THE THING ABOUT FAILING:
EXPLORING A RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT FOR RE-ADMITTED STUDENTS

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
OUTLINE

The context – Refining Your Learning Skills
The IL session
The Wikipedia assignment
REFINING YOUR LEARNING SKILLS FOR RE-ADMITTED STUDENTS (RYLS)

THE CONTEXT
REFINING YOUR LEARNING SKILLS

- Helps students apply for a waiver of academic dismissal
- 80% required to pass; one chance only
- 30 classroom hours, daily assignments

Description

This course includes 30 classroom hours, plus daily assignments and some afternoon appointments. The course is practical and experiential and is designed to enhance your learning skills for the purpose of achieving academic success in university. Students who attend this course will have experienced academic success in high school; however, the study skills applied may not have been sufficient for the intense demands placed on students in the early years of university. To help you refine your skill set, we have selected a range of topics that aim to secure...
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What will I learn?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Time Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Learning from Lectures and Note Taking</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Coping Strategies</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Procrastination and Alternative Thinking</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Goal Setting and Academic Integrity</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Learning Styles</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Assertive Communication and Exam Anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Exam Preparation and Survival Tips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mindfulness and Your Future</td>
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</table>
DALHOUSIE & RETENTION

• Initiatives to increase retention
• FASS first year seminars
• Dalhousie Libraries Research Assistance Program
• RYLS opened to FASS students in 2015
“THE THING ABOUT FAILING…”

It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all — in which case, you fail by default.

J.K. Rowling

Image: http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/csi-blog/four-tips-overcome-failure
RYLS – OUR APPROACH

- IL session
- Assignment
- One-on-on meetings
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- IL session
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HABIT-BREAKING

Information literacy: uncritical belief

Study skills: leaving research papers until the last minute
THE INFO LIT SESSION
Refining Your Learning Skills: Research session

What we like about research
- Learning new information/things
- Finding lots of sources
- Learning HOW to research

What we find most challenging about research
- Finding relevant info
- Determining a source’s legitimacy
- Getting started!
- Dryness of the material

Created by Thomas Helbig from Noun Project
I SEARCH, THEREFORE I AM

THE MEDIA MENU
After beginning their day with forecasts and the news, many swiftly lose interest. At night, bring on the Kardashians.

“weather” 5:24 a.m.
“news” 4:52 a.m.
“celeb news” 12:04 a.m.

IT’S BEEN A LONG DAY
Lapses and forgetfulness peak when you would expect: well after midnight.

misspell facebook as “facbook” 3:08 a.m.
“forgot password” 2:44 a.m.

AVERAGE RATE

HOW DO WE DECIDE WHAT TO BELIEVE?

- Emotion
- Prior knowledge
- Evidence
TOPIC – RESEARCH IS ITERATIVE

• Choosing a manageable topic
• Initial research
• Narrowing/changing the topic based on results
• Creating searchable parts

8 PAGE PAPER. DOUBLE-SPACED. INCLUDE 5 PEER-REVIEWED SOURCES.
NOT FINDING MUCH?

Break down your research topic into researchable chunks

"I want to research selfishness in the works of Kurt Vonnegut."

- Research selfishness in other literature
- Read up on selfishness from other perspectives (ie. Psychology)

- Read his books closely for similar patterns
NOT FINDING MUCH?

Be open to broadening your topic

“I want to research the use of Instagram at funerals by university students.”

Instagram  funerals  students

Remove a variable. Try:

Instagram use at funerals
OR
Instagram use by students
Oregon shooting: Jeb Bush says 'stuff happens' as left calls for gun control
The Guardian - 17 hours ago
"I know there is way to have sensible gun control me that prevent violence, prevent ..."

Donald Trump almost made a really good point about mass shootings
Vox - 17 hours ago
If not now, when? America's endless gun control
Yahoo News - 10 hours ago

Gun control
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
Not to be confused with international arms restrictions, called Arms-control.
Gun control generally refers to laws or policies that regulate the manufacture, sale, transfer, possession, modification, or use of firearms. They vary greatly around the world. Some countries, such as the United Kingdom, have very strict limits on gun possession while others, like the United States, have, compared to most industrial democracies, relatively few restrictions (although policies vary from state to state).

Contents [show]
1 Terminology, and context
2 Regulation of civilian firearms
3 International and regional civilian firearm regulation
4 Studies, debates, and opinion
5 Notes
6 References
7 Bibliography
8 External links

Coalition for gun control/pour le contrôle des armes
Cato Institute
The Trustworthy Encyclopedia
WHAT MAKES A GOOD SOURCE?

- The author’s credentials
- Found on a university website
- Government source

- Well-known
- Unbiased
- References other sources

Remember that authority is contextual!
#Funeral and Instagram: death, social media, and platform vernacular

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This paper presents findings from a study of Instagram use and funerary practices that analysed photographs shared on public profiles tagged with ‘#funeral’. We found that the majority of images uploaded with the hashtag #funeral often communicated a person’s emotional circumstances and affective context, and allowed them to reposition their funeral experience amongst wider networks of acquaintances, friends, and family. We argue that photo-sharing through Instagram echoes broader shifts in commemorative and memorialization practices, moving away from formal and institutionalized rituals to informal and personalized, vernacular practices. Finally, we consider how Instagram’s ‘platform vernacular’ unfolds in relation to traditions and contexts of death, mourning, and memorialization. This research contributes to a broader understanding of how platform vernaculars are shaped through the logics of architecture and use. This research also directly contributes to the understanding of death and digital media by examining how social media is being mobilized in relation to death, the differences that different media platforms make, and the ways social media are increasingly entwined with the places, events, and rituals of mourning.

**Keywords:** Instagram; platform vernacular; hashtag; funeral; photo-sharing; selfie

**Introduction**

There is a growing body of research examining the ways death is addressed in online environments. Following the emergence of online memorials or ‘virtual cemeteries’ (Roberts, 2004) in the 1990s, and the more recent popularity of memorialized profiles on social media platforms, scholars from a range of disciplines have become increasingly interested in the digital mediation of death, commemoration, and memorialization. This work has examined how grief and social support take shape in online networks (Brubaker & Hayes, 2011; Moss, 2004; Williams & Martin, 2009), and how the dead remain and continue to participate in social settings through...
THE RESEARCH PAPER PROCESS

• Get a topic
• Research the topic
• Determine whether your sources are any good
• Read the sources and take notes
• Form an argument
• Fit the sources in with your argument
• Write the paper
• Cite your sources!
Char Booth: “We can engage learners to leverage paywalled library resources, empower participation in public discourse, and improve their powers of inquiry, evaluation, and attribution, all while creating a better Wikipedia.”

Heidi Jacobs: interrogating a familiar source like Wikipedia may encourage students to be critical of other sources.
WHY I USED WIKIPEDIA

• To problematize Wikipedia in a tangible way
• To tie research to responsibility
WIKIPEDIA & THE ONE-SHOT

- John Thomas Oliver (2014): “Let Wikipedia through the gates!: A Trojan horse approach to information literacy”
- The Wikipedia edit-sprint
  - 30-minute intro to library resources
  - 20-minute critical discussion of Wikipedia
  - 10-minute Wikipedia editing demo
  - 30-minute Wikipedia edit sprint
ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVES

• Define an information need (an unverified Wikipedia page)

• Search relevant resources (Searching is strategic; Research as inquiry)

• Use and document the information to improve the Wikipedia article (Information has value)
THE ASSIGNMENT (4 PARTS)

1. Find a topic
2. Research the topic
4. Reflect
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(4 PARTS)

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Find a topic
• Site search Wikipedia

site:en.wikipedia.org “needs additional citations” keywords
THE ASSIGNMENT
(4 PARTS)

1. Find a topic
2. Research the topic
4. Reflect

Research the topic

• 3 books or journal articles
• Meeting with librarian
• Mini-annotated bibliography
• Consult RYLS LibGuide
THE ASSIGNMENT
(4 PARTS)

1. Find a topic
2. Research the topic
   - Watch instructional video
   - Cite an uncited claim OR
   - Add/cite new information
   - Provide before & after PDFs
4. Reflect
THE ASSIGNMENT
(4 PARTS)

1. Find a topic
2. Research the topic
4. Reflect

Reflect

• Thoughts on the assignment? On Wikipedia?
• Confidence as a researcher?
• Personal connection with the library & university?
• Suggestions for improvement?
STUDENT FEEDBACK

- General increase in students’ confidence as researchers and connection to the library
THOUGHTS ON WIKIPEDIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student comments</th>
<th>#</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprised at how easy it is to edit Wikipedia; understand why professors revile it; feel that this needs to be discussed more in high school</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still find Wikipedia to be a useful resource when used correctly</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newly impressed with Wikipedia</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions unchanged</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

“I felt like I could add a piece of my new found knowledge to society. At first I thought Wikipedia was really bad to use, but now I think as long as you look into the citations it can be a very useful tool.”
SUGGESTIONS FROM STUDENTS

• Provide a list of topics (added on second round)
• More instruction on editing Wikipedia
• Students should be encouraged to pick topics in their own disciplines
ARE THE EDITS STILL THERE?

For the most part, yes!

- 18 students have completed this assignment
- 14 edits are still there; 1 has been built upon
- 2 unsure
- 2 removed
SITE TRAFFIC

From Nov. 2015 until Jan. 18th 2016

• Lowest was 822 views
• Highest 106,468 views
THINGS TO DO DIFFERENTLY

• Stress the importance of source evaluation
• Try for a debriefing
• Insist on students choosing topics prior to the one-on-one meetings
• Consider in-class searching
• More focus on Wikipedia to reinforce nuances
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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QUESTIONS?
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