

Miami University Libraries

Teaching Evaluation – Instructional Assessment Report

Librarian Instructor Jenny Presnell

Date of Session October 4, 2010

Session Details (Class, Professor) HST 702, Research Seminar for Graduate Students

Learning Objectives

1. To specifically address questions about advanced research (see the list of topics below)
2. To discuss research skills for graduate students. Specifically the professor requested we talk about my book.
3. Present options for bibliographic management and note taking (Refworks and Zotero).

Handouts None. Used Libguides, MiamiLINK, Refworks, and Zotero.

Brief Narrative Description of Session

Purpose of the class is to have graduate students begin thinking about research for their thesis. The class asks students to take a research topic and work with it, finding primary and secondary sources and working that into something original. This involves a prospectus, a beginning, but extensive, bibliography, and a final paper. My purpose is to expose the students to a variety of online and in-print resources as well search techniques for primary sources. Also, because they are in preparation for a larger project, students need learn how to use bibliographic management software. For this class, the professor was using my book, *The Information-Literate Historian* and she wanted the class to discuss its contents.

Student Research Topics:

- English Protestant martyrology in the mid-seventeenth century
- Relationship of evolutionary theory to race in the 1950s and 1960s
- Geodæsia: Land and Memory: a case study in Butler County, Ohio (exhibit)
- Women's mobility within the colonies during the 17th and early 18th centuries
- Loyalists in Revolutionary-era history
- The Ethnography of *Charlotte Temple*: Education and Identity Formation in the Ohio Valley, 1800-1850
- Middle Eastern modernism through the study of Amman, Jordan
- Kenya-U.S. relations through study of airlifts of East African students to American universities between 1959 and 1963, organized by Kenyan labor leader Tom Mboya

- Bohemian Communities in Dresden and Munich and the Development of Regional Identification in the Second German Empire
- Al-Tabari in Context: Representations of Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan
- Cultural influence of the French military in colonial America
- Italian national identity in immigrant communities in Cleveland, Ohio, in the early 20th century

Assessment Method Utilized

I used a one minute paper and asked the following (see below for data):

1. What should every first year history graduate student know?
2. How could this session be improved?

Summary of Assessment Result

Students wanted more specific research ideas for their individual topics. While that's a legitimate need, it's hard to do in front of a class with such complex topics. We did examine some, but were not and would not be able to get through all of the topics.

Did you meet your learning objectives?

Learning Objective	Exceeded	Met	Did not Meet
1		X	
2	X		
3		X	

Reflection on Assessment/Implications for Future Teaching

There isn't much I would change about this session. Since the class is meant to be tailored to the specific needs of topics, classroom activity is very dependent on the experiences of the class and with what questions they come. One student suggested workshops for undergraduate students, which has been something I've wanted to try for many years, but found it hard to find the time to develop them.

The session that discussed my textbook was very useful. It gave me student perspective on how it's used. If the book goes into a second edition, I have good information on how to change and expand certain sections.

Assessment Results:

What should every 1st year history graduate student know?

- Everything is this book by J. Presnell. However, I would change this Q to “what HST undergraduates should know”. A chronic problem exists in research, is that undergrads too often have no exposure to this kind of researching before they enter grad school. There’s no reason for that. So – I explained the choice of target audience for this book, and suggest more workshops like this for undergrads
- All HST grad students should know, I now believe, of Refworks. As an organizational tool its important but as a timesaving device it is crucial.
- They should know resources for quick citations of footnotes/bibs. Also, databases to search book reviews (JSTOR) and articles. World cat and I.L.L. O-Link (or similar for each state)
- How to use worldcat, Refworks. How to use the Internet to search for primary sources. They should know how useful a resource Jenny Presnell is – everyone should meet w/ you one-on-one about research.
- How to find and use, in this article:
 - scholarly article databases
 - library catalog
 - primary source databases
- Methodology of researching sources online and how to locate them when not readily available by MULibraries
- History grads should also know how to search the MULibraries catalog → especially since the new version has so many features.
- All history grads should know about Zotero. In the fifteen minutes playing around with the site, I already discovered numerous advantages to using the site.
- Should know a variety of databases not just a few. This ensures that they get valid sources. They should also have an idea of the right search words to use.
- The extent of databases available through this university – I think the mindset of the current grad students think “large scope” → internet/JSTOR/etc. and won’t automatically at this university look for databases.
- I would say that all history grad students should be familiar with the library’s selection of online access to primary resources such as English books online, and American History in video. We need to know the research resources at our disposal.

How could this session be improved?

- Provide the audience with a list of “need to bring” items – ie. Electronic copy of bib or a source list that can play with while we are in the workshop. Also – our own laptop? Thanks for everything
- Perhaps do more practice research at a variety of electronic resources for primary-source material. Perhaps introduce students to online national catalogues of foreign governments (like the British National Archives, Spanish colonial research, etc).
- Improvements: None of which I can currently think of...
- Introduce this ‘workshop’ to the first year of graduate school

- Perhaps focus more on people's topics to jump-start their research process. Gets points across while being beneficial to individuals.
- I would devote a little chunk of time making sure everyone knows the searching capabilities of the catalog.
- To be individually targeted for a least 1/3-1/2 of the course: individual help on our own projects.
- Great seminar – maybe do a couple of examples of how to find obscure sources
- N/A
- Information more pertinent to specific topics
- I know it's difficult (and gets into very esoteric grounds) but maybe ways of accessing non-English language material