Examples of effective assignments introducing FYS students to the library and research

Lauren and Charlotte encourage you to bring your students early in the semester for the scavenger hunt activity during Common Hour or classtime, and then bring them back later, during classtime, to *use* the library and get to know its resources and services by doing an assignment for your course.

Below is a sampling of assignments from our FYS faculty over the years. Some are major culminating projects and some are less involved, like a single homework assignment.

Please contact Lauren (x6419) or Charlotte (x6409) to schedule your visits and to discuss plans for an assignment for your course. We can advise you on the do-ability of your idea and help design the assignment and plan for the library visit.

For more ideas (find links on the For Faculty guide->For FYS Faculty, or Google these)

- **Ideas for Incorporating Research into FYE** (from Colorado College's Tutt library)
- **What First Year Seminar Faculty Ask Students To Do in FYS** (from Saint Michael's College library)

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**Ana Alexander: Latin America Past and Present**

**Annotated bibliography and presentation.** Students choose a Latin American country, then learn how to find a variety of kinds of sources to learn more about one aspect of their country. They keep a record of their sources in EasyBib and prepare a bibliography in MLA style. They evaluate their sources, and narrow them down to the three best to annotate, noting the kind of source, its content and quality, and what it contributed to their learning. They teach their classmates about one interesting aspect of their country, informed by quality resources.

**Andrew Alexander: English Composition**

**Exploratory essay.** This is a “thesis-seeking” process through which students arrive at a position on a controversial topic by critically engaging a handful of argument pieces on the topic. The essay is a narrative of the students’ engagement with their selected sources, discussing what the source contributes to the student’s journey towards an answer to their research question. The professor is able to address students’ research process as they are conducting the research, not after the fact.

**Adam Chill: Coffee in World History**

**Research on a commodity.** In a course on the history and contemporary global issues around coffee as a commodity, the students branched out to research other commodities: bananas, sugar, chocolate, textiles/jeans, gold, diamonds. They were asked to report on production, consumption, history and a contemporary issue for that commodity in a group poster presentation and an individual essay.
Katy Culpo: Health Education

**Professional scenarios.** Students are given a scenario they might encounter in their professional lives as health educators or PE teachers. They find materials in the library to help them accomplish the goal of the scenario (preparing for a job interview, preparing a teaching unit, creating a pamphlet, writing a resume). They are asked to find 2 books and 2 current journal articles to help solve the problem, then indicate how they would solve the problem.

Andre Fleche: Vermont Frontier

**Using primary sources to shed light on a research question.** Students were introduced to a variety of resources to search for primary source items related to early U.S. and Vermont history, including online digital collections, the library catalog, and Early American Imprints. Students wrote a paper explaining how the primary source documents shed light on their research question.

Bill Kuehn: Introduction to Sociology

**Background research on illegal dumping for culminating paper on service-learning project.** Students learn about information sources useful for researching the problem they had been experiencing in their service learning project: cleaning up a local ravine with a history of illegally dumped solid waste. Students each research a different topic related to the project and all write an introduction and conclusion demonstrating an understanding of illegal dumping.

Harry McEnerny: Acting

**Find a review.** Students use the Broadway Internet Database to learn about the original productions of the plays they are studying. They learn to use the New York Times Historical database to locate and read reviews of those productions. They comment on the critic's assessment (positive or negative), use a quote to back this up, and learn to cite the article.

Jonathan Spiro: American History

**Annotated bibliography and essay on sources.** Students choose a theme and locate a wide variety of sources on their theme in American history in the three specific decades the course focuses on, at least 10 per decade. They write annotations of the 10 best sources overall and discuss 3-5 in an essay about how those sources relate to one another and how they informed their thinking on this theme in American history.

Patricia Vanderspuy: World History

**Family history/global history.** The students interview elders in their family, look for historical documents related to their family’s immigration process, and research the context of emigration from their home country or region and immigration/migration in the U.S. at the time.

Becky Eno: Coming of Age (Upward Bound)

**Coming of age literature and context.** Students read accounts of coming of age from different countries. They then research what life is like for teenagers in the country of their story.