Library Research Skills
Syllabus, Spring 2015

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COURSE DESCRIPTION (From the Course Catalog)

"Library Research Skills is a course focusing on both the concepts and skills needed to conduct library research with an emphasis on electronic information sources. The purpose of the course is to provide individuals with a basic understanding of the library research process and the skills by which they can successfully find information for research, presentations, and other class assignments."

The general work of the course will be about locating and pushing the boundaries of information. We will ask broad questions about why information is important, what information is, and how we can use information to build knowledge. Our official goal is to develop the concepts and skills needed for academic research (a full list of "learning outcomes" is available at the end of this document that includes further detail). To help us accomplish this goal, we'll be writing regular entries and engaging in discussion on our blogs, completing a few task-specific assignments, and synthesizing our thoughts and skills towards a final project. The class is structured to be a student-centered inquiry-based learning community. There will be weekly discussions online, 4 worksheets, and 2 self-evaluations throughout the term (more on this below). The final project for the course will be an annotated bibliography.

D2L

As this is a fully online course, you will need to access class materials and assignments on your own time, as there are no regularly scheduled class meetings. You can log in to D2L at https://ecat.montana.edu/. In order to access the D2L component of this course, you need to know your NetID and password. For help, see the password help page at http://password.montana.edu/. For D2L help, you can call the main support telephone line

at 406-994-3255 or email D2L Help at ecat@montana.edu. If you need any assistance during the course that D2L support cannot provide, please let me know.

REQUIRED TEXTS
There is no required text to purchase. Our readings will be provided through D2L.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION
Since this is a collaborative course that focuses on discussion, you are responsible to yourself and your classmates to prepare for discussion by reading and carefully considering the assigned articles each week. The class will be a community-focused cooperative learning experience, so discussion participation is central to the work of the course. In this way you and your work are, in a very real way, the primary texts for this course. In order for the class to work together as a community, it is important that you read the assigned work for each week's class. If you can't finish the assigned work for any reason, please discuss this with me in advance so that we can find a solution together.

OFFICE HOURS
Office hours will be by appointment via Google Hangouts, Skype, Facetime, or by telephone. If you are local in Bozeman, I'm also frequently in my office and available for a face-to-face meeting. I'm always happy to meet with you to discuss the course or just to chat. This is the most effective way for me to give you individual attention and get to know you better. I encourage you to meet with me as early in the semester as possible, especially if you have any particular questions or concerns. I'm also very easy to reach by e-mail. You can send questions or comments to me at swyoung@montana.edu, and you can also contact me through Twitter (@hei_scott).

THE WORK OF THE COURSE:
This course focuses on the concepts and skills of information research. We will explore the concepts component of the course through weekly readings and blog discussion, and we will develop the skills component through a series of worksheets. The week-by-week readings and worksheets assignments will become available through D2L as we move through the semester.

Blog Participation.
For this class you will create and maintain a Tumblr blog where you respond to issues that are raised in our weekly reading. Tumblr will serve as the discussion platform that we will use throughout the term. Unlike journaling or response papers you'd submit only to me, this will give you a chance to practice your writing in a more social forum. Like journaling, though, this is meant to be an informal outlet, so you shouldn't worry about this writing

being scrutinized or evaluated. Just make sure your ideas can be understood and that you engage your audience to comment. I will mostly ask you to post a blog entry in response to questions I give to you based on that week's readings.

To help aid discussion, I will divide the class into small groups of about 6 (further instructions will follow through D2L). You will interact with your fellow group members online by posting comments and replied to the posts on their blogs. Use these opportunities to demonstrate understanding and thoughtfulness with the concepts of the course. You will focus on the work of your group, but are free to observe the conversation from other groups as well.

You will post a new entry (of no more than 500 words) to your blog each week. You will also comment twice each week on a blog entry from at least one of your peers in your group. These comments should be as collaborative as possible. In other words, don't just throw your ideas into a vacuum. Instead, ask questions of each other and use the other comments as a jumping off point by answering questions, amplifying or complicating ideas, etc. Make sure to go back and respond to comments made on your own blog. This will help keep your readers happy.

Blog Discussion Expectations
- I will provide readings and discussion prompts through D2L each week, on Wednesday evenings
- You will post one response to the week's readings to your blog by 5PM of the following Wednesday (no more than 500 words)
- You will post two responses to your group's posts by 5PM each Friday (no more than 250 words)
- The class blog (http://theinformationists.tumblr.com/) will be a place that I will post items relevant to our class in a free-flowing way. You can choose how much you want to tune in and reply to these posts.
- Your individual blogs will be the place for you to write about the week's readings and reply to your peers.

Leading Discussion
You will be asked to help lead small group discussion at least one time throughout the term. This is, by no means, a formal presentation of any sort. Rather, on the week you sign up for, be prepared with a couple questions or topics related to the reading for the week, and bring at least one or two passages that you'd like the group to look at in detail. With your questions, topics, and/or passages, you will start a discussion thread for your Tumblr group, and you will be responsible for replying to your peer's questions. As you are leading

discussion, I will moderate the discussions to some degree but will primarily act as a member of the group with my own questions, comments, etc.

<u>Worksheets</u>

As a tool to help develop our research skills and build towards the final project, there will be 4 worksheets due during the term. These will consist of a set of instructions and questions designed to get you thinking about various themes, conflicts, and issues at play in the works we'll be discussing.

1. Framing the research process as open inquiry
2. Evaluating types of sources
3. Search skills (boolean logic, truncation, controlled vocab)
4. Choosing, citing, summarizing, and evaluating sources

The details of the worksheets will be available through D2L.

<u>Final Project</u>

Due: E-mailed to me by Friday, May 1 at 11:59PM.

The four worksheets you complete will relate directly to the final project, an annotated bibliography on a topic of your choosing. The four worksheets, in fact, when combined will together comprise the annotated bibliography. Instead of sending your annotated bibliography to me alone, you will post it to your blog. This will allow it to be read not only by your peers in this class but also by anyone else on the web who may be interested in your topic and the research you've done to illuminate that topic.

A detailed description of the final project will be posted through D2L.

GRADING

For this class, you will decide whether you receive an A, a B, or a C (with lower grades at my discretion), based on the completion of certain conditions, outlined below. While I will assign final grades (as officially required), you will evaluate your own work throughout the course. At the beginning of the term I will ask you to define personal learning goals that will serve as general guides through the semester. At the middle of the term, you will write a midterm self-evaluation that reflects on your work and contributions throughout the course. You will complete a similar self-evaluation at the end of the term. The self-evaluations are intended to serve as (helpful!) reflective exercises in which you document your process and overall progress. The self-evaluations will not only inform my

own evaluation of you, but will inform how I adjust the course itself as we progress together.

Throughout the course I will not be putting grades on individual assignments, but rather questions and comments that engage with your work rather than simply assign a number value to it. You will also be reflecting carefully on your own work and engaging thoughtfully with the work of your peers. The intention here is to create a more open organic learning experience rather than a prescriptive grade-driven experience. as opposed to working as you think you're expected to. If this process causes more anxiety than it alleviates, contact me at any point to confer about your performance in the course to date. If you are worried about your grade, your best approach will be to join the discussions, do the reading, and complete the worksheets. You should consider this course a "busy-work-free zone." If an assignment does not feel productive, we can find ways to modify, remix, or repurpose the instructions.

An "A" Grade
- Miss a maximum of one weekly blog post
- Participate with good faith and generosity in all discussions
- Complete all four worksheets on time
- Complete the midterm and final self-evaluation with sincere self-reflection and thorough familiarity with course readings and discussions
- Complete a final project that both demonstrates familiarity with class discussions and readings and shows that you've learned new research skills
- Meet with me at least once over the course of the semester to discuss your performance in the class, areas of improvement, and any questions you may have

A "B" Grade
- Miss a maximum of two blog posts
- Participate with good faith and generosity in all discussions
- Complete all four worksheets, and submit at least three on time
- Complete the midterm and final self-evaluation with sincere self-reflection and thorough familiarity with course readings and discussions
- Complete a final project that both demonstrates familiarity with class discussions and readings and shows that you've learned new research skills

A "C" Grade
- Miss a maximum of three blog posts
- Participate with good faith and generosity in most discussions
- Complete the midterm and final self-evaluation

- Complete all worksheets
- Complete a final project that demonstrates familiarity with most class discussions and readings and shows that you've learned new research skills

Midterm Self-evaluation
Due: E-mailed to me by Friday, March 6 at 11:59PM.

Instructions: Compose an e-mail to me (swyoung@montana.edu) with answers to each of the following questions. No need to use an attachment. Just write or cut and paste your answers directly into the e-mail. You are welcome to approach this self-evaluation either as a series of answers to each of these questions or as a less formal letter to me about the course and your work.

1. Evaluate your work on the blog. What aspects of your work are the strongest? What could have used more work? How has your thinking evolved from one week to the next? Feel free to use this rubric to help assess your own work.

2. How would you characterize your involvement in our discussions so far? What are your strengths and weaknesses in this regard?

3. Have you completed all assigned work for the course (Worksheets, blog entries/comments)?

4. What letter grade would you give yourself for the first half of this course and why? Consider preparedness, the strength of your written work, your participation in discussion, and your goals for the semester.

5. How is this course meeting your personal learning goals?

6. (Optional): What questions do you have for me at this point? About the subjects of the class? About your work/progress this semester? Are there any aspects of your work that you would particularly like feedback on?

Final Self-evaluation

Due: E-mailed to me by Tuesday, May 5 at 11:59PM.

Instructions: Compose an e-mail to me (swyoung@montana.edu) with answers to each of the following questions. No need to use an attachment. Just write or cut and paste your answers directly into the e-mail. The questions here are less prescriptive than on the midterm self-evaluation, in order to give you the opportunity to reflect on the course in a way that feels appropriate to you.

1. Write a short evaluation of your performance in this class (250-500 words), addressing the following sorts of questions: How many blog entries/comments did you produce? Were you prepared for each class week? Did you do all of the required readings and worksheets? How would you characterize your overall effort, interest, and commitment to the class? Did your engagement increase or decrease as the semester went along? How did you meet the goals for the course?

2. What letter grade would you give yourself for the semester and why? Consider preparedness for class, the strength of your written work and other assignments, and your participation in discussions.

COURSE DESIGN & STRUCTURE

The design of this course borrows from a fellow educator, Jesse Stommel. Please view similar syllabi for his courses [Hypertext and Electronic Literature](#), [Digital Humanities](#), and [The Posthuman](#).

DISABILITY

If you have a documented disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodations, please contact me or Disabled Student Services.

UNIVERSITY CONDUCT POLICIES

This course will adhere to the [MSU Conduct Guidelines](#).

LSCI 121
Student Learning Outcomes

Design a research topic and search strategy.

o Define and develop a research topic appropriate to the assignment.

o Construct a search strategy.

o Determine alternative terminology (subjects, keywords, phrases) for the research topic.

Differentiate among resource types and choose the most appropriate for the research topic.

o Differentiate between primary and secondary sources.

o Understand how and where to access primary and secondary sources.

o Distinguish scholarly articles from popular content such as newspaper, magazine, trade, and consumer publications.

o Define what is meant by "peer-reviewed" publications.

o Demonstrate how and where to access scholarly and popular resources

o Identify the most appropriate resource type for a research topic.

Effectively utilize information resources.

o Identify the types of information available in library catalogs, databases, and open-access resources.

o Differentiate between searching the Web and searching library Web-based databases.

o Utilize subject guides to find specific research tools and resources.

Formulate and refine search techniques and strategies.

o Effectively employ advanced search strategies in the library catalog, databases, and search engines.

o Effectively utilize controlled vocabulary.

Apply critical thinking skills when selecting information resources

o Evaluate information for reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, intended audience, and point of view.

Demonstrate a basic understanding of plagiarism and copyright as applied to the research process.
o Understand how citing sources relates to avoiding plagiarism.
o Correctly identify plagiarism in sample texts.
o Effectively utilize direct quotes and paraphrasing in writing exercises.
o Distinguish between information covered by Creative Commons, in the public domain, and information protected under copyright law.
o Understand and apply the principles of fair use when using portions of copyrighted material.

List bibliographic references in an accepted citation style (MLA, APA, Turabian, etc).
o Understand why it is important to use citations, including referring back to sources, for future researchers, and for authority of paper.
o Construct a bibliography using proper style.

Utilize various library services to maximize the information acquisition experience.
o Understand when to request additional help from a librarian.

o Understand how to utilize interlibrary loan services when materials are not available locally.