

Student Learning Outcomes: Information Literacy in HIST 2020-American History II

Assessment Report | Spring 2013

In the spring of 2013, I did an assessment of three (3) sections of [HIST 2020-American History II](#) out of a total of seven research sessions taught for the course for a sampling of forty-three percent (43%).

The three (3) outcomes, measured by means of reviewing footnotes from 51 primary source and 36 secondary source student essays submitted by the deadline, included:

1. Selecting a primary source from a specific primary source database, *Social and Cultural History: Letters and Diaries Online*.
Result: Completed by **90.2%** (46 students)
2. Correctly identifying citation elements for a primary source in Chicago style, with a goal of eighty percent (80%) correctly citing their source.
Result: **17.6%** (9 students of 51 who submitted on time) got **80% or higher correct**.
3. Correctly identifying citation elements for 2 journal articles from either the *America: History and Life* or *JSTOR* database in Chicago style, with a goal of eighty percent (80%) correctly citing their source.
Result: **47.2%** (17 students of 36 who submitted on time) got **80% or higher correct**.

The students who submitted the secondary essay were better able to identify citation elements for a journal article than those who submitted and were able to identify citation elements for a primary source from *Social and Cultural History: Letters and Diaries Online*. While not surprising, as primary sources such as diaries, are not as straight forward as citing journal articles.

By collecting the completed primary source essay, more students were able to find and select a primary source (Outcome 1); however, only 17.9% this spring compared to 38% in the fall were able to correctly cite eight of ten citation elements (Outcome 2). With more time to find and cite a secondary source through completing the essay due in April, the number of students out of the whole class who got 80% or higher was 20% versus 7% for the fall.

Obstacles to higher achievement outcomes for 2 and 3 did not include time this semester. Ten students who responded, at a response rate of 14.2%, to an informal survey of 2 questions expressed confidence in their ability to complete the essay assignments after the research session. Since the survey was anonymous, it cannot be known if these students did well or were more confident in their abilities than were actually successful at the 80% or high accuracy rate.

Drilling down and looking at specific citation elements, students from the three classes were able to complete the author information at least a 91.6% rate and complete correctly at least a 78.6% rate and as high as 91.6%. When it came to the date of the item, students were only able to complete at an average rate of 48.2% while the lowest was 31.5% and the highest 58%. These two items if completed correctly are sufficient enough to pinpoint the item. Other common issues included citing the number of pages in the collection but not the actual item page(s); leaving off the URL of the database, and getting the editor of the collection and author of the item confused.

Possible ideas for improvement include adding a citation format and example for a diary entry, posting the handout in D2L in case students lose the original, and asking via a D2L post if students are having issues citing a source. I only made one minor tweak from the fall to the spring to the primary source citation format to state the recipient line only applied if it was a letter. In reviewing the footnotes from this spring, it may be helpful to address in class and/or D2L, what happens in cases where there is not a clear answer such as when a letter is addressed to someone only by the first initial or nickname.