Focused on the future of learning.

INTEGRATING INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS INTO THE CURRICULUM

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Focused on the future of learning.
The Context…

Athabasca University – Undergraduate Model

• Open Education: older than 16, but no requirements
• Online Distance Education: no face-to-face experiences
• Continuous Enrollment: Students can start a course any month of the year – No cohort groups
• Self-paced, Individualized Studies: no deadlines
• 6 Months Contract with paid two-months extensions
• 1 Tutor Per Group: each group up to 30 students
• Study Guides, course materials, readings, etc.
• Tutors limited time: reply answers and mark assignments
The Context…

Courses

- History 215: Europe: Ancient to Early Modern
- History 371: Early Medieval Europe: 400–1000
- History 372: Europe in the High Middle Ages, 1000–1350
- Humanities 312/Classics 312/History 312: Ancient Rome
- Humanities 313/History 313/Religious Studies 313: Early Christians
- History 383: The Vikings

In these courses, distance learners are introduced to European history by surveying the most significant political, economic, religious and social events, transformations and trends in ancient times, to early eighteen century. Courses are for major, minor or elective.
Students are expected to...

• Investigate, research, read critically and write clearly their findings.
• Use extensively university libraries and distinguish different sources of academic information.
• Perform strategic, active, and critical reading skills.
• Understand why, how and when to document their writings using the standardize Chicago style.
• Be able to organize history essays and construct logical arguments supported by evidence.
• Synthesize information extracted from a variety of sources.
• Present facts accurately; discuss and analyze evidence.
• Explain the relevance of their sources; and compare and summarize the interpretations of historians.
• Demonstrate strong academic writing skills that conform to the standards for organizing history essays.
The Problem...

**Many Students:**

- Are new to study of history at the university
- Have not mastered the reading, research and writing university skills
- Don’t understand what is expected for written assignments
- Don’t distinguish the different sources of academic information
- Don’t know how to write academic history essays
- Don’t understand how/where to search for scholarly documents, select sound academic information and write effectively to complete the written assignments
- Seem to perform poorly because they lack the required ILSs to complete and meet the expectations and objectives in their assignments.
- Are frustrated with written assignment marks
The lack of students’ ILSs can:

- Limit their performance,
- Result in academic misconduct (cheating and plagiarism),
- Jeopardize the completion of their assignments
- Limit students ability to complete courses satisfactorily,
- Risk the completion of their studies.
The Problem...

Tutors:

• Feel frustration with unskilled students
• Find that students don’t just “pick up” skills
• Realize that students avoid extra or non-credit instruction
• Don’t have the time for time-consuming remedial measures
• Find attempts at hap-hazard instruction time-consuming
• Have to invest more time on re-writes and appeals than in their main teaching responsibilities
• Have to work harder on prosecuting plagiarism than on guiding and supporting students
• Get frustrated because many students, anyway, don’t pay attention to their feedback
Several preventive and correction measures that have failed:

- Expect students will “pickup” skills on their own
- Expect students will study marker’s corrections and integrate them in their assignments
- A published writing guide was integrated in the course
- Instructions and expectations about research and academic writing were integrated in study guides.
- References to generic online libraries and academic writing tutorials were provided to students
- Expect students to take a separate course to ‘catch up’
- Students were instructed to call librarian or tutors for personalized instruction
- It was even discussed to lower courses’ expectations
A multidisciplinary group (a librarian, an editor, a historian and a learning designer) got together with the course coordinator to assess the context. Prior experiences were discussed and new alternatives analyzed. The discussion focused on how students would learn effectively ILSs at distance within the particular AU undergrad model. Based on the librarian’s recommendations, the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (ILCSHE, 2000) framework was discussed and adopted to enhance instruction. It became clearer that a new attempt to enhance students’ performance needed to align ILSs instruction to the learning activities, assignments and evaluations to help students meet the learning objectives and teachers’ expectations.
“Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.”

- Determine the extent of information needed
- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically
- Incorporate selected information into one’s knowledge base
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally

(ILCSHE, 2000)
Looking for an effective solution...

- “[…] Strategies that require the student to engage actively in “framing of a significant question or set of questions, the research or creative exploration to find answers, and the communications skills to convey the results...”

- “Courses structured in such a way create student-centered learning environments where inquiry is the norm, problem solving becomes the focus, and thinking critically is part of the process.”

- “Achieving competency in information literacy requires an understanding that this cluster of abilities is not extraneous to the curriculum but is woven into the curriculum’s content, structure, and sequence.”

(ILCSHE, 2000)
New instruction for the course:

- Designed in a dynamic, flexible, generic, and adapted for AU European History courses.
- Student-centered
- Research oriented, where inquiry is the core of the learning activities
- Engage students on conducting research, developing critical thinking, reading critically and writing effectively
- Intended to put in practice ILSs in a creative process of exploration that leads students to meet the research goals
- Assignments reflect the research process and build upon one another
Integrating ILSs modules ...

ILSs modules were integrated into the course:

- Address ILSs students have been struggling with
- Documented, instruction was written and learning materials were integrated in the ILSs modules / About 10 pages each
- Reflect the academic research process
- Model the Information Literacy Skills
- Engage students through the research process
- Strategically linked to the requirements and work to complete course assignments
- Focused on practical skills needed for assignments and final exam
- Assist students on producing their assignments
- Help students to enhance their performance in assignments and evaluations
- Flexible to fit student’s schedule
- Online and easy to update / Adaptable to other courses
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<th>Assignments</th>
<th>History Skills Modules</th>
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<td>1 Introduction to Course</td>
<td>Assignment 1: Review of a Scholarly Article</td>
<td>Skills Module 1: Library Research Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Select from one of 3 scholarly articles about Early Middle Ages</td>
<td>• Identifying scholarly writings: books and articles</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Critically read the essay</td>
<td>• Searching AU’s online library catalog</td>
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<td>• Write a report analyzing and appraising the article following detailed</td>
<td>• Searching AU’s online journal databases</td>
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<td></td>
<td>instructions</td>
<td>• Research exercises</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Use library search tools to find at least 3 more writings by the</td>
<td>Quiz 1: Library Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>article’s author</td>
<td>• Prepares for written assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Ancient Greece</td>
<td>Assignment 1: Review of a Scholarly Article</td>
<td>Skills Module 2: Reading Scholarly articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Select from one of 3 scholarly articles about Early Middle Ages</td>
<td>• critically reading a scholarly essay</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Critically read the essay</td>
<td>• recognizing a scholarly essay</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Write a report analyzing and appraising the article following</td>
<td>• Analyzing its parts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>detailed instructions</td>
<td>• following a historical argument in a scholarly essay</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use library search tools to find at least 3 more writings by the</td>
<td>• Appraising essays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>article’s author</td>
<td>• Prepares for Assignment 1 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Ancient Rome</td>
<td>Assignment 1: Review of a Scholarly Article</td>
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<td>Assignment 1: Review of a Scholarly Article</td>
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<td>5 Early Middle Ages</td>
<td>Assignment 1: Review of a Scholarly Article</td>
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History 215: Europe: Ancient to Early Modern
Learning Units | Assignments | History Skills Modules
--- | --- | ---
6 High Middle Ages | **Assignment 2:** Essay Plan and Annotated Bibliography
- Chose from among the assigned research paper topics
- Write a 1 page essay proposal
- Attach a bibliography of 6 or more scholarly books or articles
- Indicate how the items were found | Skills Module 3: Chicago-Style Documentation
- Reason for documentation
- When to cite
- Using the Chicago-Style
- Documentation exercises

7 Middle Ages II | **Quiz 2: Documentation Quiz**
- Prepares for Research Essay (Assignments 2 and 3) | 

8 Late Middle Ages | **Skills Module 4: Organizing a History Essay**
- Purpose of essay assignments
- Features of essays
- History Essay Elements
- (no quiz: prepare for Research Ass. (3) and final Exam) | 

9 Renaissance and Reformation | 

History 215: Europe: Ancient to Early Modern
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<tr>
<td><strong>10 States and Capitalism</strong></td>
<td><strong>Assignment 3:</strong> A research essay.</td>
<td><strong>Skills Module 5:</strong> Using Evidence in a History Essay When and how to: - summarize - paraphrase - and quote</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Must use at least 4 scholarly books and/or articles - Must used Chicago-Style documentation - Must conform to History essay norms - Must avoid plagiarism</td>
<td><strong>Quiz 3: Using Evidence</strong> - Prepares for ass. 3 (Research Essay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11 Wars of Religion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Skills Module 6:</strong> Academic Integrity: Avoiding Plagiarism - Avoiding Plagiarism - Common Questions about Plagiarism - Detecting Plagiarism - Mastering the Techniques for Giving Fair Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 Absolutism and the Limits of Early Modernity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Quiz 4: Academic integrity</strong> - Prepares for Ass. 3 (Research Essay)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The Study Guide guides your studies. It contains the course themes, objectives, study questions, viewing assignments, and reading assignments.

- **Study Schedule**
- **Students' Introductions (Optional)**

**Unit 1  Introduction: The High Middle Ages**
- Skills Module 1  Library Research Skills
- Quiz 1: Library Skills

**Unit 2  Making a Living and Living Together**
The Suggested Study Schedule recommends that you begin working on Assignment 1
- Skills Module 2  Chicago Style Documentation
- Quiz 2: Chicago Style Documentation

**Unit 3  Christendom Reformed**

**Unit 4  The Crusade Movement**

**Unit 5  The Twelfth-Century Renaissance**
- Submit Assignment 1: Research Plan and Preliminary Bibliography
  The Suggested Study Schedule recommends that you begin working on Assignment 2

**Unit 6  Feudal Monarchies**

**Unit 7  Urban Growth**
- Submit Assignment 2: Review of Scholarly Article or Essay
  The Suggested Study Schedule recommends that you begin working on Assignment 3

**Unit 8  Urban Society and Culture**

**Unit 9  Religious Movements**

**Unit 10  High Scholasticism**
- Skills Module 3  Organizing a History Essay

**Unit 11  Thirteenth-Century Kingship**
- Skills Module 4  Using Evidence and Avoiding Plagiarism
- Quiz 3: Using Evidence and Avoiding Plagiarism

**Unit 12  Romanesque and Gothic Architecture**
C. Using the *Chicago Manual of Style*

When documenting sources, scholars and students must follow a standardized style for formatting the information. Tutors will usually specify which style is appropriate for their discipline. Most styles are similar in that a reader can easily identify the author, title, publisher, and year of a source. Researchers usually consult a particular style guide that explains how to format documentation.

**Preference of Historians**

The notes-bibliography system most commonly used by historians to cite their sources is the *Chicago Manual of Style*.\[7\] Because it is a massive reference book, researchers often use shorter guides, for example, Turabian’s *Manual* or Benjamin’s *Guide*. For this module, you can use the *Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide*. You may want to bookmark it or print it out for reference while preparing your written assignments in this or other courses.

Historians prefer the Chicago humanities style (note-bibliography) form of documentation which places a little number at the end of the sentence and a corresponding numbered note at the foot of the page. The source is also listed in a bibliography attached to the end of the essay. Footnotes are easier to read than endnotes, especially when reading an electronic version.

Other disciplines use an in-text citation system (such as MLA or APA) that places brief information about the source in parentheses at the end of a sentence and full publication information in a bibliography at the end of the essay. The MLA style, for example, gives the author’s surname and page number, like this (Cels 41). The APA in-text citation gives the name, year, and page, like this (Cels. 2008, p. 41). Footnotes or endnotes are...
ILSs modules are evaluated...

ILSs modules are not ‘optional’ materials ignored by students

4 Automated Online Quizzes
- Multiple-choice questions
- Automatically and instantly graded
- Instantly provides students with rich feedback
- Grades entered into Moodle Grade Book automatically

3 Assignments:
History Literacy Skills are:
- Explicitly integrated in rubrics (instructions)
- Gradually introduced and build upon each other
- part of the criteria for evaluation

Final Examination:
- Literacy skills needed for exam essays
- Students have to write essay questions
ILSs modules are evaluated...

Automated Quizzes evaluate ILSs

- Encourage students to learn actively and practice skills
- Given modest credit (1.25% each) as incentive
- Online, multiple-choice and automatically marked
- Don’t add to tutor’s marking load
- Marks automatically entered into Moodle grade book
- Questions on module topics and module exercises
- Multiple attempts to work on quizzes before submitting
- Cannot be modified once submitted
- Show wrong and right answers and provide rich feedback
- Quizzes easy to update
- Quizzes and modules adaptable to other courses
ILSs modules are evaluated...

ILSs were integrated in the evaluation criteria and expectations for assignments

Assignment 3: Research Essay Instructions

Rationale: The research essay enables you to investigate a historical topic or problem related to the course in detail. You will demonstrate your ability to find and evaluate primary and/or scholarly sources and to use them in formulating and supporting your answer to one of the research questions. Finally, you will demonstrate your ability to present your findings in a clearly written and persuasive essay that conforms to scholarly conventions.

Format: Your long essay should be 12–14 pages (3000–3500 words exclusive of notes and bibliography), double-spaced, with standard 1.25-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman font. Long quotations should be set off as a block, indented from left, and single-spaced without quotation marks. Bibliography and footnotes/endnotes should be single-spaced. Please provide a separate title page with an intelligent title, your name and student number, the course name and number, your tutor’s name, and the submission date. Each page after the title page should be numbered.

Goal: Write an original essay that responds to your approved research plan using at least five scholarly sources and relevant primary texts from the Early Middle Ages. Some questions will require you to examine one or more primary texts very closely as well as various interpretations by modern scholars. Other questions will report more on the debates of modern scholars and their findings, but you should still consider the evidence scholars use, as explained in Skills Module 1.

Standards: Your research essay should conform to the standards for research materials, documentation, organization, and use of evidence as explained in the skills modules of this course.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct prohibited by Athabasca University’s regulations, which also set out sanctions against offenders. Plagiarism occurs when a student uses the words or ideas of another person without giving proper credit, as explained in Skills Module 4 of this course. The re-submission of a paper in whole or in part that you have written for credit in another course is considered cheating. Tutors look for signs of plagiarism and take action when they suspect it.

Evaluation: Tutors evaluate the quality of essays based on several general criteria. They check to see how thoughtful the essay is and how persuasively it argues a thesis that addresses the assigned question. The information in the essay should be accurate, precise, and relevant. Evidence should be well chosen, clearly explained, and scrupulously documented. The evidence should come from reliable primary and scholarly sources. The parts of the essay should be well organized, and each paragraph and sentence clearly written in an academic tone.
ILSs modules are evaluated...

Assignments build upon one another so that:

- Tutors can follow closely students' progress
- Tutors get familiarized with students’ work style
- Students integrate gradually ILSs into their work
- Students have to negotiate/discuss with tutors their work
- Students get useful and practical tutors’ feedback
- It makes more difficult for students to incur in academic misconduct and plagiarism
Assignment 1: Research Plan and Preliminary Bibliography Instructions (for Assignment 3, the Research Essay)

Assignments build upon one another so that:

You will begin your research project by submitting a research plan and a preliminary bibliography of scholarly books, articles, and primary sources that you are considering using for your research essay (Assignment 3).

Later, for Assignment 2, you will report on one of the scholarly articles/essays that you plan to use for Assignment 3, a 12–14 page research paper that responds to your selection from the following list of assigned questions.
Assignments build upon one another so that:

Assignment 1: Research Plan and Preliminary Bibliography Instructions (for Assignment 3, the Research Essay)

Assignment 2: Review of a Scholarly Article

Assignment 3: Research Essay

Write an original review of the scholarly journal article, essay, or book chapter that you selected in Assignment 1, as potentially useful for your research essay (Assignment 3). Concentrate on identifying the main points and conclusions of the article/essay/chapter and synthesize the information that will be useful for your own project.
Assignments build upon one another so that:

The research essay enables you to investigate a historical topic or problem related to the course in detail. You will demonstrate your ability to find and evaluate primary and/or scholarly sources and to use them in formulating and supporting your answer to one of the research questions. Finally, you will demonstrate your ability to present your findings in a clearly written and persuasive essay that conforms to scholarly conventions.
Initial Anecdotal Feedback...

- Tutors pleased with instructions
- Students appreciate the instructions
- Modules are work, but have real value
- Students feel better prepared for assignments and evaluations
- Students think they can transfer ILSs into other courses
- Students who had never used AU library or used journal articles feel confident to do so
- Stimulates intellectual curiosity
Next steps...

Online Student Evaluation

- Does students’ performance improved as a result of the integration of the ILSs in History courses?
- To what degree do students think the Skills Modules assisted them on meeting the learning objectives in History courses satisfactorily?
- How much do students think their performance improved because of the ILSs Modules?
- How helpful do students find the ILSs modules on completing their assignments successfully?
- How much do students think the ILSs Modules informed them to complete their assignments successfully in their History courses?
Integrating Information Literacy Skills into the Curriculum

Thanks for your Attention