

Course Syllabus

<http://www.libraries.wvu.edu/instruction/classes.htm>

General Information Literacy Objectives for Women's Studies

Here are the developmental objectives of the assignments:

- understand the process of inquiry in the interdisciplinary environment of women's studies
- find a women's studies subject and do smart searching
- analyze the subject: state it in a sentence and ask at least three questions about it; then turn it into a problem
- learn about subject language and controlled vocabulary concerning women
- understand the Mann methods of searching model
- understand the social, political and economic components of the information environment and the special differences for women and women's studies
- understand the hierarchy of knowledge and find examples in a daily newspaper on subjects about women
- understand the publication sequence flow and find examples of changes in information over time through use of the women's history timeline
- expand publication awareness: exposure to an array of publication types about women
- evaluate sources of all kinds including print and electronic genres
- organize and present evidence
- write responsibly from sources
- cite sources and avoid plagiarism

Intellectual Foundations for the Course

The fundamental research findings and ideas that support “Women’s Studies Research in the Information Age” are writings published over the last thirty five years regarding the education of library users and the unique aspects of the information environment of women’s studies. Lynn Westbrook provides an extensive and perceptive discussion of the components of the information environment of women’s studies in her 1999 book *Interdisciplinary Information Seeking in Women’s Studies*. This adds to and expands Sue Searing’s 1985 discussion in *Introduction to Library Research in Women’s Studies*. Searing’s book was published almost twenty years ago but it still addresses effectively the unique characteristics of women’s studies and women’s studies research. Of course, many things have developed further since that time not the least of which is the Internet.

The ISP model developed by Carol Collier Kuhlthau of Rutgers University is central to the course’s approach. It convincingly identifies in her wonderful 1993 book *Seeking Meaning* (that is now in its second edition, 2004) that people searching for information go through a complex cognitive, affective, and strategic Information Search Process that has six clear stages. They begin with topic selection and close, not surprisingly, with completion of the search. This model points out the intersections between thoughts, feelings, and actions throughout the six stages of information gathering and points out librarian interventions at the various stages of inquiry that are effective and greatly needed as the information seeker navigates through the information environment. This model also emphasizes the learning and growth that information seekers can experience if

they have realistic expectations regarding the complex emotions that come up in the inquiry process and throughout what I'll call the "mess" of real research.

The idea of integrated course assignments that address issues of the research process and that become gradually more difficult and challenging as the four years of undergraduate work move ahead is another research finding I have chosen to both build my course on and frame my advocacy for course development and curricular change at the WVU Center for Women's Studies and beyond. Patricia Knapp's groundbreaking 1966 book *The Monteith College Library Experiment*, which actually launched the activist library instruction movement, not only takes up integrated course assignments, but also the importance of partnership between librarians and faculty and the different and equally valuable perspectives librarians and faculties have on research and libraries. She was such a pioneer in our field.

Another lynchpin in the framework of my course is the Methods of Searching Model developed by Thomas Mann of the Library of Congress in his 1993 book *Library Research Models*. This book rejects the traditional subject orientation that we tend to think of in libraries and in teaching as the sole approach for gathering information. Instead, he presents and clarifies seven different options for seeking information. They are offered as approaches searchers may find illuminating and rewarding if they choose to experiment with them for deep and thorough exploration. Subject searching is included on a par with six other approaches to seeking information.

Christine Bruce's dissertation on information literacy (which was turned into a book in 1997) is entitled *The Seven Faces of Information Literacy*. Her major contribution is to clarify an alternative perspective on the subject of information literacy by "describing conceptions of information literacy amongst a group of information users in higher education." Fundamentally her model grows out of the information seeker's perceptions of the information environment and then emphasizes the user's experience with the process of seeking information, how much the process changes the person, and how the person decides to use the information wisely for the benefit of others. This is thus centered on the student's experience and is well suited to the feminist classroom.

From the Information Sciences literature, there is the 1980 Flow of Information model of Sharon Hogan. It explains the way something happens such as a breakthrough book is published or an historical event occurs and then over a 6-10 year time period a predictable sequence of publication occurs that includes many genres of publications and certainly runs the gamut of quality. This sequence of publication theory addresses the dissemination of both scholarly and non-scholarly information, (both essential to women's studies teaching and research). This is a huge and important subject by itself and one that students need to understand before they undertake serious research themselves.

Correction of the record by feminist research is another related idea that fits in well here. The hierarchy of information from fact and opinion to knowledge, understanding and wisdom from Christine Bruce's and Thomas Mann's research are further conceptual

discussions that offer more variables of great importance. Students all need to understand the differences between a few facts and a thoughtful 200-page book, and all the publication genres in between. Students will encounter so many types of information in their undergraduate years. Yet how will they know the differences in publication hierarchy unless we expose them to their definitions and characteristics? Immersion in the rich variety of feminist publications is a way to start in women's studies classes.

Ten Coordinated Active Learning Assignments for WSST 493G

Do the Curiosity Inventory provided by the instructor and see what answers you give to the questions. Discover whether you already have a topic you wish to explore that you have been discouraged about in the past.

Read the Kulhthau ISP model (Information Search Process) and do self-diagnosis to determine where you are in the six stages of the process. Maintain a research journal to keep a record your progress through the stages, noting the thoughts, feelings, actions, strategies, and moods you experience as you continue to work through your project. Be ready to hand in this journal from time to time through the course.

Work on the four-part research process essay and annotated bibliography throughout the course. (See Susan Beck’s “Meta-Learning Project” in *Teaching Information Literacy Concepts*.) Parts include: a statement of your subject and how you chose it, your reasons for picking it, and your expectations for the directions it may take you. The first and second drafts and the final research process essay with supporting annotated bibliography complete the assignment and relevant parts will be due at four points through the course.

Read the 26-page Library of Congress Subject Headings on women handout provided in class. Discuss in class their helpful applications as well as their drawbacks in information searching. Practice using the headings in searches on topics provided by instructor in class and share findings with class.

Study the Mann “methods of searching model”. Go over the seven types of searches noted and practice using them on a topic of interest in class making use of the instructor as a guide as you work. Try these various methods outside class as well throughout the course.

Do the in-class “Hierarchy of Knowledge” assignment by going over the definitions of fact, opinion, data, information, knowledge, and understanding with the instructor and then break up into groups of two to find examples about women of each level of information in the *New York Times* (See Gerald T. Burke “Defining, Identifying, and Understanding the Difference Between Data, Information, and Knowledge,” in *Teaching Information Literacy Concepts: Activities and Frameworks from the Field*).

Do the “Publication Sequence Flow” assignment using the chronology of women’s history on the web at <http://www.legacy98.org/timeline.html> to choose an important event or breakthrough for women and find examples of publications from 1701-1849, 1850-1900, 1900-1950, and 1950-1998 that relate. Take a look at them and be ready to discuss the differences you see in them across time in class. Extend this assignment in a second part after the in class discussion of primary and secondary sources. Visit several sites on the web (URL list provided) that provide primary sources and evaluate them. With your instructor, visit the West Virginia Collection and experience an introduction to

the Lena Lowe Yost collection on women's suffrage and West Virginia women's suffrage in particular. Write the results of this visit up in your journals.

Visit the class community information stations and examine the publications you find there and visit the websites on the handout at station 1. Using the evaluation sheets provided, write up your assessment of the quality and authority of each publication or site and be ready to come back to class and report on your findings. This is called the "Information Immersion and Assessment" assignment.

Review the historic photographs of women distributed by the instructor. Read the biographical information provided with the photograph. Using the additional biographical sources you learn about in class, investigate the woman in your photograph further and see what additional information you can dig up about her.

For extra credit in this course, maintain a "Research Portfolio" throughout the semester. Over and above the required research journal, the portfolio may contain examples that illustrate your "mess of research scrapbook" which will be very individual to you and your area of interest and topic of choice. There may be cognitive maps, drawings, photographs, photocopies of articles and books, screen prints of bibliographic records you find that are particularly interesting to you, interview notes from talks you had with friends, faculty advisors, or others during your research process, interlibrary loan requests, stills from films, clips from video, quotations of particular meaning, and anything else that has spurred your creativity and encouraged your research process and improved its quality and diversity.

Sources

American Library Association/Association of College and Research Libraries,
Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education
<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/informationliteracycompetency.htm>

Bateson, Mary Catherine, "Lives of Learning" *Chronicle of Higher Education* July 25, 2003: B3.

Birks, Jane and Hunt, Fiona *Hands on Information Literacy Activities* New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2003.

Bloom, Leslie Rebecca, *Under the Sign of Hope: Feminist Methodology and Narrative Interpretation*. State University of New York Press, 1998.

Brown, John Seely and Duguid, Paul *The Social Life of Information*. Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2002.

Bruce, Christine *The Seven Faces of Information Literacy*. Adelaide Australia: Auslib Press Ltd. 1997.

Delamont, Sara *Fieldwork in Educational Settings*, 2nd Edition. London, New York: Routledge, 2002.

Fink Deborah *Process and Politics in Library Research*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1989.

Gilbert Laurel and Kile Crystal *SurferGrrrls-Look Ethel: An Internet Guide for Us!* Seattle, Washington: Seal Press, 1996.

Gradowski, Gail, Snavey, LoAnne and Demsey, Paula *Designs for Active Learning: A Sourcebook of Classroom Strategies for Information Education*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1998.

Grassian, Esther S. and Kaplowitz, Joan R. *Information Literacy Instruction: Theory and Practice*. New York: Neal Schuman Publishers, Inc. 2001.

Hogan, Sharon "Flow of Information" conceptual approach to library instruction 1980. (Adapted by Diane Zwemer, UCLA Libraries; confirmed in email correspondence between Sharon Hogan and Esther Grassian, September 18, 1998.)

Jacobsen, Trudi and Gatti, Timothy *Teaching Information Literacy Concepts: Activities and Frameworks from the Field*. Pittsburgh: Library Instruction Publications University of Pittsburgh, 2001.

Kozol, Wendy "Information Literacy Grant Proposal: Revising the Women's Studies Curriculum." <http://www.denison.edu/collaboration/ohio5/grant/development/kozol.html>

Knapp, Patrica *The Monteith College Library Experiment*. Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1966.

Kulthau, Carol Collier *Seeking Meaning: A Process Approach to Library and Information Services*, 2nd edition. Westport, Conn. and London: Libraries Unlimited, 2004.

LaFond, Deborah M. "What Does Information Literacy Mean for Women's Studies?" <http://www.albany.edu/~dlafonde/women/infolitwss2.htm>

Mann, Thomas *Library Research Models*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Mann, Thomas "The Importance of Books, Free Access, and Libraries as Places-and the Dangerous Inadequacy of the Information Science Paradigm" *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, July 2001, Volume 27, Number 4, p268-281.

McCann Carole and Kim, Seung-Kyung *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

National Women's History Project *Timeline of Legal History of Women in the United States 1701-1998*.

Penn, Shana *Women's Guide to the Wired World: A User Friendly Handbook and Resources Directory*. New York: The Feminist Press, 1997.

Pryse, Marjorie "Defining Women's Studies Scholarship: A Statement of the National Women's Studies Association Task Force on Faculty Roles and Rewards." June 1999. <http://www.nwsa.org/taskforce.htm>

Reichel, Mary and Ramey, Mary Ann eds. *Conceptual Frameworks for the Bibliographic Education: Theory and Practice*. Littleton Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 1987.

Rockman, Irene and Associates, *Integrating Information Literacy into the Higher Education Curriculum: Practical Models for Transformation*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2004.

Roberts, Helen, *Doing Feminist Research*. London: Routledge 1981.

Searing, Susan E. *Introduction to Library Research in Women's Studies*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1985.

Tufte, Edward *Envisioning Information*. Cheshire, Connecticut: Graphics Press, 1990.

Weeg, Barbara E. "Library Skills Development in a Women's' Studies Course: *Feminist Collections* Vol 18 #3 Spring, 1997.

Westbrook, Lynn *Interdisciplinary Information Seeking in Women's Studies*. Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland and Company, 1999.

Young, Rosemary and Harmony, Stephen *Working with Faculty to Design Undergraduate Information Literacy Programs*. New York: Neal Schuman, 1999.

cww
11/08/04