Jul 24th, 3:15 PM - 3:35 PM

Unifying Ideas: Building For-Credit Information Literacy Around Themes to Optimize Student Learning

Elizabeth Price  
*Murray State University*

Rebecca Richardson  
*Murray State University*

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: [http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/liw_portland](http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/liw_portland)

Part of the [Information Literacy Commons](http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/liw_portland)

---

Elizabeth Price and Rebecca Richardson, 'Unifying Ideas: Building For-Credit Information Literacy Around Themes to Optimize Student Learning’ (July 24, 2014). *Library Instruction West 2014*. Paper 12.  
[http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/liw_portland/Presentations/Material/12](http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/liw_portland/Presentations/Material/12)

This Event is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Library Instruction West 2014 by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. For more information, please contact pdxscholar@pdx.edu.
Unifying ideas

Building for-credit information literacy courses around themes to optimize student learning

Elizabeth Price and Rebecca Richardson
Murray State University
“The most glaring mistake in higher education today is the belief that students learn to do research by doing it. This is absolutely not the case, as countless studies of student research ability have demonstrated.”

(Badke, 2008, p. 2)
Prior experience

- Jefferson Community and Technical College in Louisville, Ky.
- 130 GEN: Introduction to Information Resources
  - 3 credits
  - An exploration of the developing information society, different types of libraries, and electronic resources, such as the Internet, online databases, and information management software. Focuses on the nature of information, computer technology, and ethical computing issues.
INF (LOR) 101 Research in the Information Age

- 3 credits
- Fulfills General Studies requirement
- Catalog: A course designed to explore the phenomena, activities, and issues surrounding the development, gathering, organization, and use of information and resources in a global community. Designed to acquaint students with best practices in information-seeking behavior for various situational, civic, and scholarly purposes, with specific attention given to the ethics of using and creating information.
BAD teacher
Problems with for-credit IL

- See content as dull (Kennedy, cited in Holder, 2010, p. 6)
- Don’t see connection to other coursework (Ibid)
- Too few are discipline specific (Ibid)
- Freshmen don’t do advanced research (Burke, 2012, p. 162)
- Prefer expediency; keep topics to research in “reserve” (Holliday & Rogers, 2013, p. 266)
- Too skill-based, isolating IL from broader contexts (Jacobs and Berg, 2011, p. 387)
- Lacking value (Valentine & Wukovitz, 2013, p. 25)
Why wasn’t it successful?
Barbara Fister, citing research by Holliday and Rogers (2013), described the problem thus:

“Stop talking about ‘finding sources’ [and] frame the work as learning about something.”

(Fister, 2013)
Solution?

- Theme-based information literacy instruction
- Natalie Tagge’s article from *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* (2012)
  - From the frying pan into the fire (and back again):
    Adventures in subject-based, credit instruction
When Worlds Collide
(Greenwood & Frisbie, 1998)

Hunger
(Barry, 2011)

Food
(Piper & Tag, 2011)

This I Believe
(Piper & Tag, 2011)
Applied themes

Music
(Kitts, 2013)

Zombies
(Stahura & Milanese, 2013)

Filter bubbles
(Valentine & Wukowitz, 2013)

Personal finance
(Bergstrom & Price, 2013)
Becky’s theme
Is Google Evil?
“[The theme] improved student research tremendously. Now, projects demonstrated a thorough understanding of topic, and annotations showed us students were actually reading and comprehending the materials discovered.”

(Stahura & Milanese, 2013)
Student Benefits

- Improved theses
- Ability to analyze sources for usefulness rather than summarize abstract or basic information
- Peer teaching opportunities
- Enough sources to write 5-10 page paper
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2013 Theses based on interests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● What were the living conditions for the typical French buccaneer during the buccaneering period?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Who are the employees working in sweatshops, what are their conditions, which U.S. companies have been discovered employing sweatshop workers, and what is the government doing about them?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014 Theses based on theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● In what way does privacy affect the psychological development of children?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● How are K-12 teachers in the United States transitioning to Google Drive-based instruction?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instructor benefits

- Built knowledge by starting with background info
- Less “worksheet” answering
- More critical thinking about sources
- Better class discussions
- Easier for instructor to grade a single topic
  - And you feel less **hopeless** as an instructor
- Re-energized passion for teaching
- Opportunities in marketing course to students
Choosing a theme

- Be authentic
- Be relevant to your students
- Be broad enough to support a variety of majors and interests
- Allow for discussion and negotiation among students
Contact information

Elizabeth Price
eprice4@murraystate.edu

Becky Richardson
rrichardson5@murraystate.edu

Email addresses and short URL for slides available on handout.

Special thanks to George Bergstrom at Sullivan University for his research help and contributions in developing this topic for presentation.

gbergstrom@sullivan.edu


Burke, M. (2012). Academic libraries and the credit-bearing class. *Communications in Information Literacy, 5*(2), 156-173.


Price, E. and Bergstrom, G. (2013). Gilligan, Norm and a few Friends: Using a theme to make your course more meaningful. Presented at Kentucky Library Association Library Instruction Round Table Conference at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, Ky.

