

## Literacy Grant Final Report

Sharon M. Meagher, Ph.D.

Professor of Philosophy and Chair, Department of Latin American Studies and Women's Studies  
(LA/W/S)

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**Project Summary:** I was awarded a stipend to integrate a more deliberate information literacy component into *Phil 218: Feminism: Theory and Practice*, a course that is cross-listed with the women's studies program and serves as a required course for it. AS students grappled with academic questions about what feminism is, we also taught them how to better find and evaluate effective research and web-based information on the topic. In collaboration with Donna Mazziotti, Public Service Librarian and liaison to the department of Latin American Studies and Women's Studies, we developed 5 mini-lessons and corresponding assignments that developed students' information literacy skills. Students were then expected to utilize those skills in a final project. We also assessed the project at semester's end.

### Project Timeline:

Summer 2009: Donna Mazziotti and I met to discuss the course and student needs, and we developed a plan of 20 minute guest mini-lessons that would be presented by Donna throughout the semester. A course objective was added to the syllabus: "*students will understand how to engage in research on issues concerning feminist theory and practice, and will learn how to evaluate research sources as well as claims made in the popular media.*"

Fall 2009: Course was taught, and integrated the following information literacy "mini-lessons":

1. *research on unfamiliar concept or term using Credo.* After a presentation on the use of Credo, students were asked to identify a concept or term use of Credo for general reference/research. Students were assigned a reading that contained many unfamiliar concepts/terms. Each student chose one, researched the term using Credo, and then posted an explanation of the assignment on Angel. In that way, students also improved their reading comprehension, since they had solid explanations of terms that appeared in the text.
2. *"chasing a footnote."* Students had to locate a reference found in a reading assignment. Again, students posted their results, thus beginning to develop a reference list for potential use in larger projects.
3. *website evaluation.* Students were taught how to evaluate the quality of information available on a website. They were then asked to find a website that discussed "feminism" in some way and evaluate it. Each student again posted their findings on Angel and shared them with their classmates, thus continuing the build the database of research resources for their larger project (see below).
4. *researching your topic.*
5. *Library information wiki.* Donna explained the purpose of the library's research wiki, presented a format on how to develop annotated bibliographies, and explained to students how to contribute to the wiki. Students then wrote annotated bibliographies and posted them on the library's wiki resource pages for women's studies.

With the exception of the wiki assignment, which carried more weight, the short assignments paired with each information literacy mini-lesson were graded on a pass/fail basis with suggestions for improvement (when applicable).

Students were then assigned a larger, research project in which they were expected to draw on what they had learned in the information literacy lessons. The assignment required that they work in groups to present information about a particular feminist issue. They then defined

poster and interactive presentations and presented them to the whole University community. Part of the assignment required students to not only present their information, but to explain how they researched it and found and evaluated appropriate information resources. In this way, the lessons were reinforced as the students taught them to other students not enrolled in the class. As a final, related project, the students then took their best research resources and posted them on the University of Scranton's library wiki. *Thus their work has had a lasting impact on the University community.*

### **Assessment:**

Students were given short assignments following each information literacy lesson. Each of the assignments was linked to a particular reading or project that we were doing in class at the time. Students were assessed on their ability to find appropriate resources on feminism and to evaluate their quality by evaluating student assignments keyed to various ACRL competency standards. Students succeeded in all assignments.

In addition, Donna Mazziotti distributed an evaluation form in class, which students completed (see attached).

I also added questions to the on-line course evaluation that were specifically focused on the information literacy initiative. 75% of the students replied. The questions used the following likert scale:

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree

Those questions and results are as follows:

**I improved my information literacy skills in this class.** 0 0 2 6 10; 16 students agreed or strongly agreed that they'd improved their information literacy skills.

**Donna's lessons were clear.** 0 0 2 3 13; 16 students agreed or strongly agreed that Donna's lessons were cleared; the vast majority of them strongly agreed.

**I understand better how feminist researchers find resources for their work.** 0 0 3 7 8

**I see the relationship between understanding what feminism is and understanding how to evaluate information.** 0 0 3 7 8

**My experience working on the feminist fair improved my knowledge of feminism.** 0 0 3 8 7

**My experience working on the feminist fair improved my group work skills.** 0 0 5 5 8

**The information literacy assignments were helpful.** 0 0 4 5 9

**Analysis of Assessment:** In all cases the vast majority of the students rated the project a success. Donna Mazziotti received uniformly high ratings from the students for her work. What was weaker than I would have hoped was the ability for the students to see how the work that we were doing was integrated into the course content—even though I made a presentation on those connections after each of Donna's lessons. The obstacle here, I think, was that Donna was only available (through no fault of her own) on certain days, and the presentation days did not always work ideally with the course content. I think that it will be easier for students to see those connections when primary instructor presents the lessons, so that I can more seamlessly integrate information literacy lessons at the appropriate moments.

### **Conclusion. Grant/Project Outcomes:**

- a. students demonstrated improvement in core information literacy competencies
- b. students enrolled in Phil 218 made better and more frequent use of the librarian's reference desk
- c. students shares what they learned with other students—in the case of shorter assignments, with their classmates, and in the case of the larger project, with the University community
- d. students contributed to the library's women's studies research wiki

- e. Meagher is committed to continuing to integrate the information literacy lessons into future iterations of the course
- f. Meagher will share what she has learned at the women's studies faculty retreat in May, and encourage other faculty to include information literacy lessons into their classes and/or apply for literacy stipends themselves.

I thank that library advisory sub-committee on information literacy for awarding me the literacy grant. And I thank Donna Mazziotti for her enthusiasm, professionalism, and hard work on this project. It was a pleasure to work with her!