Criminal Justice Processes & Information Literacy

The Class

- **Soca 435 - Criminal Justice Processes (3 hr)**
- **Soca 389 – Writing in Sociology (1 hr)**
- **Soca 488 – The Capstone Experience (1 hr)**

Senior level seminar examining the Criminal Justice System as an "Organizational Ecology." Agents calibrate activities on the basis of constraints imposed by overlapping layers of social structure.

Writing
1. 5000 words total writing in semester
2. Opportunity for revision based on feedback
3. Writing is 100% of one-credit hour grade
4. Use information effectively and ethically to accomplish a specific purpose

Library Class Sessions
1. Finding statistics and background information on a community and evaluating web sources (week 2)
2. Finding and using news sources, finding city/town budgets, and following citation styles (week 6)
3. Finding academic literature, using sources in your writing, and research logs (week 10)
4. Guided research workshop (week 12)
5. Displaying research in an academic poster (week 15)

- Individual consultations with the librarian were encouraged

The Project

Information Literacy Framework
1. **Community Selection:** Each student gathered information about a particular community.
2. **Phase I:** 8 to 10 page argument memorandum identifying a problem in the community and recommending a particular criminal justice process in response.
3. **Phase II:** 8 to 10 page expository memorandum summarizing the criminological literature on the problem area to support a grant application.

IL Standards for Anthropology and Sociology Students

1. Know what kind of information is needed
2. Access needed information effectively, efficiently, and ethically
3. Evaluate information and its sources critically; incorporate selected information into knowledge base and value system
4. Use information effectively and ethically to accomplish a specific purpose

Outcomes

Pre & Post Tests

- **Battery of Items Concerning:**
  - Attributing Sources
  - Credibility of Information
  - Primary vs. Secondary Sources
  - Questions likely to yield quality information

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attribution</td>
<td>+ Modest improvement (strong pre-test scores).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>+ Clearly understand authority of peer-reviewed information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary vs. Secondary</td>
<td>- Significant confusion (particularly concerning content on Web).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>- No evidence of improvement in ability to articulate useful questions.</td>
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Student Survey

Students were asked to complete an end of semester survey on the IL component of the class

Response rate: 22 out of 24 students (92%)

Student Survey Outcomes

- Through this class, I feel I have become a more effective criminal justice information researcher.
- The instruction I received on identifying, locating, and using information was useful to me in other courses and outside of school.
- As a result of the instruction, I am better able to refine my research and obtain information useful to class projects.
- I am more efficient at retrieving a relevant set of search results from an academic database.
- I feel the most important skill I learned was being able to read sociological journal articles more effectively.

Student Feedback

Q: One goal of this course is to develop students’ information literacy skills in what ways was this course successful, or not successful, in reaching that goal?

“Because of the course I learned a lot about how to do research and how to write a good paper. It was much more informative and challenging than my other courses. I am more confident in my writing skills after this class.”

“I found this course extremely successful. It really enhanced my research ability and gave me the skills I need to do research in the future. I am very thankful that I now know how to find academic articles. This will help me in graduate school.”

Q: What do you feel was the most important/useful research skill you learned in this class and why?

“I never knew how to begin a research project. Starting the hardest. Having the database available with templates gave me an understanding of how to begin future projects.”

“Learning how to search databases and search for scholarly articles was probably the most important thing for me. Like I said earlier my go to for information used to be a Google search, but now I know where to find more useful information.”

“I feel the most important skill I learned was being able to read sociological journal articles more effectively. I always had trouble getting useful information out of these sources but now I feel as though I have a better handle on how to read them.”


Credibility
- Questions likely to yield quality information
- Primary vs. Secondary Sources
- Attributing Sources

2. ALA/ACRL/ANSS Instruction and Information Literacy Curricula, January 2, 2001.

Sociology & Anthropology

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