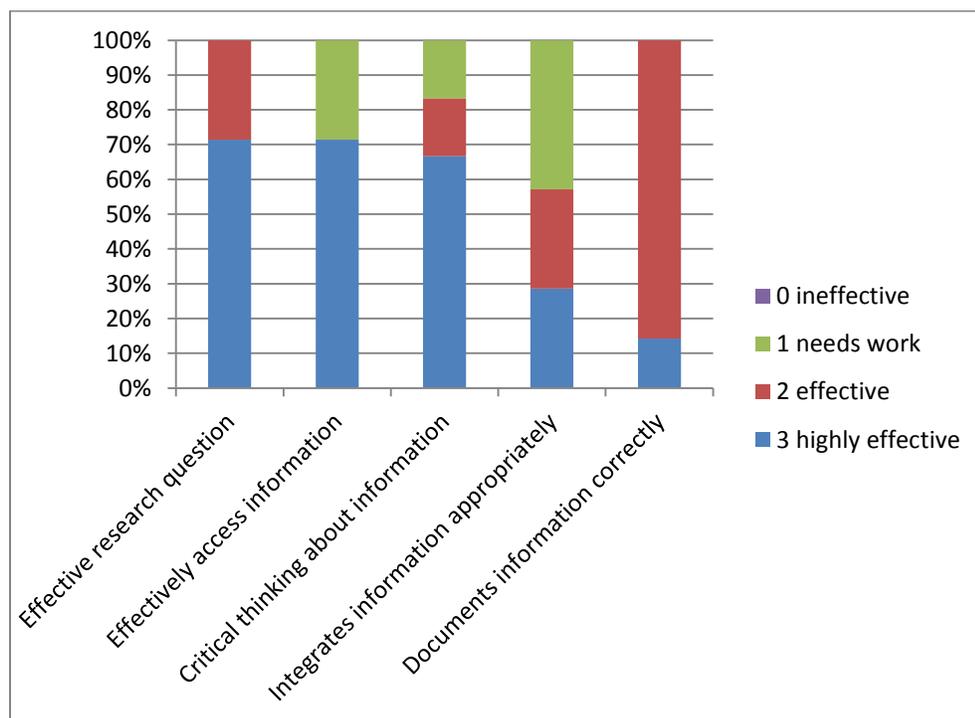


2012 Library Instruction Program Assessment Report: HONS 3500

This year, the library focused on the HONS 3500 course, which is team taught by a librarian and a faculty member from the Anthropology Department. The course is designed to give juniors in the Honors program an initial experience researching a topic of their choice, which they may continue as their senior Capstone project.

The course focuses on developing and writing a research proposal, with much instruction and practice in researching, evaluating, and integrating literature into the research proposal correctly according to discipline style. Five of the eight library instruction program learning objectives (PLOs) were used as course learning objectives (CLOs), and a rubric was constructed around these learning objectives (or goals) with a range from 3 (most) to 0 (no) progress on each. The assessment of each goal and recommendations follow.



2012 HONS 3500 Information Literacy Assessment Combined Scores. n=7

1. Articulate an information need: given a general topic, students will articulate a research question that guides the search for sufficient authoritative resources in a variety of formats.

Students' final research proposals were assessed for how focused and "researchable" the topic was. The instructors spend much time helping students develop a researchable topic; however, it

is a large project with original research requirements, so some students were still finding focus by the end. This focus is somewhat dependent on literature discovered, which in turn influences the research question. Three of the 7 students who completed the course achieved 3 out of 3 points on the rubric, though a couple scored 2. Although ideally all students would score a 3, we are satisfied that we are meeting this learning goal.

2. Access the information effectively and efficiently: after learning how print and digital information is organized in the library, such as catalogs and disciplinary databases, students will efficiently retrieve information using a range of search strategies.

A major course learning goal was that students learn a variety of strategies using a variety of tools. For the first 8 weeks, students were tasked with searching different types of tools and listing several possible sources relevant to their topic. Using these weekly reports, we assessed the number, relevance, and quality of resources students found as an indicator of effective searching in a diverse set of tools. This is not a complete surrogate for this "process" learning goal. We could not assess students' actual process, such as which specific databases they used, and how efficiently or deeply they searched them. Most students received a top score of 3 points on the rubric. However, a couple students scored a low 1 point. We feel this goal is being met based on this measure.

Some weekly reports also ask students to describe what is working well in their research process, and what is not working well. In the future, requiring more of such discussion of process may allow better assessment of this largely process-oriented goal.

3. Information production and critical thinking: after learning how information is produced for different audiences and purposes, such as primary vs. secondary sources, scholarly vs. popular, book vs. journal, online vs. print, and disciplinary differences, students will apply these concepts in choosing authoritative and relevant information.

Students' final research proposals were assessed for relevance, authority, and variety of sources. As students explained their sources in the literature section of their proposal, they explicitly discussed relevance and somewhat more implicitly demonstrated authority of sources. Also, citations demonstrate an appropriate range of source types. This was one of the main goals of the course, and much instruction and practice was spent on it. Four students scored 3 out of 3, with one student scoring 2 and one scoring 1. Although ideally all students would score a 3 on this goal, we are satisfied that the goal is being met and have no recommendations for changes.

4. Non-library sources and critical thinking: after learning how information is created and organized by non-library Web sources, students will apply critical thinking skills in choosing relevant and authoritative non-library information.

No findings. Although the library program learning objectives (PLOs) separate library research from non-library research (i.e., the Web), and evaluation of Web information is relevant to this

course, the rubric did not include it as a separate goal because no assignment required Web resources specifically (though many allowed them). There is merit in keeping library and Web searching separate as PLOs: library research focuses on mastering database features, search concepts, and organization schemes in addition to critical thinking about source choices, whereas Web research focuses instead on authority issues. However, for this course there would perhaps be more merit in joining library and non-library research together for a couple reasons: the distinction between Web and library information is blurring, and students' own projects may use a mix of both sources, or no Web sources at all.

To assess this goal in this course, we could require an assignment on Web resources, though not all students would find it relevant to their final projects.

5. Plagiarism and appropriate information usage: after learning about plagiarism and the legal, ethical, and economic aspects of using information, students will integrate information sources into their projects using ethical standards and discipline style manuals.

Students formulated citations for various types of sources in several weekly assignments. Also the midterm and final required correct in-text citations and accompanying bibliographies. Students were given feedback on all of these. On the rubric, this PLO was broken down to two course objectives: in-text citations, and full citations in a bibliography.

For in-text, results were mixed. Two students scored a 3, while three scored a 1. For the bibliography citations, only one student scored a 3, while the rest scored a 2. This after several opportunities to polish citation skills. Many students repeated earlier mistakes that we had commented on, as if they did not understand how important our input to their process was. Others struggled to consistently apply standard guidelines in text and in bibliographies, again as if they did not understand how important attention to this was.

This target was not met. Students are already being given much practice and feedback on citing properly but more instruction could be devoted to developing in-text integration of sources, for which students seemed particularly inexperienced. Existing instruction could also be improved, including more hands-on instruction and/or more high stakes testing. Though citing correctly in a particular style is exacting work, it is fundamental to this course which develops future researchers. Also, it is not clear that assessing this one goal as two separate criteria on the rubric is necessary. Although they can be seen as different components, they tend to be related enough to treat them as two halves of the same skill; if students did well on one, they would do well on the other.

In summary, students did well on most goals except integrating sources and citing them. Although much time is spent on this, more could be spent, or rather, better results through more efficient use of time by instructor's assignments and grading emphasis.

One further identified task for next year is to revise the course learning objectives on the syllabus to align more with the library's PLO wording, and to make them also align more with Bloom's Taxonomy to facilitate assessment.

The librarian will work with the co-instructor to implement these suggestions next spring, when the course is taught again, and eventually assess this course again.

Submitted 6/11/12 by Tim Held. Revised 8/22/12