

Training Student Research Fellows to Serve as Peer Tutors

The training course for future peer tutors is currently being developed and will be submitted to the University of Richmond Academic Council for approval within a few weeks. The plan is for the course to be offered in spring of 2003 and for the first group of research fellows to be assigned to courses as peer tutors in fall of 2003.

Outline of the course we are intending to require for all research fellows

ID 300: Information Skills for the Research Fellow

Description: This 3 credit course will teach undergraduates research skills, enable them to deal with a wide range of research materials and techniques, and familiarize them with the information technologies in the student labs, especially the Tek.Know Center. Students will also learn how to identify key features of a research problem; how to identify and evaluate information resources; and how to tutor their peers in planning and performing a search, evaluating results, making effective use of research materials, documenting sources used, and presenting the completed research.

Outline

Week 1: Discussion of course goals, syllabus, major project (an annotated bibliography on an interdisciplinary topic) and other expectations (e.g., tutoring practicum). Introduction to Blackboard, library web page. The world of information and the scholarly publishing cycle.

Week 2: Why research? Research as a discovery (i.e., learning) process. Defining a topic. What are search strategies and how do you create one? Getting started and getting grounded. Keywords and controlled vocabularies.

Week 3: Catalogs—what are they and what's in them? Journal Locator and ILL. Historical and retrospective information collections. Primary sources.

Week 4: Choosing and using indexes. How databases and item records are structured and why it matters. Scholarly vs. popular articles.

Week 5: Newspapers. Statistical sources. Government information.

Week 6: Documenting sources. Avoiding plagiarism. Citation formats.

Week 7: The Internet as an information source, strengths and weakness. Search engines. Evaluating web sites.

Week 8: Common information technologies on the UR campus. What's in the labs and what should everyone be familiar with? Strengths and weakness of various presentation media (Web sites, PowerPoint, print, lecture) and how they can be used in combination to enhance a presentation.

Week 9: Peer tutoring. Being helpful without being too helpful. Learning styles. Analyzing research assignments. When to refer.

Week 10: Nonverbal formats. Finding graphical, video, and audio sources of information and incorporating them into a research project/presentation. Special copyright considerations.

Week 11: Information policy: who controls the media and why does it matter? The cost of information. Censorship. National information policy. Privacy. Preservation.

Week 12: Practicum; work with a librarian to set up practice research consultations with other students.

Week 13: Practicum continues.

Week 14: Presentations based on research projects.

Week 15: Presentations continue.

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