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2015

American Music

William Fulton

CUNY La Guardia Community College

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Designing Information Assignments for Literacy (DIAL)

Template for Assignment

1. William Fulton
2. American Music
3. Activity Duration: Two weeks
4. Activity Learning Objectives:
 - Objective 1: To find and provide bibliographic citation for three sources (two books and one article) related to a previously proposed research paper project. This is the second staged assignment in a research paper process that includes four assignments (project proposal, annotated bibliography, outline, and final paper) administered over the last eight weeks of the class.
 - Objective 2: To annotate each source (in one or two paragraphs) in order to show how it relates to the student's chosen project, what is the thesis of the book or article, and why this particular source is of particular value to the subject.
5. Activity Description:

The process began with a class trip to the library, and individual subject searches of the university's available books and articles (on databases such as JSTOR). Students ordered and borrowed books, and downloaded articles, and were instructed to review enough sources in order to choose three that are specifically relevant and useful to their topics. The activity culminated in an annotated bibliography of the three chosen sources.
6. Materials and Resources
Provide your instructions, handouts, and links to any other materials students use to do the activity.

Assignment #2: Annotated bibliography

The goal of this assignment is to provide three sources for your research project, and to write one or two paragraphs (roughly a half page per source) discussing the source, and how it

relates to your research project. As discussed in class, you should have at least one paper book (meaning, not an ebook), and two other sources that can either be ebooks, paper books, or a combination of one book and one academic article. Credible, vetted online sources, such as newspaper and magazine articles, interviews, etc., can be used for your paper, but not as one of your three sources in this assignment. Why? Because books and academic articles will provide a more complex, thorough engagement with a topic than newspaper or magazine articles, and you will need to show that you are conducting proper research to gain a greater understanding of your topic.

Based on Chicago-style citation format, your bibliography format should be as follows:

BOOK:

Author Last, Author First. *Title*. Publisher City: Publisher, Date.

Example: Fulton, William. *Can't Wait to Read your Papers*. New York: LaGuardia, 2015.

ACADEMIC ARTICLE:

Author Last, Author First. "Article Title." *Journal Title*. Volume: Number (Date): Page-Page.

Example: Fulton, William. "Can't Wait to Read your Papers." *The Journal of LaGuardia*. 1:1 (2015): 200-204.

The format of your assignment should include: A heading (as I have used here), the assignment title, and three citations, each followed by your discussion of the source's content. I am not expecting you to read all of the books in their entirety, but you should state clearly: *how* this relates to your research, *what* thesis the author or authors are making, and *why* you chose this source. Be sure to provide specifics, detail, and even a quotation from the source if it helps your discussion.

7. Reflection about the Activity (please write several paragraphs):

What did you learn by doing this activity with your students? What was successful? What would you do differently next time? Were there challenges or surprises? How did you change your activity to make it more focused on inquiry and problem solving? How does your activity address the college's Inquiry and Problem Solving competency?

By spending time with my students in the library as they searched for sources, I realized what a daunting concept research is for most of them! They often gave up easily if a search didn't readily produce results, or gravitated toward sources that had little or nothing to do with their project. This process has made me realize that the conceptual basics of research needs to be incorporated into my class earlier, and that students (in my case, community college students) may need more than two weeks to complete this assignment correctly. Research is a process of trial and error, and students looking for a quick solution to the assignment often miss how the

process of looking can inform their historical investigation in a way that quickly finding a passable source cannot.

The primary change I would make to the assignment is to give the students more time to complete it, and devote more class time to discussing research fundamentals. This would entail starting earlier in the semester, in order to give them an opportunity to try different approaches. I may even consider making it a two part project, in which a second annotated bibliography is assigned a month after the first.

This assignment works toward developing student's competency in Inquiry and Problem Solving. This course (American Music) is a Liberal Arts music history course, and so their *inquiry* involves researching a chosen area of American music history, and their *problem solving* is to provide an interpretation of how their topic relates to larger issues and historical trends discussed in class. Part of the importance of *problem solving* is to negotiate contradictory viewpoints and theses about genres of American music, specifically related to topic areas covered in class (such as class, gender, identity, race, authenticity, and place).