QEP Pre-Activity Report

Name: Allison Elledge  
Course/Section to be Assessed: History 1120  
Semester Implemented: Fall 2014  
Control Course/Section (if applicable): P 21

1. What is the desired learning outcome? *(What do you want the students to be able to do better at the end of the lesson and to what degree?)*

The desired learning outcome for my project is to have students write in a concise manner and engage in research, finding and explaining primary and secondary resources. They will gain experience primarily by using the library’s resources and concise writing.

2. What activity/lesson will be implemented to increase mastery of the desired learning outcome?

A topic statement and a 15-source annotated bibliography.

3. How will you measure whether the activity improved mastery of the targeted outcome?

I will measure this based on the types of sources the students use—databases, journals, primary sources, images, interviews, and such—as well as the level of detail in their annotations.
QEP Final Report — Annotated Bibliography

Allison Elledge
History 2010, United States History I
Fall, 2014

Background

The Annotated Bibliography assignment was a two-part activity that took place during the Fall 2014 semester in one section of Hist. 2010, United States History to 1877. (I also used this assignment in my other classes: Hist. 1020, Westerr: Civ. I, Hist. 1110, World Civ. I and Hist. 1120, World Civ. II). Prior to turning in any assignment, students were required to attend a mandatory library lesson, in which a representative of PSCC’s library came to class to discuss the library’s databases and other resources and show students how to begin a research project. The first written part of the assignment required the students to write a brief topic statement (half to one page) on a topic of their choosing from a list of subjects I provided. Students also have to gather and annotate 1-2 primary sources and 2-3 secondary sources so that I could evaluate both the kinds of sources they were finding as well as guide them on how to briefly summarize an article or book. They were expected to find the author’s main arguments and conclusions, provide examples, and state why a particular source was significant to their topic. The second part of the assignment was to complete a 15-source annotated bibliography on the same topic in addition to a longer topic statement (1-2 pages), which can be compared to an introduction to an essay. My suggestions were to gather five primary sources and fifteen secondary sources, though these numbers were more of a guide than a strict requirement. In the past, I have required students to find 20 sources for this project, but I have narrowed it to 15 sources because students were getting repetitive and while the library’s resources have much to offer, it is more limited than the University of Tennessee’s library.

Objective

This project addresses four challenges:
1. teach students how to conduct scholarly research
2. enhance reading comprehension
3. practice concise and clear writing
4. expose students to scholarly research literature

The complete objectives and description of the activity appear in the QEP proposal, which is included at the end of this report.

Assessment

A modified version of the Quality Education Plan (QEP) In-class Activity Survey was administered during the last week of classes. Seventeen surveys were completed. The results follow:
Make your ratings by checking the appropriate space. The exercise was

engaging 5: 8: 8: 4: 2: 0: 1: boring

useless 0: 1: 2: 3: 2: 10: 12: beneficial


dull 1: 1: 4: 8: 7: 4: 3: exciting

valuable 9: 11: 5: 4: 1: 1: 0: worthless

complex 4: 5: 6: 8: 2: 3: 0: simple

Comments
Students were invited to include comments. Their responses follow.

“Before this project I knew little to nothing about the War of 1812, and now I would say I am very knowledgeable about the subject. This was a beneficial project.”

“It is beneficial, because I had to search and learn more about U.S. History, but it shouldn’t be 15. It should be 10.”

“I felt that it was a good experience to do the annotate bibliography. It was simple and not incredible demanding, but it also did teach me a lot about my topic.”

“It was very helpful in getting me used to research.”

“When you’ve taken six semesters of English classes though high school and college, you get tired of the English essay style paper . . . So I love that this was different, and I got to be specific and in no time I had my longest paper ever.”

“Much more interesting to write this project than a boring research paper. It takes time, but it’s easier to take a break and come back another day to finish it.”

“It was valuable in the fact that you learned so much about that topic. The worse part was how time consuming it was. Some of the facts I learned were cool and interesting, but sifting through all the sources was boring.”

Results-Outcome
The class assessed the exercise as generally useful, with the majority of students indicating that it encouraged them to better learn how to use databases and summarize a
lengthy book or article in a concise manner. Several indicated in a class discussion that they enjoyed the research process, particularly because they were interested in the topic that they had chosen. Other students felt that requiring 15 sources was too much.

Grades assigned to the topic statement and annotated bibliography show improvement. The initial topic statement and 3-4 sources are essential to guide the students in doing research of this sort and providing feedback for the final assignment. I intend to continue assigning the Annotated Bibliography in future classes, and will likely continue requiring 15 sources. Further details about the project are in the QEP proposal, which is in Appendix A, attached.

QEP project proposal
Allison Elledge
Adjunct instructor, history
Hist. 2010, Fall 2014

Objective
This project addresses four challenges for history classes:
  1. teach students how to conduct scholarly research
  2. enhance reading comprehension
  3. practice concise and clear writing
  4. expose students to scholarly research literature

Description of activity
Instead of requiring students to write a research paper I will ask them to prepare a lengthy annotated bibliography. My hypothesis is that the work necessary for a fully developed annotated bibliography will better prepare students to write research papers in the future. Students at PSTCC often do not understand either how to find scholarly sources or what they are. This exercise will familiarize them with both.

Early in the semester the entire class will attend a presentation by a librarian explaining how to conduct scholarly research, including techniques designed to teach them how to recognize acceptable sources by comparing them to non-scholarly literature. The librarian will also explain how to annotate a bibliography and describe the difference between primary and secondary sources. I will reinforce this information during subsequent classroom discussions.

Students will be required to submit a preliminary 1-page topic statement along with a trial bibliography consisting of one primary source and three secondary sources. I will provide feedback explaining how to improve their topic statement and their sources. After getting approval for this first state of the project each student will begin working on the full bibliography.
They will be required to write and 1-2-page topic statement and include at least five primary and ten secondary annotated sources in the bibliography. The annotation must include a description of the source’s content, the main arguments, and the conclusions. In addition, students will describe why each source meets the criteria for scholarly research.

I will provide Web sites that give advice about writing an annotated bibliography and about writing style.

Engagement Measure
Toward the semester’s end I will administer the QEP in-class survey after modifying it to reflect the challenges described in the project objective.

Assessment measure
The QEP survey responses will be tabulated and evaluated.

In addition, each annotated bibliography will be graded on how well it meets the project requirements, how well it is written, and how well the student employs good grammar, spelling, and structure. Grading will also reflect how well the student follows instructions.

My evaluation of the annotations will include written suggestions for improvement. This may be as simple as suggesting use of the computer’s spell and grammar checking function or recommending that the student get assistance at the college’s tutoring center. I will also make specific comments about improving the bibliography.

The combination is expected to result in students learning how to do scholarly research. In the process, the students’ reading comprehension and writing skills should also improve.