

**General syllabus
LIBR 100
Spring 2007
Information Research
Syllabus**

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Course Description

Since the arrival of the internet a chief problem for students and researchers alike has become not too little information but too much. This embarrassment of riches means that it is more important now than ever to have the skills for homing in on relevant and credible sources. This one credit course strives to meet this need.

We will cover the following topics: (1) The many ways in which information gets to researchers: books, magazines, journals, websites, wikis, and blogs, as well as the different degrees of reliability accruing to each; the role of peer review in scholarly books and journals. (2) Electronic research: selecting a manageable topic; choosing an appropriate database; identifying keywords; combining keywords with the boolean operators *and*, *or*, and *not*; the different types of databases (full text, index and abstract, and index). (3) Books: How is searching for books by subject in a catalog different from searching for magazine or journal articles by subject in a database? Why do books remain a valuable source for research? (4) How to cite sources. (5) Working with bibliographies. (6) Print indexes. (7) Evaluating sources: print, organizational websites, blogs, and wikis. (8) Information ethics: intellectual freedom, censorship, intellectual property, copyright, and privacy. (9) Plagiarism and academic integrity.

Course Goals.

At the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Identify an appropriate topic.
2. Find relevant print and electronic sources on your topic.
3. Use the free web effectively.
4. Evaluate sources, both print and electronic, as to authority, reliability, and bias.
5. Cite your sources correctly
6. Know what constitutes plagiarism

Required text:

Arlene Rodda Quaratiello, *The College Student's Research Companion*, 3rd Edition (On reserve)

Recommended text:

Myrtle Bolner and Gayle Poirier, *The Research Process: Book and Beyond*, 4th Edition. (On reserve)

Blackboard site: This course has a Blackboard site. You are expected to check the site in time to be prepared to your next class.

Assignments:

Quizzes and participation: 15%

Midterm: 10%

Homework: 15%

Final project:

 Oral Component: 10%

 Written Component: 30%

Final exam: 20%

Reading: You're expected to do the reading before the class in question. There will occasionally be in class writing on the reading assigned for that day. These exercises will be graded A, C, or F.

Homework. There will be four short assignments.

Final project

The project: Choose a controversial topic related to the Bush administration. Here are some examples of topics you might choose:

- * The evidence for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq
- * The treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison
- * The Iraq insurgency
- * No Child Left Behind
- * Stem cell research
- * Hurricane Katrina
- * Logging in national forests

Other topics are also possible, subject to my approval.

You will be expected to give an informed and accessible discussion of your topic and your sources. You should evaluate your sources and explain how you located them. You will need to find at least 6 types of sources to support your discussion. These sources are

- * One scholarly book
- * One scholarly article
- * One article from a respected and serious magazine (other than for instance *Time*, *Newsweek*, *US News and World Report*, or the like; articles should be least 1500 words)
- * One article from *The New York Times* (at least 1000 words)
- * One website
- * One reference source

Focus. The paper should focus on a discussion of your research strategy. In it you should address the following questions: What keywords and subject terms did you use? Which ones worked? Which ones didn't? What databases did you use? Which yielded the best results? Did you have to refine or revise your

topic? If so, why? You should also discuss your sources. Did they deal with your topic? Were they biased? What were the authors' credentials? What bearing did these credentials have on the credibility or objectivity of the source?

All the sources that you use have to be available here at Hunter. If you have trouble finding a source, let me know. Please don't go to the reference desk.

Purpose: to choose a plausible topic, refine it, locate credible and relevant sources, and to defend the choices that you've made. Avoid editorializing.

Length: five pages, double spaced, one inch margins, 12 pt. Times Roman font. Citations in MLA format. See the Hunter Reading Writing Center's useful handout on MLA (<http://rwc.hunter.cuny.edu/reading-writing/on-line.html>).

Oral component: Between May 2 and May 16 everyone will be expected to talk about their project for 5 minutes. I will ask people to sign up for a time during the first class. Things you should discuss include: (1) the databases you used to find your magazine, journal, and newspaper articles; (2) the book(s) you used; (3) the website(s) you used. For this you will need to turn in an outline of at least twelve components. You can refer to this outline during your presentation, but you shouldn't read from a text. You can show relevant websites and use Powerpoint if you'd like.

Audience: Imagine that you're a policy analyst for a member of the House of Representatives. You're providing House members with a briefing in the form of a research guide on your topic.

Assessment of final project. In your oral presentation I will be looking for lucid coverage of the four themes mentioned above. Your essay will be graded on the overall quality of your presentation: (1) the clarity of your prose, (2) the coherence of your essay, (3) the extent to which you address the questions mentioned above in focus, and (4) the quality of the sources that you have chosen.

All assignments are due at the beginning of class. I will accept nothing electronically. I will accept no late work without a legitimate documented excuse.

Lateness and absences: You will not pass the course if you miss more than two classes unless you have a compelling documented excuse. Lateness after 5 minutes will be counted as half an absence; lateness after 15 minutes will be counted as a full absence. You are responsible for everything covered in classes that you miss.

Please turn off your cell phone during class.

Please note: There will be no incompletes.

Also, there will be no class on the following days: Feb 21 and April 4

Communication: Occasionally I will want to get in touch with the whole class by email. I will address all emails to your Hunter account. If you're not in the habit of checking your Hunter account, please have your emails forwarded from it to the account that you do check regularly.

Plagiarism and cheating. Cheating on an exam will result in an automatic F for the exercise. I will also pass your name along to the college's student disciplinary committee for possible further sanctions. Plagiarism is any attempt to pass someone else's ideas or research off as your own, through either unattributed direct quotation or paraphrasing. It's a kind of theft. Plagiarism on either of the essays will also result in an automatic F for the assignment, and I will again pass your name along to the student disciplinary committee. Plagiarism doesn't pay: if you try it, you will almost certainly get caught.

Turn-it-in.com. If I suspect plagiarism I will ask that you submit your essay to Turn-it-in.

CUNY POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/english2/plagiarism.html>

Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion.

Cheating is the unauthorized use or attempted use of material, information, notes, study aids, devices or communication during an academic exercise.

The following are some examples of cheating, but by no means is it an exhaustive list:

- * Copying from another student during an examination or allowing another to copy your work.
- * Unauthorized collaboration on a take home assignment or examination.
- * Using notes during a closed book examination.
- * Taking an examination for another student, or asking or allowing another student to take an examination for you.
- * Changing a graded exam and returning it for more credit.
- * Submitting substantial portions of the same paper to more than one course without consulting with each instructor.
- * Preparing answers or writing notes in a blue book (exam booklet) before an examination. Allowing others to research and write assigned papers or do assigned projects, including use of commercial term paper services. o Giving assistance to acts of academic misconduct! dishonesty
- * Fabricating data (all or in part).
- * Submitting someone else's work as your own.
- * Unauthorized use during an examination of any electronic devices such as cell phones, palm pilots, computers or other technologies to retrieve or send information.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting another person's ideas, research or writings as your own.

The following are some examples of plagiarism, but by no means is it an exhaustive list:

- * Copying another person's actual words without the use of quotation marks and footnotes attributing the words to their source..
- * Presenting another person's ideas or theories in your own words without acknowledging the source.
- * Using information that is not common knowledge without acknowledging the source.
- * Failing to acknowledge collaborators on homework and laboratory assignments.

Internet plagiarism includes submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers, paraphrasing or copying information from the internet without citing the source, and "cutting & pasting" from various sources without proper attribution.

Obtaining Unfair Advantage is any activity that intentionally or unintentionally gives a student an unfair advantage in his/her academic work over another student.

The following are some examples of obtaining an unfair advantage, but by no means it is an exhaustive list:

- * Stealing, reproducing, circulating or otherwise gaining advance access to examination materials.
- * Depriving other students of access to library materials by stealing, destroying, defacing, or concealing them.
- * Retaining, using or circulating examination materials which clearly indicate that they should be returned at the end of the exam.
- * Intentionally obstructing or interfering with another student's work.

Adapted with permission from Baruch College : A Faculty Guide to Student Academic Integrity.

Course schedule**January 31:** Information, choosing a topic, and database searching

1. Pre-test: VOILA!
2. Information
 - a. How is information produced?
 - b. How does it find its way to you?
 - c. How do we assess its credibility?
 - d. Peer review
 - e. Primary vs. secondary sources

Homework: Please send me an email indicating your major or potential major. Due Feb 7, 10 AM.

February 7: Research topics

1. Choosing a viable research topic
2. Topic vs thesis
3. What is a database?
 - a. Indexes
 - b. Indexes with abstracts
 - c. Full text databases
4. Choosing the right databases:
 - a. General databases vs. specialized databases
 - b. Scholarly databases vs. non-scholarly databases

Reading: Quaratiello, chs. 1 and 7

Recommended: Bolner: pp. 23-26

Homework (due Feb 14): Choose a topic for your final project and write three questions you want answered about that topic.

February 14: Search methods and databases

1. Boolean methods and proximity operators
2. Subject indexing/headings; thesauruses
3. Searching with controlled vocabulary
4. Field searching vs. full text searching
5. Working with specific databases
 - a. Academic Search Premier
 - b. Lexis-Nexis
 - c. Specialized databases

Reading: Quaratiello, pp. 28-36; 67-72; General Searching Strategies (tutorial; http://library.hunter.cuny.edu/tdoyle/Boolean_files/v3_document.htm)

Recommended: Bolner, pp. 47-60.

February 28: Magazines, Journals; political bias or orientation in magazines

1. Scholarly, trade, and popular sources
2. Scholarly communication
3. Determining whether the article has a bias—for instance, political or religious—or orientation
4. Plausibility of information
5. Older vs. newer articles

Reading: Quaratiello, pp. 65-67; 143-47

Recommended: Bolner, pp. 30-31; 139-45

Homework (due March 7): Provide citations and annotations for two magazine articles—that is, articles from non-scholarly periodicals—that are relevant to the topic of your final project. Make sure your articles comes from a high quality source. Avoid, for instance, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report*. Your annotations should justify your choice of articles. The annotations should be between 100 and 150 words each.

March 7: Books

1. Library of Congress classification
2. Using Library of Congress subject headings
3. Deciphering catalog records
4. Books as sources of bibliographies
5. Scholarly books vs. trade books
6. Finding book reviews
7. Sources for book reviews: *The New York Review of Books* and *The Times Literary Supplement (TLS)*

Reading: Quaratiello, pp. 17-28

Recommended: Bolner, 333-337; 65-72

March 14: Working with bibliographies; print reference sources

1. Reading citations
2. Putting together a bibliography/proper documentation
3. Annotated bibliographies
4. Writing annotations
5. Conventional (print) reference sources
 - a. Atlases
 - b. Statistical
 - c. Biographical
 - d. Specialized (subject) encyclopedias/dictionaries
 - e. Directories
 - f. Handbooks
 - g. Quotation sources
 - h. Chronological sources
 - i. Bibliographies

Homework (due March 21): Provide citations and annotations for two scholarly books that are relevant to the topic of your final project. Your annotations should justify your choice of the books. The annotations should be between 100 and 150 words each.

Reading:

Quaratiello, pp. 49-64

Raimes, *The Open Handbook*, p. 402 (eres)

March 21: Demographic and Congressional information with guest speaker Professor Danise Hoover

1. Demographic information
 - a. U.S. Census Bureau
 - b. New York City Department of Planning
 - c. Infoshare

2. Congressional Information: Lexis-Nexis Congressional

March 28: Midterm

1. Midterm (25 minutes): will cover Jan 31-March 21; format: several questions requiring short answers.
2. Print reference sources (continued from March 14)

April 11: Evaluating scholarly sources; research on the web

1. Evaluating the quality of scholarly articles
 - a. Citation counts
 - b. How to use a citation index
 - c. Citation counts in Google Scholar
2. Research on the web
 - a. Credibility: the internet vs. print

Reading: Quaratiello, pp. 143-147

Homework (due April 18): Provide citations and annotations for peer reviewed articles that are relevant to the topic of your final project. Your annotations should justify your choice of articles. The annotations should be between 100 and 150 words each.

April 18: Research on the web continued

1. Criteria for evaluating websites
 - a. Authorship; sponsoring institution
 - b. Authority
 - c. Purpose
 - d. Quality of writing; tendentious language
 - e. How recent?
 - f. Can factual claims be corroborated?
 - g. Domain

Reading: Quaratiello, ch. 4; pp. 143-47

Also:

Burbules, N.C. 2001. "Paradoxes of the Web: The Ethical Dimensions of Credibility." *Library Trends* 49 (3): 441-47, paragraph 1.

Fallis, D. 2004. "On Verifying the Accuracy of Information: Philosophical Perspectives." *Library Trends* 52 (3): 463-466, paragraph 2; 470 (bottom)-472 (bottom).

Rothenberg, D. 1997. "How the Web Destroys the Quality of Students' Research Papers." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 32 (August 15): A44. (eres)

Vedder, A. & Wachbroit, R. 2003. "Reliability of Information on the Internet: Some Distinctions." *Ethics and Information Technology* 5 (4): 211-15.

Recommended: Bolner, 139-45

April 25: Research on the web continued

1. Research on the web, continued
 - a. Search engines and search directories
 - b. Effective web search strategies

2. Blogs
3. Wikipedia

Reading:

Giles, J. 2005. "Internet Encyclopedias Go Head to Head." *Nature* 438 (7070; December 15): 900-01.
The Library Bill of Rights (<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/statementsif/librarybillrights.htm>)
 Poe, M. 2006. "The Hive." *Atlantic* 298 (September): 86-94.
 Reed, B. 2006. "'Wikimania' Participants Give the Online Encyclopedia Mixed Reviews." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 53 (September 1): 62.
 Schiff, S. (2006). "Know it all." *New Yorker* 82 (July 23): 36-43.

Recommended: Bolner, pp. 123-27

Homework (due May 2): Provide citations and annotations for two credible and content-rich websites that are relevant to the topic of your final project. Your annotations should justify your choice of the websites in the light of the main criteria for evaluating websites above. The annotations should be between 100 and 150 words each. Helpful source: Hunter's Reading/Writing Center's handout on web evaluation at <http://rwc.hunter.cuny.edu/reading-writing/on-line/evaluating-web-sources.pdf>

May 2: Information ethics I

1. Information ethics: Copyright, intellectual property, fair use, and plagiarism and academic integrity
2. Presentations

Reading:

Hettinger, E. 1989. "Justifying Intellectual Property." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 18 (1): 31-32.2; 47.4-49.
 Raimes, A. *The Open Handbook*, pp. 363-67 (eres).

Recommended: Bolner, pp. 31-32

May 9: Information ethics II

1. Censorship and intellectual freedom
2. Privacy
3. Presentations

Reading:

Frické, M., Mathiesen, K., and Fallis, D. 2000. "The Ethical Presuppositions behind the Library Bill of Rights." *Library Quarterly* 29 (4): 470.2; 473.3-77.4; 478.3-79.1.
The Library Bill of Rights (<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/statementsif/librarybillrights.htm>)
 Moor, J. "The Ethics of Privacy Protection." *Library Trends* 39 (1/2): 76.3-80.1

Recommended:

Fallis, D. 2004. "Epistemic Value Theory and Information Ethics." *Minds and Machines* 14 (1): 101-17.
 Garoogian, R. 1991. "Librarian/Patron Confidentiality: An Ethical Challenge." *Library Trends* 40 (Fall): 216-33

May 16:

1. Student presentations
2. Voila! Post-test