FROM SKILLS TO TRANSFORMATIVE UNDERSTANDING: fostering higher order thinking through collaborative research instruction

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“A critical theory of IL seeks to engage students as active social subjects charged with interrogating the social world and developing their own capacity for informed questioning… It would view the library instructor more as a facilitator of collectively generated insight and knowledge than a sagacious depositor of facts and inherited wisdom.” – Jonathan Cope
threshold concepts...

- **Transformative:** causes the learner to experience a shift in perspective
- **Irreversible:** once grasped, cannot be un-grasped
  - **Integrative:** unifies separate concepts/lessons/facts into a unified whole
- **Bounded:** may help define the boundaries of a particular discipline, are perhaps unique to discipline
- **Troublesome:** often counter-intuitive, the place where students stumble or get stuck

from: [http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/ulib_fac/60/](http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/ulib_fac/60/)
• **Research as inquiry:** refers to an understanding that research is iterative and depends upon asking increasingly complex questions whose answers develop new questions or lines of inquiry in any field.

• **Scholarship as a conversation:** refers to the idea of sustained discourse within a community of scholars or thinkers, with new insights and discoveries occurring over time as a result of competing perspectives and interpretations.

• **Searching as exploration:** Locating information requires a combination of inquiry, discovery, and serendipity. There is no one size fits all source to find the needed information. Information discovery is nonlinear and iterative, requiring the use of a broad range of information sources and flexibility to pursue alternate avenues as new understanding is developed.

“The deepest learning happens in courses and programs...it’s far too complex to be mastered in a scattering of class periods.”

--Barbara Fister
Assignment Design

Proposed Assignments

- Focus on any contemporary trial in the news
- 1st paper: informative, exploring details of trial
- 2nd paper: argumentative, arguing trial verdict

Revised Assignments

- Focus on contemporary trial from preselected list
- 2nd paper: incorporate research from 1st paper but focus argument on larger legal/social issue
- Students maintain research journal
- Add annotated bibliography as part of 2nd assignment
(the class)
Students will share their vision of research in order to better understand how research informs learning.

Quick Write: What’s the point of academic research? (aka, why are you here?)

Students will come to see research as a messy, iterative, and ultimately empowering process.
So what is research all about?

(you tell me)
research is about... (what students said)
Students will learn to use library and Internet reference sources to refine, develop, and expand research questions/interests.

Conversation mapping activity

- Students will be inspired to pursue questions rather than find simple answers.
- Students will learn things that change their minds.

(learning outcome #2)
Think about your topic as part of a larger conversation. In the circle below, write down the topic that you will be exploring in your paper. Use the lines coming out from the circle to identify different parts of that conversation. You can fill out all the lines, leave some blank, or add new lines as needed.

Should someone who bullies another be at fault for their death even if it wasn't intentional?

- Milwaukee School Superintendent William Andropoulos
- Intimidation
- Privacy
- Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support
- Suicide
- Richard Hazler, Ohio
- Fairness
- Ryan Patrick Halligan
- School Intervention
- Shay Bilchik
- Tyler Clementi/Dharun Ravi
- Peer Pressure
- Judgement
- Cyberbullying
- Kay Hypowitz
- Real life/everyday @ work
- Statistics
- Other cases involved with it
- Tina Meier
- Supervisor (background)

Once you’ve filled out the chart above, use the following databases to help expand your understanding of your topic and the conversations/ideas around that topic. Add new ideas, conversations, and keywords that you find while using these databases.

CQ Researcher
Issues and Controversies
Opposing Viewpoints in Context
(learning outcome #3)

Students will learn to follow citations in order to begin to trace the development of research/knowledge on a topic.

Citation Trace activity

- Students will learn to research like experts
- Students will begin to view sources as spaces in which scholars communicate with each other and the world.

BIG LOFTY GOALS
connections

new directions
Students will be able to use library databases in order to learn about their research topics.

-Brief review of database search strategies

-Independent searching guided by librarian and instructor

-Students will think critically about the ways in which they access and use information

-Students will ask for help/guidance if and when they need it
guided discovery
(what does it all mean?)
the guide http://libguides.brookdalecc.edu/ENGL122/Girard
image credits

- Humboldt Redwood Forest by Scrubhiker
- Are You Losing It? by Timothy Tsui
- Two dogs, One stick by theilr
- Classroom by James F. Clay
- Adelaide Tracks by Les Haines
- Navigation by Martin Fisch
- Question Mark Graffiti by zeevveez

(all through flickr cc)
references

- “Information Literacy and Social Power” by Jonathan Cope in *Critical Library Instruction: Theories and Methods*
- *Revised Draft, ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education Task Force
- *The Library’s Role in Learning: Information Literacy Revisited* by Barbara Fister
- *Talking About Information Literacy: the Mediating Role of Discourse in a College Writing Classroom* by Wendy Holliday & Jim Rogers
further reading (good starting points)

threshold concepts

- Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge: Linkages to Ways of Thinking and Practising within the Disciplines by Jan Meyer and Ray Land
- The Problem with Threshold Concepts by Lane Wilkinson

*Michael Thomas Flanagan maintains a Threshold Concepts Bibliography at [http://www.ee.ucl.ac.uk/~mflanaga/thresholds.html](http://www.ee.ucl.ac.uk/~mflanaga/thresholds.html)

critical library instruction/ critical information literacy

- Critical Library Instruction: Theories and Methods edited by Maria Accardi, Emily Drabinski, and Alana Kumbier
- Critical Information Literacy: Implications for Instructional Practice by James Elmborg
- Libraries, Learning and Liberation by Barbara Fister
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