

Government 275
Bush Faculty Development Grant, Area 2c
Final Report
1/23/05

Within Augustana's curriculum, Government 275, "Politics and Literature," provides students with an opportunity to enhance their understanding of political theory and practice by closely reading works of narrative fiction and drama that address political themes.

As a result of this project, students have demonstrated the ability to research the literary and historical context of one of the assigned readings, delve into the scholarly criticism of that work, assemble an annotated bibliography of at least six reliable scholarly sources, and craft a narrowly focused research paper of 8-10 pages.

To this end, Lisa gave two hour-long presentations to the students of Government 275, one on preparing an annotated bibliography, and one on effectively citing sources. Both were very well received by the students.

During the first of these sessions we administered a pre-test to measure information literacy. There was significant variation among students in their self-reported skills. Some considered themselves skilled at using online databases and search engines, while others confessed a lack of skill. When we asked about preparing an annotated bibliography, half the class considered themselves less than "skilled." We also gathered information about which citation style students preferred, which helped us advise them as they composed their papers.

We then administered a post-test on Wednesday, December 7. As the attached statistics demonstrate, there were improvements along every dimension. Most notable are the following:

- High increases in self-reported skills regarding JSTOR, Project Muse, citing sources, and preparing an annotated bibliography.
- In the post-test—unlike the pretest—no one claimed to be "not skilled" at any task.
- In the post-test, several people considered themselves "highly skilled" in at least one task (in particular JSTOR and internet search engines).

Both Joel and Lisa advised students in researching and drafting their papers. In addition, Joel devoted significant class time to discussing how to formulate a research topic and conduct research. The annotated bibliographies, due October 7, though ranging in quality, were for the most part well done. Students critically reviewed each other's rough drafts, and discussed them in small groups during class. The final drafts of the paper were due on Wednesday, December 7. For many, this was their first sustained research paper in the social sciences. Several papers were very good, and a couple of them might turn into Augustana Symposium presentations in April 2006. All of the papers showed evidence of significant engagement with the secondary literature, and attentiveness to proper methods of citation.

We have attached our pre- and post-test results below, along with open-ended student comments.

Respectfully submitted by:



Lisa Brunick

Pre- and Post-Test Questions and Results
Government 275
Fall 2005

1. Please rate your ability to use the following (1=Not skilled, 3=Skilled, 5=Highly skilled)

	1	2	3	4	5	n	Average
Online Library Catalog							
Pretest		1	6	3		10	3.2
Posttest		1	3	3	2	9	3.7
Academic Search Premier							
Pretest	3	3	3	1		10	2.2
Posttest		2	4	1	2	9	3.3
MLA Database							
Pretest	1	5	3	1		10	2.4
Posttest		2	4	1	2	9	3.3
JSTOR							
Pretest	1	1	6	2		10	2.9
Posttest			2	2	5	9	4.3
Project MUSE							
Pretest	4	4	2			10	1.8
Posttest		2	2	1	4	9	3.8
Internet Search Engines							
Pretest			2	6	2	10	4.0
Posttest			3		6	9	4.3

2. How comfortable are you seeking assistance from librarians?
(1=Not comfortable, 2=Comfortable, 3=Very comfortable)

	1	2	3	n	Average
Pretest	1	6	3	10	2.2
Posttest		5	4	9	2.4

3. Please rate your ability to do the following (1=Not skilled, 3=Skilled, 5=Highly skilled)

	1	2	3	4	5	n	Average
Choose a database							
Pretest		2	6	2		10	3.0
Posttest		1	5	2	1	9	3.3
Choose keywords							
Pretest		1	7	2		10	3.1
Posttest			3	5	1	9	3.8
Assess source credibility							
Pretest		1	7	2		10	3.1
Posttest			3	6		9	3.7
Cite sources							
Pretest		4	4	2		10	2.8
Posttest			3	5	1	9	3.8
Critically read/summarize							
Pretest		3	5	2		10	2.9
Posttest			6	2	1	9	3.4
Compare/contrast sources							
Pretest		3	6	1		10	2.8
Posttest			6	1	2	9	3.6
Prepare annotated bib.							
Pretest	2	3	4	1		10	2.4
Posttest		1	2	6		9	3.6

4. One of the goals of your assignments is to develop critical research skills to help you locate, analyze and synthesize information effectively and efficiently. Have the research and writing activities helped to achieve this goal? Please explain.

They have helped me reach a better understanding of how to use the library resources more effectively.

Yes. The activities were very helpful.

I think so. It helped me better understand sources I generally do not use. Also, it helped refresh my memory on citation styles and creating an annotated bibliography.

Yes, the proposed activities were enlightening and quite helpful. I had no knowledge of Project MUSE and was useful, not for this class but for another one. Thanks Lisa.

Yes. I think that you bring us through good activities to help us be better researchers/writers. Learning more about microfilm could be helpful just to be able to use another source of information.

Yes, I think it will take some practice, but I feel better off before. I feel like certain aspects—like using the microfilm. I feel like there isn't a variety of easy accessible materials . . . but then I wonder if I still don't search well. [sic]

I learned so much about JSTOR and Project MUSE, I was previously unaware of these resources. I wish I had known sooner, but maybe I just forgot w/o using the knowledge right away as a freshman.

Yes, I have learned much.

I've learned to question the effectiveness and legitimacy of novels, and the ideas they are meant to convey.