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### **Can't Get an Information Literacy Course Approved? Teach a Writing Class**

In the Fall of 2002, I put my background in English to good use. I approached the chair of the English Department at La Salle University (where I work as the Media Services Librarian in Connelly Library) about teaching a writing course. Because of a large incoming freshman class, I knew he would be looking for instructors.

The department offers 2 basic writing courses. Eng107 which focuses on grammar, sentence structure, and other basic elements and Eng108 which focuses on writing increasingly complex papers leading up to a research paper. I was assigned a section of



Eng108 and quickly approached Bernetta Doane, our Bibliographic Instruction Librarian, about incorporating information literacy into my course.

We decided that she would have 3 75-minute class periods to work with my students. As a fellow librarian, I would supplement her work in my classroom. Work on the final paper spanned the final 8 weeks of class. The students had other papers due in the meantime, but we spent ½ the semester working toward the final research paper.

In her BI sessions, Bernetta normally focuses on 6 steps:

1. Choosing a topic
2. Finding background information
3. Selecting resources
4. Searching resources
5. Evaluating resources
6. Citing resources

#### **The Assignment:**

“Write a well-organized, well-developed, and coherent paper on an approved topic. Follow MLA style for overall formatting and documentation. Include a “Works Cited” page at the end of your paper.

Your paper should be about 6-8 pages long; however, concern yourself more with creating an excellent paper. Be sure to include your name, course, section, date, and a title. The final paper must be printed out on a computer.”

On week 8 of the semester, I covered the first part of the process, **choosing a topic**, before my class met with Bernetta.

I asked the students to pick one person from a list of 40 people. For the sake of establishing some restrictions, everyone on the list was someone famous from the United States in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. I encouraged my students to pick someone highly interesting to them since they would be researching that person for half the semester.

To enable my students to find very basic background information, I showed them how to use Encyclopedia Britannica Online. I asked them to provide me a list or short paragraph which included the following information:

- Sex and race
- Dates and places of birth and death
- Major achievements
- Important life events
- Important people and places associated with their subject

I also required them to come up with at least 3 possible topics. For example:

- Ronald Reagan and Alzheimer's disease
- Ronald Reagan and Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)
- Ronald Reagan and the fall of the Berlin Wall

Both these assignments were due on week 9 when they first met with Bernetta.

### **IL Module One (week 9):**

We held the first class in a classroom in the library.

#### **Finding Information:**

Bernetta gave an overview of Information Literacy concepts and then demonstrated using various biographical indexes for finding background information for their subjects. She then brought them to the reference area to show them how to find biographical information in our reference collection.

She gave them a hands-on assignment to find background information about their subjects.

The students now had access to more specific biographical information. I asked them to develop a more specific thesis by week 11. For example:

- Ronald Reagan's strong stance on his Strategic Defense Initiative contributed to the demise of the Cold War.
- Ronald Reagan's meetings with Gorbachev in Iceland was a key early step toward bringing down the Berlin Wall.



## **IL Module Two (week 12):**

We held the second class in a computer classroom so that students would be able to participate in guided, hands-on instruction.

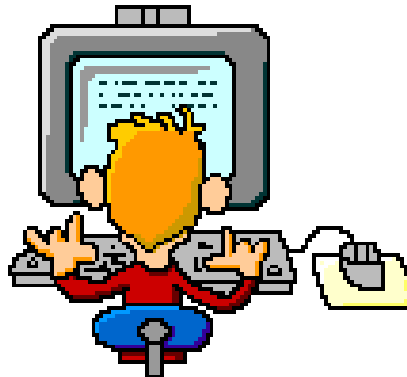
### **Selecting Resources:**

Bernetta gave an overview of what resources are available through our library's Web site (<http://www.lasalle.edu/library>) including the catalog, databases, and subject guides created in-house.

### **Searching Resources:**

Bernetta continued her instruction by guiding the students through exercises using Boolean operators and showing them how to broaden and narrow their searches.

She gave the students exercises to help them find relevant information about their chosen subject.



## **IL Module Three (week 13):**

We held the third class in the computer classroom for more hands-on instruction. In the class period at the end of week 12, I covered the final part of the process, **citing resources**, in the classroom with a combination of lecture and paper-based exercises.

### **Evaluating Resources:**



Bernetta provided more guided activities and discussion focusing on the differences between popular and scholarly articles and provided instruction on evaluating Web site, specifically using the C.A.R.D.S. method (**C**redibility, **A**ccuracy, **R**elevancy, **D**ates, **S**ources).

I required that an annotated bibliography be submitted before the end of week 13. This assignment required the students to provide a list of 20 potential sources for their paper. I required them to include at least one of each of the following:

Book  
Scholarly article  
Authoritative Internet Site

I asked them to annotate their bibliography by describing why they thought each citation was a legitimate choice and by explaining what evidence they had that any given resource was scholarly and/or authoritative.

After week 13, Bernetta's work was done. I had the students submit an outline by the end of week 14. I held individual conferences during week 15 and required the students to bring a draft. I did not assign a final exam, so I required the final research paper be turned in by the end of exam week, week 16.

