ELEVATING THE DISCUSSION: Collaborating with Faculty to re-envision information literacy

Andrea Cameron, Teaching & Learning Librarian, Concordia University
Outline

- The vision
- The outcome
- Best practices
- Discussion
1. The vision
U1x course structure

Pedagogical Map for Concordia’s U1x

Experiential Learning
Students spend time with Research Units as interns, volunteers, attending workshops, etc.

Critical and Analytical Thinking

Applied Research

Flipped Classroom

Going Public
Students practice Citizenship through peer teaching, social engagement and online publications (ePortfolio, Wiki, Blog)

Information Literacy
Students develop & refine Research Skills

Effective Communication
Students develop and refine Writing and Social Media Skills

A 1st Year Experience Pilot course

Peer Teaching

Personal Research Practice

Blended Learning
Students will…

• Situate their studies and interests within larger university and global contexts

• Develop an understanding of the relationship between research and citizenship

• Develop core competencies like self-knowledge, information literacy, online communication
The Information literacy component

- Show them how to search, use RefWorks, etc.
- Talk to them about Google filter bubbles
Additional Learning outcomes

▪ Self-direction
▪ Passion
▪ Subjectivity
▪ Embodiment
▪ Serendipity
1. The outcome
The Research unit visits

- Technoculture Art and Gaming Lab
- Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling
- Centre for the Arts in Human Development
- PEFORM Centre
- Centre for Microscopy and Cellular Imaging
- Concordia Centre for Broadcasting and Journalism Studies
- Montreal Institute for Genocide Studies
- Zero Energy Building Studies
Lectures
And discussions

▪ The art and science of ‘play’ in research
▪ Oral history and ethics
▪ Arts-based inquiry and digital literacy
▪ Digital citizenship
▪ Critical disability studies: What is “normal?”
▪ Health and wellness, balancing work and play
▪ Strategies for effective communication in the 21st century
▪ Media and political economy: the 21st century citizen
▪ Sustainability and human habitation
U1x assignments

- Personal research profile
- Student-centred research unit profile
- Documentation of self-directed experiential learning
- Final project lightning talk
- Final project
The Info-lit modules

- Flipped classroom
- Independent readings and viewings
- Discussion in class
- Reflections and research tasks
Preparation for class discussion:

Viewing

- Developing a Research Question  Steely Library NKU (4:33)
- Developing Research Questions  Laurier Library (5:03)
- Picking your research topic IS research!  NSCU video (3:10)
- How to use reference sources  SFU Library (5:39)

Reading

- Truth be Told: How College Students Evaluate and Use Information in the Digital Age (Read Failure to Launch, pages 31-33 only!! Full report is 72 pages)
• What do you find challenging and what do you find enjoyable about research?
• What defines a good researcher and good research?
• What is the relationship between research and society?
• Is there a contribution you would like to make to society, through research, or the knowledge you gain through your studies?
Weekly Reflections

- What does it mean to participate in the scholarly conversation?
- What are the characteristics of a good research question?
- What is your process for developing a research question? Are there ways you could improve this process?
- What skills or knowledge does one need to be effective in searching for information? Do you have the skills and knowledge that you need?
- How do you decide whether the sources you find are authoritative/reliable? What steps can you take to ensure the reliability of your own research?
2. Working with threshold concepts
Research as an inquiry

Research is an inquiry

“One starts from ill-formed general ideas, follows initial leads amid great confusion, and finally ends with a clear and important piece of research…It does not go from question to literature review to data search to analysis to write-up. Rather it is massively parallel. Everything will seem illogical and out of order. But you must nonetheless keep control of this massively parallel endeavor and guide it to a successful final product. And that final product will, in fact, make the whole project look much simpler than it actually was.”

– A. Abbot, American Sociologist, University of Chicago

Scholarship is a conversation

What is a meaningful social experience for videogame players?

Mia Consalvo
Canada Research Chair in Digital Games Studies and Design
Professor
Department of Communication Studies
Associate Director
Concordia Centre for Technoculture, Art and Games
Searching is a strategic process

Demonstrated different examples of metadata/classification (e.g. NAICS, MESH, census geographical hierarchy) used in databases, and compared to Google algorithm
Searching is a strategic process

- Asked students which organizations create different types of information
- Examples:
  - Rental costs in Canada
  - Impact of Caffeine on student performance
  - How much perfume is sold in Japan
  - The suspension of Syrian peace talks in Geneva
- Grouped their answers into categories

Diagram:
- News agencies
- Academic researchers
- Commercial researchers
- Info creators
- Non-profits/associations
- Government
Authority is constructed and contextual

Authority is constructed and contextual

- Compared sources on *street harassment and women’s self-esteem*:

- Asked what criteria do you use to decide which resources are appropriate for a university paper?
Information creation is a process

Talked about process as a source of authority
Information has value

- Watched two videos:
  - Academic Integrity and what it means to your future
  - Using copyrighted content licensed under Creative Commons or from the Public Domain
- Talked about relationship between Academic Integrity and Copyright
Information has value

- In groups, students read and summarize articles…
  - “Harper’s attack on science: No science, no evidence, no truth, no democracy”
  - “Canada’s long-form census is back for 2016”
  - “Yes, we were warned about Ebola”
  - “Who’re ya gonna call? Not the corporate university”
Best practices
Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.

Albert Einstein
What I’d do next time

▪ Make sure there is an assignment that lets them practice skills
▪ Example: Develop research question and annotated bibliography w/ accompanying research journal
What I’d do next time

- Keep opening discussion about *research as inquiry*
- driven by curiosity
- inherently uncertain
What I’d do next time

- Explain that process is the researcher’s compass through the unknown
What I’d do next time

▪ Explain that literature review is how we ground our research
▪ Provide tips for:
  ▫ Reading and note-taking
  ▫ searching
What I’d do next time

▪ Structure workshops around skills rather than concepts
▪ Why? Because…
  ▫ Concepts overlap, have different weight
  ▫ Can seem “all over the place” otherwise
Faculty feedback
Faculty feedback

- Make it hands-on
- Make it personalized (related to their assignment)
- Provide online tutorial that students could return to for review
- Include threshold concepts as extra layer over practical stuff
Faculty feedback

- Have students wrestle with personal research question
- Have students explore interdisciplinarity
Student feedback
Student feedback

- Keep the Research Unit visits
- Make it hands-on
- Make it personalized
Student feedback

- Provide opportunity to work together from different disciplinary perspectives
- Collaborate with upper-year students on instruction
Questions

Do you think it makes sense to teach information literacy from the summit instead of the trailhead? How would you manage it?

How are you using threshold concepts in your instruction for first year students, or how would you like to use them?

Do you have any questions for me?
Thanks

Any questions?
You can find me at:
andrea.cameron@concordia.ca

WordPress site for U1x:
http://u1x.concordia.ca/
Credits

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- Presentation template by SlidesCarnival
- Photographs by Unsplash