

ISLAS ACADEMY: INFUSING WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

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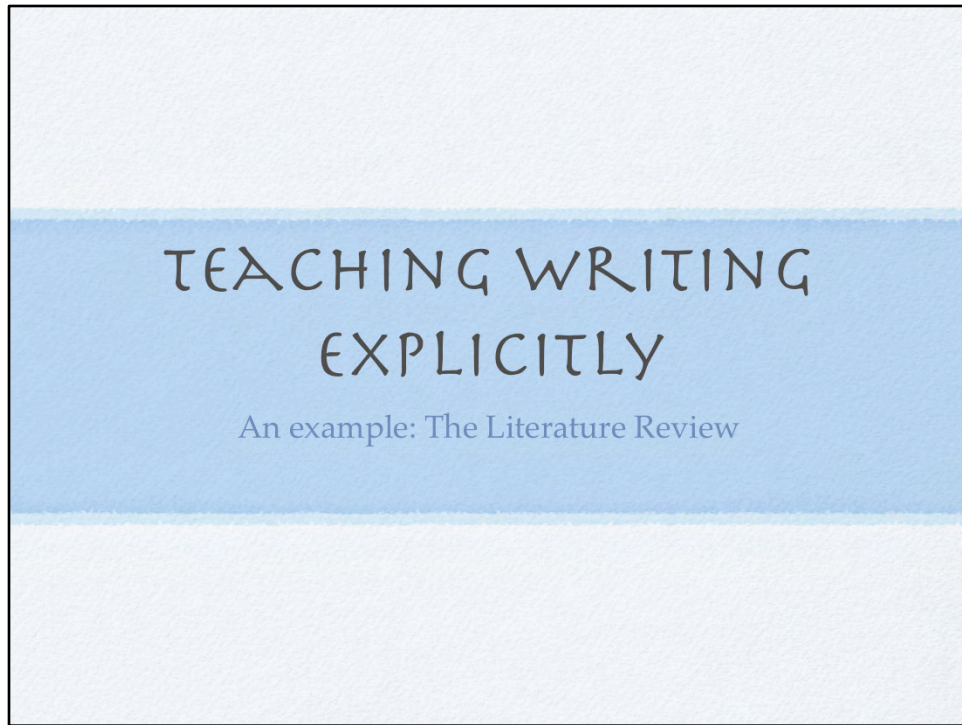
This presentation was made to ISLAS fellows as a workshop in infusing writing into a variety of classes on our campus. It focused on making writing strategies and expectations explicit for students.

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SIGNATURE ASSIGNMENTS

- Identify an assignment that you think of as a “signature assignment” -- one that’s important to you AND that you are wanting to revise.
- Tell us why you give this assignment. What purpose does it serve?
- What have the problems been with the assignment in terms of student writing and/or learning? How do you know?

Faculty in the workshop identified a signature assignment so that their thinking could be focused on a specific task.



Mary gave examples of how to make a common assignment, the literature review, more explicit for students.

SIGNATURE ASSIGNMENT

100 POINTS

- All students also need to demonstrate the ability to write utilizing the standards of the discipline.
- This will be accomplished by writing a 4-5 page paper, which examines some aspect of psychological thought (broadly defined).
- You must review the literature on the topic from scientific journals or books (no use of course texts).
- A one-page proposal for your chosen topic must be turned in no later than the week of February 21, 2011 (No Exceptions) – Tuesday or Wednesday which ever is appropriate for your class.
- Appropriate topics will focus on some aspect within the history of Psychology (i.e., behaviorism, Plato, religion).
- Papers are due the week of May 5, 2011 (No exceptions).
- There is a mandatory library literacy session the second week of class.

This was the assignment students were given. Help is already provided in this class in the form of a library visit, specifications on paper length and due dates, and the requirement of a one-page proposal.

Workshop participants brainstormed a long list of other elements of a literature review that would be helpful for students to know, including:

- what is this genre? What purpose does it serve?
- how do I read scientific journals or books?
- what makes a topic narrow enough or broad enough?
- how do I know when I have enough sources?
- what do I do with my sources in order to get them into a format that will work for this paper?
- how much summary and how much analysis? And how much opinion?

PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/tutorials/lit-review/>

This tutorial is a good way to help make the requirements of the genre of literature review specific and explicit for students. If you assign literature reviews, try watching it and discussing it with students (even if they watch it outside of class and post comments in an online discussion).

Descriptive / Structural Analysis Many Adler
 EXPLICIT GENRE ANALYSIS 10/04

Located at <http://www.salon.com/opinion/conason/2009/03/09/healthcare/print.html>

The questions our healthcare debate ignores
Why does every developed nation except the U.S. have universal healthcare? Why do they pay half as much in medical costs? Why are their infant mortality and longevity statistics superior? Series of questions

By Joe Conason
 Mar. 09, 2009 |

INTRO - SETS UP PROBLEM

As President Obama issued his call for reform of American healthcare, he must have been gratified to hear so many professions of good faith and civility from the political and commercial interests that have always opposed change. The health insurance lobbyists as well as the politicians who serve them all promised that this time would be different. data
 current relevance
 soc. perceived naïveté
 status quo in US

But amid all the reassuring blather, certain fundamental questions were not asked, as usual because merely posing them might discomfort those same special interests and political leaders. Why do we spend so much more on healthcare, per capita, than other developed countries? Why do we achieve worse outcomes on several important measures than countries that spend far less? Why do we spend up to twice as much per person as countries that provide universal coverage while leaving as many as 50 million Americans without insurance? Series of questions

BODY - RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The salience of those questions has grown over the past several decades, ever since President Truman first sought to create a universal health benefit program that resembled systems in Europe. Last month, the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development issued the latest in a long series of reports on our wasteful and cruel practices that ought to awaken a sense of national embarrassment. This highly topical study carried a deceptively bland title: "Healthcare Reform in the United States." historical perspective
 sets up focus for the rest of the paper and the authority.

Naturally the mainstream media and punditry ignored its findings (although OECD reports promoting free trade often receive wide coverage).

Documenting the gross "discrepancy" between the enormous amounts that Americans spend on healthcare and the value received for that expenditure, the study found that the

OECD issued a series of reports - the thesis?
status quo
We got poor

Another helpful way to make the genre more explicit to students is to analyze a good model with them. Here you see me analyzing an editorial on health care with students in a writing class, so that they could see the relationship between what a writer says, the main points (on the left side) and moves the writer makes, rhetorically speaking (on the right side).

The line across the middle is an analysis of structure—where the introduction stops and the body begins.

Having students mark up a sample literature review and bring it to class is a good way to open the conversation of what you expect. Then, project the sample onto the white board (without the screen) and using your white board markers, make whatever notes you would like to emphasize, as students tell you what they noticed.

For example, in a lit review, students might observe the use of transition words to connect research, the use of APA formatting, the identification of common themes or topics in the research (perhaps with the use of subheadings to mark those themes), and so on.

ADDING SCAFFOLDING

Then

Wk 1: Intro

Wk 2: Library skills

Wk 4: Proposal due

Wk 14: Paper due

Now

Wk 1: intro

Wk 2: Library, **Lit Review video**

Wk 4: Proposal due,

Small group discussions

Wks 4-8: **annotated bibs; small group sharing**

Wk 9: **Model paper posted**

Wk 10: **Revised rubric posted**

Wk 14: Paper due

In this slide we can see that although the assignment already offered some support, students benefit from additional check points, especially when this is a new genre and when it incorporates other skills they may still be developing (like reading academic texts). The right side, in red, shows additional scaffolds that help students. The small group discussions during weeks 4-8 may only take 15 minutes each, but they required students to each have read at least one article and come to class ready to share its main points.

EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION

Helpful Tips For Writing A Literature Review

1. Why Write a Literature Review?

The main function of a Literature Review is to present background on a topic, based on the information that has been collected about a problem or issue. Researchers use these to guide their studies so that they are building on what is known rather than working in a vacuum. We also use literature reviews to see what is not known about a problem or issue, so we can identify gaps in the research that need to be explored.

2. What's in a literature review?

Three areas that you need to know about include:

- 1 Specific theories related to the problem or issue.
- 2 What is known about the problem/issue from previous research studies.
- 3 What needs to be done to advance knowledge concerning the problem/issue.

3. How do I get started?

I find that index cards are a great tool for literature reviews. Keep one for each of your sources. Don't cover it with writing, but rather bullet key points in the source and indicate page numbers for any striking quotes that you might want to use. Number each card in the upper right hand corner.

Once you have the index cards finished, sit at a BIG table (or the floor if that's got more room) and play with the cards. Put them in piles of things that go together. For example, cards number 1, 5, and 6 all relate to divorce rates. Put those in that pile. Then look them

Providing students with additional resources on how to accomplish the task can be helpful for those who need more guidance. This handout is available on the Writing @ CI website.

GRADING RUBRIC

Paper Grading Rubric	Points	Points
Title Page	5	
Is the format correct? Is all information provided? Is the title appropriate for the paper? Is the format		
Abstract	5	
Is the abstract concise? Does it summarize all necessary components of your paper? Is it formatted properly?		
Introduction	10	
Do you introduce the problem under investigation and describe why this problem is important to explore? Do you present the literature in this area and weave the		

Here we added questions under each item in the rubric, to support student understandings about the faculty members' expectations.

YOUR SIGNATURE ASSIGNMENT

- What processes / knowledge / skills are required to succeed on your signature assignment?
- What can you build in to teach or model these and to address--explicitly--your expectations?

After discussing this example, workshop participants returned to their “signature assignment” and discussed ways to identify explicit processes, knowledge, and skills that students must have in order to succeed. Then they considered ways to make those qualities more explicit for students.