

TO: Charles Kratz, Dean of the Library & Information Fluency
Library Advisory Committee

FROM: Jean W. Harris, Professor in the Political Science Department

DATE: June 15, 2015

RE: Spring 2015 Information Literacy Stipend Report

During the Spring 2015 semester, in consultation with Librarian Kevin Norris, I integrated into my section of Political Science 131—American National Government II several student learning outcomes related to information literacy standards. The information literacy student learning outcomes for this course stated that by the end of the semester, students who actively engaged in class lectures and discussions, engaged in active reading of course material, and diligently completed all research and written assignments will be able to:

- Conduct effective search strategies to gather information suitable to the topic, audience, purpose, context and speaker
- Evaluate sources for credibility

To fulfill these information literacy student learning outcomes students were assigned relevant readings, worked with Kevin Norris during two scheduled class meetings in a Weinberg Library classroom where they had hands-on learning experiences conducting Internet searches and database searches on topics related to national government and politics, and completed three research exercises/projects, two of which included the requirement to evaluate (and report on) the credibility of their sources (see page 3 for exercises). Kevin was available for students to consult with for all three research projects.

Kevin, in consultation with me, developed the first research exercise. This “library exercise” required the students to use the knowledge they gained in their two learning sessions with Kevin on conducting effective searches and evaluating the credibility of Internet sources of information.

Kevin, in consultation with me and taking into consideration the three research projects required for the class, developed the topics and content to be covered in his two learning sessions with the students. Knowing the specific information the students were required to research and report on and the information literacy student learning outcomes, Kevin assisted the students in identifying several appropriate websites, databases, and search strategies. In addition he distinguished between types of information (popular vs. scholarly; primary vs. secondary vs. tertiary); explained and walked the students through evaluating the credibility of sources (currency; authority of author/sponsor/publisher; point of view or bias of the source); differentiated plagiarism and copyright; and identified Weinberg Library sources (people and

online) and other on-line sources that offer assistance in conducting research, including how to cite sources.

In addition to learning opportunities provided in consultation with Kevin, I also invited Librarian Kristen Yarmey to speak with my students about advantages of and concerns raised by the use of new social media in today's politics. Kristen included in her presentation and discussion with students the importance of evaluating the credibility of information found online and privacy concerns related to new social media, including how the Internet is used by organizations and individuals (including politicians and political parties) to mine data on Internet users.

I am confident that in consultation with Kevin, and with presentations by and discussions with Kevin and Kristen, the information literacy student learning outcomes were met by the students in my PS 131 class during the Spring 2015 semester. My confidence is grounded in the development of the students' abilities to conduct effective research for the research projects and their abilities to evaluate the quality and credibility of their sources, which were evident in their written research projects and in response to test questions.

One example of students' knowledge regarding information literacy is found in their answers to a short essay question on the cumulative final exam for this class. In their responses to the prompt, ***Identify** one of the most important things you learned about conducting research using digital technology this semester that you believe all first-year students need to know and **explain** why this is important to college students who will need to conduct research and write papers,* the overwhelming majority of students accurately explained the importance of evaluating source credibility (several extending this to all research, not just Internet research) as well as what a researcher should consider when evaluating source credibility. In addition, several students focused on the importance of proper citation of sources.

Overall, I am pleased to report that by working with Kevin Norris and complementing that work with a guest lecture by Kristen Yarmey, students in my American National Government II class during the Spring 2015 semester learned how to conduct effective search strategies to gather information suitable to their research projects and their projects' audiences, the importance of evaluating source credibility, and how to evaluate source credibility. My knowledge in these areas of information literacy was also expanded as a result of working with University librarians. One change I will make to my future classes is to include in all research projects the requirement for students to provide an evaluation of each source they cite.

LIBRARY EXERCISE
AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT II (PS 131)

Choose one of the following topics (circle the one you chose):

- Domestic surveillance and privacy
- Identification cards as an invasion of privacy
- Airport security and the rights of privacy

For the topic you chose conduct a search for each of the following:

- Scholarly article
- Popular article from a magazine or newspaper
- An internet source from a non-government organization
- An internet source from a branch of government (state or federal)

Give the citation for each of the above in correct APA format. Then evaluate the source using the following criteria: currency, authority, and point of view or bias.

CONGRESSIONAL MEMBER RESEARCH EXERCISE

Directions:

For each piece of information provided in response to the items below:

- * give the citation for the source
- * evaluate the source using the following criteria: currency, authority, and point of view or bias

Identify your two U.S. Senators and your one U.S. Representative. Then select one of the three to research (see #2-#6).

1. Provide basic biographical information for your selected congressional member. Be sure to include birth date
2. political career (what government positions has he/she been elected and/or appointed to) party affiliation
3. List the congressional member's committee assignments and any leadership positions he/she holds.
4. List and present a brief description of three policy priorities of the selected congressional member.
5. Provide at least one quote from an individual or an interest group that approves of the job the congressional member is doing?
6. Provide at least one quote from an individual or interest group that does not approve of the job the congressional member is doing.