State University (WSU) began planning for a complete overhaul of its general education system. One central component of the project was deciding what to do with World Civilizations, a two course series, required for all undergraduates. After years of development, the new UCORE (University Common Requirements) system was

launched (fall 2012), with *Roots of Contemporary Issues* (History 105 or “*Roots*”) having replaced World Civilizations as the foundational, required undergraduate course. All UCORE courses focus on at least one of seven overarching learning goals and outcomes.¹ History 105 addresses five of these goals: diversity, critical and creative thinking (CCT), information literacy (IL), communication, and depth, breadth, and integration of learning.

Roots is taught by history department faculty and its basic framework includes five themes: Humans and the Environment; Our Shrinking World; Inequality; Diverse Ways of Thinking; and The *Roots of Contemporary Conflicts*. Each term, one of many possible issues is selected for each theme. The curriculum for a theme typically consists of all, if not nearly, all of the following components: a short background lecture about the issue, a series of short readings, in class and online student discussion about the issue/readings, a short quiz about the facts surrounding the issue, and a short written response essay (see online appendix A for the *Roots* Master Syllabus).

In addition to the theme-specific parts of the course, there is a term-length research project, which

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constitutes 20 percent of the course grade for students in most sections. The project is broken into four Library Research Assignments (LRAs) and culminates in a final written paper/essay. Across the four LRAs, students are asked to go through a progression from general topic idea to research questions to thesis statement, find sources of particular formats (e.g., books, newspaper articles), write about how those sources help answer the students' research questions and/or inform the students' theses, and cite all materials in Chicago Style. More specifically, students must find a contemporary newspaper article and encyclopedia entry on their topic (LRA I), two books addressing the historical roots of their topic (LRA II and IV), an article from a scholarly history journal, and a documentary (e.g., historical newspaper article) or non-documentary (e.g., speech, letter, diary, interview) primary source (LRA III). LRA IV also requires students to submit an outline of their essay, a bibliography of their collected sources, and demonstrate they know how to use footnotes in Chicago citation style. The final essay is five to seven pages in length and must include a minimum of six sources (see online appendix B for the Final Essay Instructions).

The creation and delivery of the LRAs/final essay is a joint venture of the Roots Program and Library Instruction team. During fall term 2011, a Roots instructor and an instruction librarian wrote the rough drafts of the LRAs and final essay guidelines. In spring and summer of 2012, the research project components were piloted in five sections of the soon-to-be-retired World Civilizations courses, for a total of about 600 students. All Roots instructors and public services librarians were afforded opportunities to comment on the materials, and the Library Instruction Team created a set of online tutorials to help aid student success with the LRAs.² The 2012–13 academic year was the first for the Roots of Contemporary Issues program. It included 59 sections of History 105 at four campuses (main campus, two regionals, and one fully online). The total number of students was about 3,500. In the second academic year (2013–14), the number of section offerings and student participants was relatively the same. This paper focuses on a UCORE/Roots/Libraries student learning outcomes assessment project conducted during the summer of 2013, and utilizing History 105 student course work from the 2012–13 academic year.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature surrounding librarian involvement in assessment of learning outcomes reflects the wide variety of ways libraries and librarians assess their information literacy instruction, and how the gathered information is used. While many librarians continue to work with individual instructors or single course sections to teach and assess information literacy, there is an increasing need for librarians to become involved in wider campus assessment initiatives to advocate for information literacy outcomes, and to partner

with faculty and administrators in incorporating them into curriculum. Reaching out to larger campus constituencies requires careful planning on the part of librarians, support from administration and teaching faculty, and consideration of how best to provide instruction and assessment to a greater number of students than ever before.

The assessment of student learning outcomes is becoming a focus in higher education and for academic librarians. Stakeholders and administrators are increasingly calling for measurement of student learning and success. Lakos and Phipps discuss this growing trend, noting that accreditation agencies are “emphasizing student learning outcomes and using assessment as a mean for improvement of teaching and learning.”³ In a current university culture of decreasing or plateauing budgets, it is imperative for libraries to be able to demonstrate their value and contribution to student learning. According to Oakleaf and Kaske, accrediting bodies are increasingly acknowledging “the importance of information literacy skills, and most accreditation standards have strengthened their emphasis on the teaching roles of librarians.”⁴ Oakleaf and Kaske also stress the importance of librarians choosing assessments that can contribute to university-wide assessment and accreditation efforts, noting that they are preferable to assessments that only benefit libraries.⁵

To implement meaningful assessment that will inform larger campus missions, the literature establishes that collaboration with both teaching faculty and department or program administrators is vital. Sommerville, et.al., posit collaboration between invested stakeholders and administrators “will advance the likelihood of campus consideration of large-scale assessment results.”⁶ Additionally, Bridgland and Whitehead found that teaching faculty responded better to assessment efforts when they were approached directly by librarians with whom they already had a working relationship.⁷ They theorize that advocating for library assessment to both administrators and teaching faculty was necessary, arguing that “although the organization provides a framework, it is through more subtle connections with individuals that successful collaboration and knowledge building occurs.”⁸ An additional study by Ziegenfuss and Borrelli had similar findings: developing partnerships with both teaching faculty and campus stakeholders contributed to successful assessment.⁹

Furthermore, the importance of closely partnering with teaching faculty to develop and deliver information literacy instruction that has been designed for a specific course is well-documented. Dorner, Taylor and Hodson-Carlton found that using course-specific modules was more useful for students than previous forms of instruction that had not carefully linked the library instruction to their course curriculum.¹⁰ Stagg and Kimmins also found this to be true, judging that having short, chunked information that is responsive to student needs has the advantage of offering contextualized support for student learning.¹¹

While much of the literature agrees on the need to implement assessment measures that contribute to campus-wide

initiatives, and that success depends upon collaborating with both administrators and teaching faculty, there are only a small number of examples in the literature of libraries contributing to campus-wide assessment initiatives. Additionally, studies that focus on formative assessment of a large population of students are largely absent from the literature. Most prevalent are studies that use direct assessment measures such as rubrics and portfolios to examine a small sample of student work, such as those done by Belanger et al., Sharma, and Blake and Warner.¹²

In addition to small assessment studies, there are examples of larger scale assessment projects, such as that undertaken in the California State University system by Dunn and Sommerville, et al., that only use indirect learning measures such as surveys and focus groups.¹³ This gap in the literature has been noted by others as well. Oakleaf comments “most of the published evidence of the impact of libraries on student learning is sporadic, disconnected, and focused on limited case studies.”¹⁴ Scharf et al. also found a scarcity of examples of large-scale, direct measures assessments, stating, “While most academic libraries provide some form of library instruction, quantitative assessment studies thus far have been relatively rare. Authentic assessment of student performance has been even rarer.”¹⁵

Scharf et al. is one of the few studies where a large population of students was assessed for information literacy skills using direct learning measures. The study evaluated 100 portfolios of seniors in a required capstone course, finding that students were better able to find and cite sources than to judge the relevance and authority of those sources. Students also struggled to use the information they gathered from their sources to support their own views.¹⁶ In the Scharf, et al., study, the assessment plan was developed around the general university requirements and findings have contributed, or are expected to contribute, to curriculum changes and development in other areas.¹⁷ One limitation of the assessment is that the course through which the assessment was done had not engaged in any type of information literacy instruction involving librarians.

As assessment of student learning outcomes continues to be a growing focus for institutions of higher education, librarians will be integral to the assessment of information literacy among college students. To be successful, the literature shows, librarians must build strong collaborative relationships among teaching faculty and university administrators, and be active participants in design and assessment of learning goals, outcomes, and curriculum.

METHODS

The assessment project was led by the library liaison to the Roots program and the Roots director. These two principle investigators were joined by six other Roots instructors, all of whom were paid to participate in the study through a university undergraduate teaching and learning grant. After

institutional review board approval was secured, a spreadsheet of the population of Roots students from academic year 2012–13 (about 3,500 students) was created by harvesting class rosters from the local learning management system. All students were assigned accession numbers, then 400 were randomly selected, 200 from fall term 2012 and 200 from spring 2013. A total of about 275 final essays needed to be examined to ensure our sample size produced a confidence level of 95 percent and a confidence interval of 5–6.¹⁸ The extra cases were harvested in the event that selected students did not have a final essay. It is important to note weighed sampling for the small minority regional campus and online groups was not done. As such, sample sizes for comparisons of student performance by campus were inadequate for statistical analysis. The 400 anonymous cases were divided into eight 50 case sets and assigned to each of the reviewers in a common electronic space, where they were evaluated with a common rubric. Each case set included two identical essays, so the researchers could check for inter-rater reliability.

The assessment rubric utilized for the project was drafted by mapping Roots research assignment goals to both course level and UCORE (university level) IL and CCT learning outcomes (appendix C). In addition, the Roots librarian also consulted a few final essay grading rubrics previously developed by Roots instructors and the AAC&U value rubrics.¹⁹ The rubric took its final shape during a two-hour norming session where raters individually examined two student essays, and mutually discussed scoring rationales and ideals.

In its final format the rubric addressed eight student learning outcomes: (1) constructed a thesis that articulated a historical argument (Thesis Development), (2) evaluated and selected multiple primary and secondary sources appropriate to a research paper (Source Quantity), (3) critically evaluated the nature of those sources (Source Analysis), (4) used those sources in a way that suggests they understood the relationship between the nature of the source and the kinds of conclusions they could draw from it (Nature of Sources), (5) identified the historical roots of their contemporary issue (Historical Roots), (6) used evidence necessary to construct an argument (Argument Building), (7) produced a complete and properly cited bibliography (Bibliography), and (8) used a citation system (in this case, Chicago 16th Notes/Bibliography) that suggests they ethically, legally, and accurately referenced their evidence (Footnotes/Citation). The rubric featured five levels of achievement. The first three represented the first year of the undergraduate experience: Emerging First Year Level, Developing First Year Level, and Proficient First Year Level. The final two denoted the rest of the undergraduate experience: Middle of Undergraduate Experience and End of Undergraduate Experience (appendix C). Overall, 275 randomly selected History 105 final research papers were analyzed with each paper rated on a scale of 1–5, where 5 indicated the most success in an area, for eight separate CCT and IL learning outcomes.

Means of student performance were compared by term, as well as across learning outcomes. To explore the influence

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Table 1. Independent-Samples t-Tests, Comparing Learning Outcomes by Academic Term

Category	Term	N	Mean	SD	t	df	sig. (2 tailed) p
Thesis Development	fall	162	2.148	0.934			
	spring	113	2.425	0.914	-2.438	273	p < 0.050
Source Quantity	fall	162	4.593	0.981			
	spring	113	4.602	0.891	-0.790	273	p = 0.937
Nature of Sources	fall	162	3.302	1.092	0.693	273	p = 0.489
	spring	113	3.212	1.012			
Source Analysis	fall	162	2.562	1.039			
	spring	113	2.673	0.967	-0.895	273	p = 0.372
Historical Roots	fall	162	2.426	0.944			
	spring	113	2.761	1.037	-2.780	273	p < 0.050
Argument Building	fall	162	2.623	0.870			
	spring	113	2.770	0.896	-1.356	273	p = 0.176
Bibliography	fall	162	3.167	0.947	-1.543	273	p = 0.124
	spring	113	3.336	0.819			
Footnotes / Citation	fall	162	2.691	1.076			
	spring	113	3.106	1.063	-3.159	273	p < 0.050

Levene's = Levene's Test for equality of variance (sig.)

of the academic term on student performance, student scores were compared between fall 2012 and spring 2013 relative to each of the eight learning outcomes using independent samples t-tests. Student scores relative to each learning outcome were compared using dependent samples t-tests. Independent samples t-test and dependent samples t-tests were performed using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS V. 22).²⁰

RESULTS

Independent-samples t-tests

For six of the eight outcome areas (Nature of Sources (M = 3.265), Source Analysis (M = 2.607), Historical Roots (M = 2.564), Argument Building (M = 2.684), Bibliography (M = 3.326) and Footnotes/Citation (M = 2.862)) students performed at the "Proficient First Year" level. Concerning the Thesis Development outcome (M = 2.262), students performed at the "Developing First Year" level, the middle of the three first year categories. For the outcome Source Quantity (M = 4.602), the students scored at the "End of Undergraduate Experience" level. There were observable mean average trends in the results by campus, and for seven of the eight outcomes, students achieved higher mean averages during spring 2013 compared to the fall 2012 term.

Differences in student scores relative to each learning outcome between fall 2012 and spring 2013 were analyzed using independent samples t-tests. Source Quantity was determined to be a criterion rather than an outcome, and was

not included in statistical analyses. Before conducting the analyses, the assumption of equal variance was examined for each learning outcome. The assumption was considered satisfied, as the significance for Levene's Test for Equality of Variances for each learning outcome was found to be greater than 0.05. No significant differences were found in student scores for the learning outcomes of: Nature of Sources, Source Analysis, Argument Building and Bibliography (table 1). A difference in student score based on academic term was significant though for the learning outcomes of Thesis Development, Argument Building and Footnotes / Citation (table 1). The average student score on each of these three learning outcomes was significantly higher in spring 2013 than in fall 2012.

Dependent-samples t-tests

Differences in student scores between each learning outcome are demonstrated in table 2. The learning outcome with the lowest mean, Thesis Development (M = 2.262) was significantly lower than all other learning outcomes. Historical Roots, the learning outcome with the second lowest mean (M = 2.564) was significantly lower than all learning outcomes other than Thesis Development. Source Analysis, had the third lowest mean (M = 2.607) and was significantly lower than Nature of Sources, Footnotes / Citation and Bibliography. The mean for Source Analysis was significantly higher than that of Thesis Development. No difference was found between Source Analysis and Historical Roots or Argument Building. Argument Building had the fourth highest mean

($M = 2.684$), and student scores were significantly higher than both Thesis Development and Historical Roots. The mean for Argument Building was significantly lower than the mean of Nature of Sources, Bibliography, and Footnotes/Citation. No difference was found between Argument Building and Source Analysis.

Footnotes / Citation had the third highest mean ($M = 2.862$), and student scores were significantly higher than those of Thesis Development, Source Analysis, Historical Roots, and Argument Building. The mean for Footnotes/Citation was significantly lower than Nature of Sources as well as Bibliography. Nature of Sources had the second highest mean ($M = 3.265$), which was significantly higher than the mean of Thesis Development, Historical Roots, Source Analysis, Argument Building, and Footnotes/Citation. No significant difference was found when compared to Bibliography. Bibliography had the highest mean score ($M = 3.326$) and was found to be significantly higher than Thesis Development, Historical Roots, Source Analysis, Argument Building, and Footnotes / Citation. No significant difference was found when comparing with Nature of Sources (table 2). Mean differences were found between all comparisons of learning outcomes other than Nature of Sources and Bibliography, Source Analysis and Historical Roots, and Source Analysis and Argument Building, which were determined to not be different.

DISCUSSION

Results of independent sample t-tests comparing means for each learning outcome by academic term show that students performed significantly better in the spring semester across some but not all learning outcomes than in fall. The learning outcomes of Nature of Sources, Source Analysis, Argument Building, and Bibliography when compared between semesters, were not found to be significantly different. As Roots is a 100 level course, this finding suggests that while students taking Roots in the spring term may have had more experience in higher education and writing research papers, that experience alone is insufficient for expecting stronger performance across all learning outcomes.

As evidenced by the dependent samples t-tests, students performed best in the areas of Source Quantity, Nature of Sources, Bibliography, and Footnotes/Citation. Source Quantity scores were very high because the outcome was a simple measure of the number of sources used in the paper (appendix C). The top achievement levels in the rubric matched what most instructors assigned as a minimum number of the sources needed for the paper. In other words, to score a five on the Source Quantity outcome, students needed to find the instructor's minimum number of sources for the paper. Also, students needed to write about and engage with sources they gathered in the four LRAs, consequently these sources appear in the final essays, and thus the source quantity is satisfied. It is positive to see that students met

what the researchers believe to be a standard undergraduate expectation of having roughly one source per written page of a research paper. The students also did well concerning the Nature of Sources outcome as they utilized scholarly materials (little selection of unvetted materials or sources lacking citation) in their work, and included a good blend of primary and secondary sources. In the final essays, students used the sources they engaged with in the LRAs, so blending of scholarly sources progressed naturally from the assignment sequence.

Source attribution, both in terms of final bibliographies and internal footnotes and citations, was a strength of the students in their final essays relative to most of the other learning outcomes. This occurred primarily because the students practiced citing each source, using in-text citations and a preliminary bibliography, across the four LRAs while getting instructor and/or TA feedback during each stage. In both the areas of finding the right quantity and quality of sources and attributing them correctly, the LRAs offered deep and paced work with sources that were helpful in students' writing.

Students performed least well in the areas of Historical Roots, Argument Building, and Source Analysis; and worst concerning Thesis Development as evident in the results of the dependent samples t-tests. Although, it should also be noted that in all eight outcome areas, the students performed at minimum as "proficient for a first year student level" based on the rounded mean average scores of this study.

There are a variety of potential reasons for lower scores in these categories; modifications to the curriculum were instituted for the second year of the program to address areas of deficit. The challenge of understanding the historical roots of contemporary issues is at the heart of the course, and is stressed in the LRAs and final essay, so lower achievement in this area was disconcerting, although not altogether surprising. From the launch of the program, resource requirements within the LRAs, such as needing to find a pre-1950 primary source, and a final essay prompt reading, "The body of your paper should clearly identify the historical roots of your contemporary issue through time and across space," has aided students in focusing on the historical roots of their topics (see appendix B). The findings of this study served as a catalyst for greater concentration on the historical roots of students' topics. The most central change was instead of asking students to provide short sets of summary statements in the LRAs for the various sources they found (e.g., books, reference entries, scholarly articles), students were more specifically asked to describe pertinent facts that would help them better understand the historical nature or dimensions of their topics.

The last two outcomes presenting students with the greatest difficulty were Source Analysis and Thesis Development. The former asks students to understand the relationship between the nature of their sources and the conclusions that can be drawn from them. The LRAs contain many short lessons about primary, secondary, and tertiary sources that

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Table 2. Paired-Samples t-Test, Learning Outcome Comparison

LO	LO	Mean	SD	t	df	sig. (2-tailed) p
Thesis Development		2.262	0.934			
	Source Quantity	4.596	0.944	-31.373	274	p < 0.001
	Nature of Sources	3.265	1.060	-14.420	274	p < 0.001
	Source Analysis	2.607	1.010	-5.625	274	p < 0.001
	Historical Roots	2.564	0.996	-5.304	274	p < 0.001
	Argument Building	2.684	0.883	-7.788	274	p < 0.001
	Bibliography	3.236	0.899	-15.223	274	p < 0.001
	Footnotes / Citations	2.862	1.089	-8.114	274	p < 0.001
Source Quantity		4.596	0.944			
	Nature of Sources	3.265	1.060	19.615	274	p < 0.001
	Source Analysis	2.607	1.010	28.425	274	p < 0.001
	Historical Roots	2.564	0.996	27.944	274	p < 0.001
	Argument Building	2.684	0.883	29.173	274	p < 0.001
	Bibliography	3.236	0.899	20.447	274	p < 0.001
	Footnotes / Citations	2.862	1.089	24.833	274	p < 0.001
Nature of Sources		3.265	1.060			
	Source Analysis	2.607	1.010	10.102	274	p < 0.001
	Historical Roots	2.564	0.996	10.394	274	p < 0.001
	Argument Building	2.684	0.883	9.269	274	p < 0.001
	Bibliography	3.236	0.889	0.460	274	p = 0.646
	Footnotes / Citations	2.862	1.089	5.712	274	p < 0.001
Source Analysis		2.607	1.010			
	Historical Roots	2.564	0.996	0.706	274	p = 0.481
	Argument Building	2.684	0.883	-1.422	274	p = 0.156
	Bibliography	3.236	0.899	-10.244	274	p < 0.001
	Footnotes / Citations	2.862	1.089	-3.755	274	p < 0.001
Historical Roots		2.564	0.996			
	Argument Building	2.684	0.883	-2.462	274	p = 0.014
	Bibliography	3.236	0.899	-10.760	274	p < 0.001
	Footnotes / Citations	2.862	1.089	-4.317	274	p < 0.001
Argument Building		2.684	0.883			
	Bibliography	3.236	0.899	-9.635	274	p < 0.001
	Footnotes / Citations	2.862	1.089	-2.881	274	p = 0.004
Bibliography		3.236	0.899			
	Footnotes / Citations	2.862	1.089	6.420	274	p < 0.001

LO = learning outcome

were present during year one of the program and instructors aimed to stress more in year two. In the future, one area for which the LRAs could be improved is to include curriculum which would help students utilize author credentials as a means for substantiating authority in source analysis. Thesis development in the first year included having students write initial thesis statements in LRA1, which was too soon

and students had trouble significantly departing from these initial weak statements. In year two, students instead stated their topic and offered some initial research question ideas. Also, in the first year, students did not need to submit their final, or near final, thesis statement until they submitted the last LRA, which was often just a week or so before the final essay was due. In the second year, the final/near final thesis

statement was submitted around one month before the final essay due date. This allowed more time for guided revision of the thesis statements.

The authors were curious to know if the results from this project paralleled those from previous IL student learning outcome studies. Scharf and her colleagues found in their portfolio study that students had the most developed IL skills in the areas of citation, and finding sources.²¹ This matches our results that Source Quantity, Bibliography, and Footnotes/Citation were relative areas of success for our students. The Scharf research also showed that students were not successful at judging source relevance and using sources to support their views.²² Judging source relevance and authority is similar to Source Analysis in this study, and student struggles using sources to support viewpoints is analogous to a lack of meaningful argument building and thesis development, with a thesis statement being one's ultimate view on a particular topic. The Scharf study did not examine library instruction as a potential factor in the development of IL skills.²³ Johnson did a recent study with a WSU Honors College course concluding that after library instruction, students incorporate more scholarly works in their writing.²⁴ The Roots LRAs also include pointed library instruction that is most likely connected to student success with utilizing scholarly works in their essays.

CONCLUSION

Although this study provided information for improving the research assignments, and a quality baseline of data for wider university assessment initiatives, it also was saddled with some limitations. For example, the study is based on the first year of the course's existence, so there was little time to solidify norms for judging student performance. On the other hand, because Roots instructors use a common syllabus, it is perhaps more likely that in the first year of the new course, instructors will follow the course curriculum the most closely because they have not had time to individualize the content. The more uniform the experience of students across sections and campuses, the more confident researchers can be in drawing generalized conclusions concerning student learning.

Another limitation is that the raters, with the exception of the Roots librarian, were all Roots instructors. The Roots instructors have a vested interest in wanting to show that students met the course's learning outcomes, and thus lacked a level of objectivity that would have been preferable. The project rubric was very similar to the grading rubric a few instructors used in their classes, so some had prior context for rubric use while other raters did not. Another key limitation was that the study included too few WSU Online and Vancouver campus students. Consequently, the study did not have a weighed sample and the researchers could not search for measures of statistical significance concerning performance differences among students on the three

campuses. Finally, it is best norming practice to include the process of having each item rated in the study be examined by more than one rater. For this study, raters did not have enough time to read twice as many papers, nor could twice the number of raters be hired. Despite these minor issues, this study has a firm methodological footing and contributes to our understanding of information literacy learning among undergraduates. The WSU Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education recently showcased this study in an address to the Washington Board of Regents about undergraduate learning.

In terms of future directions, there is a plan to do a similar study after the second year of the Roots course is completed. This study will feature better stratified sampling and recruitment of raters from outside the Roots program. Programmatic assessment is a key area for librarians to increase their worth to the departments and the wider institution, while analyzing the impact of their teaching efforts. This study helps fill a gap in the literature as it is a large scale, formative and direct (based on student performance) assessment of student information literacy skill development and contributes to campus wide assessment and accreditation initiatives. As the emphasis on outcomes based assessment in higher education grows, and the prevalence of information literacy as an institution-level student learning outcome increases, librarians will be key players in crafting more campus-wide information literacy instruction and assessment programs.

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APPENDIX A. ROOTS OF CONTEMPORARY ISSUES SYLLABUS—SELECTED PARTS

The Roots of Contemporary Issues

History 105 Syllabus
[ROOT, 3 credits]

Course Description

Since January 2011, the world has witnessed and experienced an environmental disaster in Japan, protests at the United Nations against a failed response to the global AIDS epidemic, the rapid rebound of China's economy while the United States stagnates in its recovery, an announcement by the Saudi government that they will extend the vote to women in 2015 (they still are not legally allowed to drive a car), and the near unanimous decision by Southern Sudanese to separate from the North. Our world has grown increasingly complex and interconnected, and the planet's diverse peoples are facing common issues that will have tremendous impacts on our immediate future. In this course we will attempt to make sense of our increasingly complex world by focusing on five themes and their historical roots: Humans and the Environment; Our Shrinking World; Inequality; Diverse Ways of Thinking; and The Roots of Contemporary Conflicts. By examining the links between the past and present, we will also attempt to identify ways forward.

The theme of Humans and the Environment investigates the ways that the changing environment has had an impact on humans and how humans have impacted the environment, exploring specific issues beginning with the origins of our planet and the human species, patterns of climate change, and the role of technological innovation in response to change. How humans have responded to change is as relevant today as it was to hunters and gatherers of the past.

The theme of Our Shrinking World explores the often-fundamental historical transformations that have occurred when technologies allow for more rapid communications between human populations. While we might

immediately think of airplanes, automobiles, and computers when first introduced to this theme, it will become clear that the introduction of earlier technologies such as domesticated horses, sailing ships, steamships and trains have been equally revolutionary in producing changes among human communities as these later technologies.

The theme of Inequality helps us explore the rise of race, gender, class and other differences in order to explain the great disparities (the "haves" and "have-nots") of the world around us. This theme allows us to ask questions about the origins of inequality, and how the inequalities evident in the world today relate to earlier eras, including the past 500 years of globalization dealt with in *Our Shrinking World*.

The theme of Diverse Ways of Thinking will help us understand the past's diverse peoples on their own terms and to get a sense of how they understood each other and the world around them. In doing so, we will attempt to recognize, confront, and move beyond some of the narrowness with which people and scholars in the West (Europe and the United States) have understood other peoples of the world, particularly during periods of increased globalization. It will also address the historical nature of ideologies and worldviews that people have developed to conceptualize the differences and inequalities address in the inequality theme.

The theme of The Roots of Contemporary Conflicts explores the deep historical roots of conflicts between people with different ideological systems. Its goal is to understand the global context of specific conflicts, their roots in specific historical contexts, and the global nature of their causes. This integrates the previous four themes within historical case studies that are both rooted in the past but also help explain the dramatic changes we are experiencing in the immediate present.

Learning Goals and Objectives

This course has five learning goals, each of which is directly tied to WSU UCORE requirements. These learning goals are designed to build foundational skills that will aid students from all disciplinary backgrounds in becoming effective, articulate, and well-rounded college students.

1. Develop Critical and Creative Thinking: students will use reason, evidence, and context to increase knowledge, to reason ethically, and to innovate in imaginative ways, especially via interpretation and synthesis of historical documents, analytical writing and speaking, and comparative thinking.
2. Increase Information Literacy: students will effectively identify, locate, evaluate, use responsibly and share information for the problem at hand, particularly by becoming acquainted with the library and technology resources available at WSU and with primary and secondary sources.
3. Develop Communication skills: students will write (both formally and informally), speak (in small and large groups) and listen (in lecture and to each other) to achieve intended meaning and understanding among all participants.
4. Foster Diversity: students will understand, respect and interact constructively with others of similar and diverse cultures, values, and perspectives, especially via primary and secondary sources that expose students to a wide variety of world views over time and across space.
5. Enhance Depth, Breadth, and Integration of Learning: students will develop depth, breadth, and integration of learning for the benefit of themselves, their communities, their employers, and for society at large. Depth will be achieved through attention to a long chronology, breadth will be achieved through attention to a global arena, and integration will be achieved through attention to the importance of interdisciplinarity in the study of history.

Required Reading

Humans and the Environment

Global Water Crisis: No books required for purchase.

Global Warming/Climate Change: No books required for purchase.

Our Shrinking World

Global Pandemics: John Aberth, *The First Horseman: Disease in Human History* (Pearson, 2007).

Globalization: Jurgen Osterhammel & Niels Petersson, *Globalization: A Short History* (Princeton, 2005).

The Roots of Inequality

Racial Inequality: Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (New York: Broadway, 2011)

Gender Inequality: Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History: Global Perspectives* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011)

Diverse Ways of Thinking

Economic Ideologies: Joyce Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution: A History of Capitalism* (New York: Norton, 2010)

Clashing Civilizations?: Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

The Roots of Contemporary Conflicts

Conflict in post-Colonial Darfur and the Question of Genocide: Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009).

The Israel/Palestine Conflict: Ian J Bickerton, & Carla L. Clausner, *A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 6th Edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010)

Course Requirements and Grading Scale: Points possible: 1000

Library Assignments (10%) (100 points)

Over the course of the semester, students will work on a series of library assignments that will help build toward a final research paper at the end of the class. Each of the five assignments build on the former, and will help students learn the skills to complete their final research paper. The library assignments will generally be due at the end of the first week of each new issue.

Online Posts (30%) (300 points total, 10 points each)

[Generally, at the start of the second week of each lesson, students will be asked to complete an online post through the Angel site.]

Short research and response papers (30%) (300 points total, 60 points each)

[Generally, at the end of the third week, students will complete a short written assignment relative to that issues. The fifth issue will not have such an assignment, because students will be completing their research paper. These will vary according to the issues that the instructor selects. Check

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over the template lessons plans and write an appropriate narrative here].

Participation (including attendance) (15%) (150 points)

[instructors may choose to included attendance as part of the participation grade or treat them separately. Instructors are also free to mark students absent for chronic tardiness, sleeping, disruptive talking, text messaging, and/or surfing the web. TAs will be able to help with both attendance and participation].

Final Paper (15%) (150 points)

In lieu of a final exam, you will submit a five to seven page research paper that examines the historical roots of a contemporary issue of interest to you. You will in fact begin working on this assignment early in the semester and use the library research assignments to gather historical sources, learn how to cite those sources develop a thesis, and write the introductory section of your paper. This final paper and the library research assignments are individual assignments. While your chosen topic may overlap with others in the class, you must gather your own sources and write your own papers. Failure to do so will result in an F for the course.

APPENDIX B. ROOTS OF CONTEMPORARY ISSUES FINAL ESSAY/PAPER PROMPT

RCI Final Paper

The Roots of Contemporary Issues Research Paper

Format/Technical: All exams must be typed, at least 5-7 pages (double-spaced) in length, with 12-point font and 1.25" inch margins. Do not use long quotations to fill up space! These will be penalized. All exams should be thoroughly proof-read: papers with more than three typographical errors will be marked down half a letter grade.

Assignment: This course is designed to explore the roots of five critical contemporary issues over the course of the semester, one each from the themes of Humans and the Environment, Our Shrinking World, Inequality, Diverse Ways of Thinking, and the Roots of Contemporary Conflicts. Your job in this paper is to choose a contemporary issue of your own choice and to write a paper tracing its deep historical roots and its global significance. Remember that your contemporary issue must clearly link to at least two of the themes of the course, and that you will need to explicitly address these links in your paper.

Sources: Much of the research for this paper will have been done in your Library Assignment, which should have explored the contemporary issue you wish to write about. Go back to these sources, and then add at least one more book and one more academic journal article to your bibliography. All sources must be properly cited in a formal bibliography attached to the end of the paper, which does not count in your 5-7 pages.

The Paper: Make sure your introduction clearly introduces your contemporary issue, the central points about what you found, and which two themes of the course your issue relates to. The body of your paper should clearly identify the historical roots of your contemporary issue through time and across space. Remember to provide a conclusion that brings all the various parts of your essay together, especially addressing the question of how an understanding of the past is or is not important to understanding your issue in the present.

APPENDIX C. ROOTS OF CONTEMPORARY ISSUES ASSESSMENT PROJECT RUBRIC

CCT/IL Assessment Rubric – Roots Final Papers Assessment Project – Final
See page 2...

	Emerging First Year Level	Developing First Year Level	Proficient First Year Level	Middle of Undergraduate Experience Level	End of Undergraduate Experience Level
Issue Definition / Approach Thesis Development	Does not establish a thesis (historical argument) or organizational structure	Thesis (historical argument) attempted, but with little clarity; provisions for organizational structure are limited	Thesis (historical argument) established that is mostly clear, and moderately successful attempt to provide an organizational structure for the paper	Thesis (historical argument) well established, and provides a mostly clear framework for the rest of the paper	Thesis (historical argument) represents a very thoughtful research question, and sets out a very clear framework for the rest of the paper
Evaluate Information Source Quantity	Used (cited in essay/paper) 0 or 1 source(s)	Used (cited in essay/paper) 2 sources	Used (cited in essay/paper) 3 sources	Used (cited in essay/paper) 4 sources	Used (cited in essay/paper) 5 or more sources
Evaluate Information Nature of Sources	Does not utilize any appropriate primary or secondary sources; selects mostly open Internet sources or sources lacking citations	Includes a few appropriate primary and/or secondary sources, but mostly selects unvetted open Internet sources or sources lacking citations	Source selection split relatively equally between primary and/or secondary sources and unvetted open Internet sources or sources lacking citations	Selects a healthy mix of appropriate primary and/or secondary sources; limited selection of unvetted open Internet sources or sources lacking	All sources are highly appropriate, historical, and relevant to the chosen topic; no selection of unvetted material or sources lacking citations
Use Information Source Analysis	Treats sources superficially	Treats most sources superficially, but identifies the nature of those sources	In some cases, shows some awareness of the relationship between the nature of sources and the conclusions that can be made from them	Show general awareness of the relationship between the nature of sources and the conclusions that can be made from them	Treats sources in a sophisticated way, with a fairly consistent awareness of the relationship between the nature of sources and corresponding conclusions
Use Information (Integration) Historical Roots	Does not attempt to identify roots of a contemporary issue	Attempts to identify historical roots of a contemporary issue, but does so with limited space and/or time connections	Identifies historical roots of contemporary issue with moderate discussion of connections across space and/or and time	Explains historical roots of contemporary issue across space and/or time with above average quality of detail and analysis	Explains identifies historical roots of contemporary issue and makes sophisticated and deep connections across space and/or time
Use Information (Integration) Argument Building	Very little to no use of evidence to build arguments	Use of evidence to build arguments is characterized largely by limited success	Use of evidence to build arguments is a relatively equal balance of strong and weak examples	Use of evidence to build arguments is well done with more strong examples than weak	Use of evidence to build arguments includes insightful analysis throughout
Use Information (Legally / Ethically) Bibliography	No Bibliography	Bibliography present but poorly formatted and largely incomplete	Bibliography present but fails to include all sources or lacks correct formatting	Bibliography present with all sources and generally proper formatting	Bibliography present with all sources listed and correct formatting throughout
Use Information (Legally / Ethically) Footnotes / Citations	No Footnotes	Footnotes attempted but multiple errors throughout	Footnotes present with moderately accurate formatting	Footnotes included with minimal formatting errors	Footnotes have correct formatting throughout

Creative and Critical Thinking (CCT) and Information Literacy (IL) Rubric for Roots Research Paper Analysis

identify useful passages and information within”—Roots Research Assignments Goals

Issue Definition/Approach

- “Define, analyze, and solve problems”—WSU Seven Goals Document (CCT)
- “Determine the extent and type of information needed”—WSU Seven Goals Document (IL)
- “Identify... information for the problem at hand”—Learning Goals and Objectives from Roots Syllabus
- “Develop an initial thesis statement for your research paper and revise it in light of new sources”—Roots Research Assignments Goals

Use Information (Integration)

- “Integrate and synthesize from multiple sources”—WSU Seven Goals Document (CCT)
- “Combine and synthesize existing ideas, images, or expertise in original ways”—WSU Seven Goals Document (CCT)
- “Use information to accomplish a specific purpose”—WSU Seven Goals Document (IL)
- “Use responsibly and share information for a the problem at hand”—Learning Goals/Objectives from Roots Syllabus
- “Connect newly found sources to those you previously located and, when appropriate, to class material”—Roots Research Assignments Goals

Evaluate Information (Source Analysis)

- “Assess the accuracy and validity of findings and conclusions”—WSU Seven Goals Document (CCT)
- “Assess credibility and applicability of information sources”—WSU Seven Goals Document (IL)
- “Evaluate . . . information for the problem at hand”—Learning Goals and Objectives from Roots Syllabus
- “Critically analyze the sources that you gather and

Use Information (Legally/Ethically)

- “Understand how one thinks, reasons, and makes value judgments, including ethical and aesthetical judgments”—WSU Seven Goals Document (CCT)

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- “Access and use information ethically and legally”—WSU Seven Goals Document (IL)
- “Use responsibly and share information for a the problem at hand”—Learning Goals/Objectives from Roots Syllabus
- “Learn how to cite sources correctly according to historical disciplinary standards”—Roots Research Assignments Goals