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BREAKING DOWN TRADITIONAL TERRITORY LINES: BUILDING INSTRUCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LIBRARIANS, ARCHIVISTS, AND DISCIPLINE FACULTY

ALYSE MINTER, ASHLEY TODD-DIAZ AND LA SHONDA MIMS

OVERVIEW

The Towson Seminar (TSEM) is a required, for-credit first-year seminar course, which supports the acquisition of foundational research and writing skills. TSEM courses are anchored within academic departments, largely taught by discipline faculty and supported by librarians. This project involved restructuring information literacy (IL) instruction in *TSEM 102: American in the 1960s*, in order to provide a more critical approach to analysis, use of primary sources, and the research process. Using co-teaching and collaborative planning, we incorporated multiple pedagogical approaches to challenge students to consider concepts of power, voice, and representation in information, while drawing connections between social disruption in the 1960s and the present.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This instructional project consists of a five-session sequence, which incorporates information and archival literacy concepts, providing opportunities for active learning in support of course assignments. Planning for this multi-year project began in Fall 2016, with the instructional model being implemented in Spring 2017 and improved each semester, with the most recent iteration being Spring 2018. The first session introduced students to the research process and engaged students in research using scholarly journal articles as secondary sources. The second session introduced students to conducting research with primary source documents. The third session focused on critical analysis of primary source documents, using case studies and revisiting primary source materials from the first session. In the fourth session, students analyzed materials documenting the formation of the Black Student Union at Towson University, looking at context and constructing histories. The fifth session was an open lab session, in which students reviewed the research process and had the opportunity to ask questions and get feedback from both the librarian and the faculty instructor on their final assignment progress. The final assignment consisted of a research paper, which incorporated both primary and secondary sources.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

All TSEM courses have goals as part of the larger university curriculum. We adopted the following TSEM goals: research a topic, develop an argument, and organize supporting details.

TSEM 102: America in the 1960s had seven course goals as expressed in the syllabus. Of those goals, we selected three to focus on in library sessions: formulating a research question; gathering and using academic resources effectively and according to the rules of academic integrity in formulating and presenting analysis and evidence regarding a problem or issue; and connecting concepts and evidence in logically coherent, valid, and compelling ways.

This library instruction sequence was intended to increase students' knowledge of research competencies associated with primary and secondary source use, as well as to equip students to be able to find, analyze, organize, and use a variety of information resources to support the research and study of American history. Each instruction session also had individual learning objectives, which can be viewed in Appendix A.

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

The collaborative instruction efforts of librarians and discipline faculty have been shown to result in a more valuable learning experience for students (Hicks & Howkins, 2015). Through combining different areas of expertise, our instruction team was able to build on each teaching event and reinforce concepts in a way that would have been impossible with one-shot or isolated instruction sessions. We scaffolded the learning process by using a variety of teaching strategies, such as small group work, whole group discussions, direct instruction, case studies, problem-based learning, and adaptive teaching. Each instruction session also had an assessment component. Following each session, the instruction team communicated regarding the assessment results to ensure students had a firm grasp of the content. When students' gains did not match with instructor expectations, instruction was adapted to provide enrichment or extended coverage of difficult topics in subsequent sessions. Because this is a multi-year project, we have had the opportunity to change instructional scope between semesters, based on observations, self-reflections, and assessments from previous semesters.

Information Literacy

This project was grounded in the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. In her role as Research and Instruction Librarian, Alyse supported students in seeing connections between the information they were using and the context in which that information existed. This included investigating bias in primary source documents; recognizing that authority assumed or assigned to creators exists within power structures that are inherently uneven, such that authority is contextual; understanding the information creation process, in order to make better meaning of research findings and comprehend how information is valued differently, dependent on situation; and encouraging students to be inquirers and think critically about the sources they encountered and used (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015).

Using the final paper as the basis of summative assessment for desired course outcomes, our team identified the skills needed for students to be able to complete the final paper and then designed activities that would introduce those necessary skills. Each instruction session introduced or provided practice in IL skills required to complete the research assignment.

Alyse facilitated three IL instruction sessions, in addition to supporting Ashley's archival literacy instruction. The first IL instruction session was focused on research strategies, finding secondary sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, and navigating history subject databases. Students were assigned to work in small groups and worked through investigating background sources, identifying keywords, creating search strategies, and selecting relevant peer-reviewed articles. A copy of the worksheet used for this activity is in Appendix B.

The second IL session was focused on critical analysis of primary sources and introduced students to working with conflicting viewpoints as seen in multiple documents from the same event. The worksheet for this session is in Appendix C.

The final IL session consisted of a review of all previous library instruction sessions and citation formatting, followed by an open lab session, where the instruction librarian and discipline faculty member teamed up to answer questions and provide support to students as they worked on their final papers.

Archival Literacy

Archival literacy can be considered as a subset of IL that is focused on the skills necessary to work with primary sources and archival materials (Morris, Chute, & Swain, 2016). Primary sources and archival materials are often unpublished and written for a variety of audiences and purposes; therefore the context surrounding who created them, how they were created, when they were created, and why they were created become as important as the content they hold. Thus, primary sources provide unique educational opportunities for students to engage in inferring, critical thinking, and questioning in order to construct their own analyses and conclusions regarding pieces of evidence.

As Head of Special Collections and University Archives, Ashley places an emphasis on empowering students to gain archival literacy skills and feel comfortable researching with primary sources and archival records. During the course of the semester, TSEM students visited the TU Special Collections and University Archives twice for instruction sessions. The first archives session was designed to introduce students to the concept of an archives with the awareness that most of them had never visited an archive or conducted research with primary source documents before. This introductory session allowed students to hold history in their hands by working with a variety of Towson University records from the 1960s. Not only did this session allow students to relate to the human side of this era, but it challenged them to work in small groups to consider what types of unpublished, non-peer reviewed resources are created on a day-to-day basis that can inform the study of history when we are mindful of acknowledging issues of bias and context. The worksheets for this session are in Appendix D.

The second archives session encouraged students to apply course content to a case study examining the establishment of TU's Black Student Union through eight primary source documents written by various students and administrators. The session drew on problem-based learning strategies (Diekema, Holliday, & Leary, 2011) to engage learners with the process of evaluating primary sources both individually and in a cooperative learning activity to explore the timeline and motivations of a real-life event through varied perspectives.

Historical Methodology

Many students complete high school with the ability to write in summary/report form, which differs from the original research they are expected to produce in TSEMs. Working with primary source materials within the archives positioned *America in the 1960s* students as both social members of the campus community and researchers who understand the university as a place with a past, connecting their role as first-year students to one as burgeoning scholars. Students strove to understand the role of the 1960s in U. S. History as both a national and local event, cementing the knowledge that students' actions in everyday life create tangible historical evidence. This encouraged them to understand themselves as active creators and participants in the university's historical record.

The American Historical Association's (AHA) "History Tuning Project" is an effort to move undergraduate history education forward in the 21st century. Student work conducted in the TU archives meets core competencies and learning outcomes detailed by the AHA. As students constructed timelines and narratives based on the provided primary sources, they "built historical knowledge" and "recognize[d] how humans in the past shaped their own unique historical moments and were shaped by those moments" (American Historical Association, 2016, para. 4). Students created their own historical methods, as they came to understand "history as an interpretive account of the human past—one that historians create in the present from surviving evidence, and collect, sift, organize, question, synthesize, and interpret complex material" (American Historical Association, 2016, para. 4). Additionally, students encountered "the provisional nature of knowledge, the disciplinary preference for complexity, and the comfort with ambiguity that history requires" (American Historical Association, 2016, para. 4).

The AHA encourages professors to ground their students in the methodological rigor of the historical process, which is exactly the work we did in our library and archives sessions. We relinquished the process of analysis and learning to the student, offering complex tools and collaborative guidance for independent historical inquiry.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

All instruction sessions included opportunities for the leadership team to observe and verbally check in with students as they engaged in a variety of activities and group projects. Additionally, worksheets provided a concrete form of assessment that could be used to measure progress towards learning objectives. By posing questions that led students through the process of evaluating information and encouraged critical thinking around topics of creator, intent, intended audience, bias, and what information was missing from the provided primary sources, the instruction team could track the development of information and archival literacy skills. This data informed decisions about instructional strategies, session content, the balance of information between library and archives sessions, and learning activities from semester to semester.

Students prepared partial drafts of 1500 words after the first four instructional sessions, and the faculty instructor provided feedback to aid the student in producing a formal research paper of 2500-3000 words. In the final classroom meetings of the semester, students presented their work to each other in a conference-style format, discussing their topic, thesis, research struggles, and sources. In the development of the draft, the final paper, and the oral presentation, students demonstrated the benefits of the library and archival instruction sessions on their final projects. Although not all students in the course incorporated university-specific archival sources in their final paper, every student demonstrated an improved understanding of the role of primary, secondary, and archival sources in their research process.

Over the course of several semesters, we worked as an instructional team to reorder sessions and the introduction of supporting material in the classroom to better facilitate student learning. During the first three weeks of the course, the faculty instructor introduced research processes and the role of sources during regular class meetings, with the library instruction session held during week four reinforcing these concepts through a thorough discussion of the resources available for research support. By the time students arrived at their first archival instructional session during week six of the semester, they were prepared to engage with archival sources. Students were familiar with the meanings of sources and how they might play a role in their final projects. They also had the necessary historical understanding of the 1960s in place to situate these sources in the historical context of the course.

Some of the best student papers directly engaged Towson-specific sources to produce their scholarship. For example, one student interested in studying the role of the women's movement of the 1960s found information in Towson student handbooks from the same time period. During our archival instructional sessions, the student perused the handbooks and became interested in the

codes of conduct specifically directed at female and male students. One of her most profound discoveries was seemingly quite simple: that female students were held to a more detailed and lengthy set of standards in comparison to male students. This recognition catapulted her to further analyze university-specific archival materials. These materials served as her evidentiary base for a discussion of the daily expectations of women on her college campus in the 1960s, in comparison to the national discussion of white women's place in society.

CHALLENGES AND INSIGHTS

By working with primary sources and engaging in critical analysis, we recognized that students were placed outside of their comfort zone despite being in a familiar location and were challenged to learn how to work with a new set of information resources. We prioritized working closely with students as they engaged with materials in the first archives session to provide additional scaffolding regarding what questions to ask and elements to identify, in order to build towards deeper analyses. The archives became a critical thinking lab of multi-faceted, historical documents and objects for students to explore and in which to become immersed. We endeavored to draw clear connections between library sessions and course content, in order to strengthen students' academic success.

Some first-year students may be used to rote memorization and a search for the "right" answer where history is concerned. Understanding that history is made up of multiple viewpoints and perspectives can result in confusion about what it means to encounter bias in information. Students were often quick to assume that documents were unbiased and expressed earnest feedback to this end. Developing their evaluative and analysis skills was an important foundational step, which led to additional instruction coverage using case studies.

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APPENDIX A

Instructional Unit Plan

Alyse Minter, Research and Instruction Librarian

Ashley Todd-Diaz, Head of Special Collections and University Archives

Dr. La Shonda Mims, Lecturer, History

Towson University

Course Title: TSEM 102 America in the 1960s: Decade of Conflict and Change

Course Instructor: Dr. La Shonda Mims

Course Description: An introduction to the cultural, political, social conflicts of the 1960s in America, with emphasis on development of research and critical thinking skills. Through their study of major figures, movements and events of this period, as well as through guided study of research methodology, students will become acquainted with historical ways of thinking and writing.

(Selected) Course Learning Outcomes:

- Formulate a research question
- Gather and use academic resources effectively and according to the rules of academic integrity in formulating and presenting analysis and evidence regarding a problem or issue
- Connect concepts and evidence in logically coherent, valid, and compelling ways

Final Assignment(s): 2500-3000 word research paper incorporating secondary and primary sources; Oral Presentation: discussion of research process, topic, and findings

TSEM Course Objective: SWBAT research a topic, develop an argument and organize supporting details.

Format: Five library/archives instruction sessions conducted roughly bi-weekly

Purpose:

- Increase students' knowledge of research competencies associated with primary and secondary source use
- Equip students to be able to find, analyze, organize, and use a variety of information resources to support research and study of American history

ACRL Framework Connections:

- Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
- Information Creation as a Process
- Information Has Value
- Research as Inquiry

Sessions:

Session 1: Library | Academic Research with Secondary Sources

1 hour, 15min



Objective(s):

- SWBAT investigate big ideas and key vocabulary related to initial research topic
- SWBAT identify research problem and stakeholders
- SWBAT articulate research question and break it down into appropriate keyword families
- SWBAT choose a relevant article based on their research needs

Activities:

- Understanding the Problem Pt. I
 - Split into pairs/small groups
 - Explore background sources via pre-research using assigned topics and encyclopedias from GALE Virtual Ref Library
 - Identify keyword(s) from research topic and brainstorm synonyms/related terms
 - Create a logical search strategy
 - Perform search in America History & Life, choose one relevant article
 - Cite article in Chicago Style: author-date (time permitting)

Assessment:

- Observation, engaging and questioning
- “Understanding the Problem Pt. 1” Worksheet

Session 2: Archives | Working with Primary Source Documents 101

1 hour, 30min

Objective(s):

- SWBAT conduct basic analysis of primary source documents (i.e. type, purpose, creator, date, apparent bias)
- SWBAT apply discipline knowledge to explain importance of using primary source documents

Activities

- Pre-knowledge assessment (K/W) – Alyse
- Intro to archives presentation – Ashley
- Station rotations (7min/ea)
- Whole group discussion/post-learning assessment (L)

Assessment

- Questions worksheet for rotations
- K-W-L query

Session 3: Library | Critical Analysis of Primary Source Documents Pt. I

1 hour, 15min

Objective(s):

- SWBAT analyze primary source documents for bias
- SWBAT infer meaning from documents given context and part-to-whole relationships

Activities:

- “What’s Race Got to Do With It?” or “Towson: Past in Present, Present in Past” case study

- Discussion
- Understanding the Problem Pt. II
 - In small groups, examine selected primary source docs from 1st archives session
 - Analyze and critique for bias/perspective, given discussions from case studies

Assessment

- Observation, questioning, discussion
- “Understanding the Problem Pt. 2” worksheet

Session 4: Archives | Critical Analysis of Primary Source Documents Pt. II

1 hour, 30min

Objective(s):

- SWBAT analyze primary source documents to gain understanding of historic events
- SWBAT assess representation of voice/exclusion/bias in primary source documents
- SWBAT synthesize historical information to create summary of events
- SWBAT develop timeline of events based on collective document analysis

Activities

- “BSU Formation at TU” case study
 - Intro to BUS history & review of primary vs. secondary sources - Ashley
 - Small group analysis of primary sources & create summaries as visual posters on white boards
 - Whole group – Students create timeline w/ posters (rolling white boards)
 - Whole group – Discussion of importance of context, how primary sources don’t exist in isolation & importance of representation/multiple voices

Assessment

- Poster – students create visual summary of information inferred from primary source analysis

Session 5: Library | Review Research with Secondary Sources, Citations, & Open Lab

1 hour, 15min

Objective(s):

- SWBAT identify research problem and stakeholders
- SWBAT articulate research question and break it down into appropriate keyword families
- SWBAT choose a relevant article based on their research needs
- SWBAT apply rules of attribution in order to create accurate citations

Activities:

- Review academic research (brainstorming keywords, creating search strategies, searching in appropriate databases, selecting relevant articles) and researching with primary sources
- Review/reintroduce citing with Chicago style: notes & bibliography
- Open lab – research/write individual papers with support from librarian, teaching faculty, and student assistant (A-LIST student or Writing Center fellow)

Assessment:

- Observation, engaging & questioning

- Feedback sheet (exit ticket)

Unit Assessment

- Feedback sheet (at conclusion of final library session)

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APPENDIX B



Name(s):

Research topic (from handout):

Encyclopedia and article title:

“Understanding the Problem” Part 1

Part 1: Exploring Background Information

- Go to the “Explore Background Information” tab in your course guide (<http://towson.libguides.com/tsem102mims/background>).
- Open Gale Virtual Reference Library.
- Search for the encyclopedia entry provided on your slip of paper.

Skim through the entry. What type of “big picture” information does it contain about your topic?

Were there any unfamiliar words or ideas? Provide an example of one or two:

What words seem most important to use in describing your topic?

What question(s) would you like to answer regarding your topic?



Wait for further directions.

Part 2: Identify Keywords

In this segment you will identify keywords and related terms from the research topic written above.

Keyword 1:	Synonyms & Related Terms
Keyword 2:	
Keyword 3	



Wait for further directions.

Part 3: Create a Search Strategy

AND	
AND	



Wait for further directions.

Part 4: Searching in a Subject Database

- Go to the course guide (<http://towson.libguides.com/tsem102mims>).
- Use the “Find Secondary Sources: Articles” tab. Click “**Search Selected Databases.**”
- Using the search strategy from Part 3, search for **(1) relevant, peer- reviewed article.**

Write the author(s) and title here:



Make sure your document has been saved.

APPENDIX C

Name(s):

“Understanding the Problem” Part 2

Part 1: Quick Read

Create a brief summary of your primary source document. What are your first impressions? What questions do you have about this document? What does it tell you about Towson history?



Wait for further directions.



Part 2: Deep Reading

Use the following questions to analyze your primary source document for bias:

- What kind of material/document is this? When was this created?
- What else was going on at that time?
- Who created the document? Who was the intended audience?
- Whose perspective is the information presented from?
- How does the creator's voice intersect with privilege or marginalization?¹
- How does this impact how this information might be valued or devalued?
- Whose voice is missing? Could this missing voice add additional insights from a different perspective? What would that voice add to the analysis?



Wait for further directions.

¹ **Privilege** - a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group of people (ex. on the basis of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, language, socioeconomic status...etc).

Marginalization - treatment of a person, group, or concept as insignificant or peripheral; to put or keep (someone) in a powerless or unimportant position within a society or group.

Part 3: Consulting Other Sources for Context

No primary source document lives in isolation. Based on what you've heard from your classmates and/or read for context, how did your interpretation of the document change?

What potential follow-up questions does your group have? What areas of research could provide further insight?



Make sure your names are on the paper.

APPENDIX D

TSEM 102: America in the 1960s

As you review the primary sources around the room, consider the following questions and discuss them among your group members:

Yearbooks

- Whose point of view is being shared in the yearbooks?

Documents

- What is the connection between these two documents?

Handbooks

- How do these handbooks reflect the student experience during the 1960s and 1970s?

Newspapers

- Aside from the details of the news stories, what information do the newspapers hold?

Photographs

- Without any accompanying text, what subtle information about TU in the 1960s and 1970s can you draw from these images?

Ephemera

- Often ephemera contains limited information, but can be a starting point for additional research. What clues for further research do you see?

Correspondence

- What does this correspondence say about TU's relationship with the outside community?

After reviewing all seven types of primary sources, discuss the following questions among your group members:

1. Which type of resource did you think was the most informative and why?

2. Which type of resource did you think was most biased and why?

3. Which type of resource surprised you the most and why?