

Wikipedia Project

Rationale for project:

Students will engage in historical inquiry, research, and analysis at a level appropriate and manageable for a survey class while practicing historical thinking as central to engaged citizenship.

To successfully complete the project, students must:

- Analyze Wikipedia as a source and contemplate its veracity.
- Research academic journal articles, monographs, biographies, or essay collections on a historical topic.
 - Seek a variety of sources that provide evidence to support an argument about the past.
 - Identify and summarize other scholars' historical arguments.
 - Evaluate conflicting historical interpretations.
 - Analyze various types of historical sources appropriate to the study of their topic.
- Create an academic, annotated bibliography for a historical research project.
 - Synthesize relevant academic research and existing open access scholarship.
- Create or edit a Wikipedia article on a historical topic.
 - Identify what in the researched material is already found in the Wikipedia article and what needs to be added.
 - Apply historical knowledge and analysis to contribute to contemporary social dialogue.
 - Understand that the ethics and practice of history mean recognizing and building on other scholars' work, peer review, and citation.
 - Make sure that Wikipedia edit does not contain subjective or unsourced opinions and value statements.
 - Make sure that each edit leads back to a reliable source for a citation.

Findings (out of 75 students over three sections):

- Students stated that they were more vested in their research than they were when the form of research resulted in the standard paper.
 - Part of this was likely due to the fact that their work was being made available on a global, popular website.
- Students indicated a better understanding of the field of history.
 - Recognized that history is debatable and that historians don't always agree.
 - Understood that history is told from a multitude of perspectives and that some aspects may not yet be told, while some—due to lack of evidence—may never be uncovered.
- Students questioned sources challenging author's arguments and attempting to verify evidence.
- Students questioned veracity of Wikipedia as a whole, but their specific articles especially.
 - This changed from beginning when they thought it was a pretty decent research tool, although not stellar, once they realized how easy it is to change the site.
- Students indicated a greater interest in historiography. They felt that they were part of the debate and showed interest in learning about conflicting interpretations of the past for other topics.

Link to Wikipedia's Education Department: <http://wikiedu.org/for-instructors/>