

Wikipedia  
Education  
Program

# Case Studies: How professors are teaching with Wikipedia

Wikimedia Foundation

Since Wikipedia began in 2001, professors around the world have integrated the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit into their curriculum. In 2010, the Wikimedia Foundation started the Wikipedia Education Program to provide more support for professors who are interested in using Wikipedia as a teaching tool.

In this brochure, professors around the world will explain Wikipedia assignments they've used to meet learning objectives for their courses. They will also explain how they graded these assignments. These case studies can help you form a plan for how you can use Wikipedia as a teaching tool in your class.

This brochure is just the beginning, however. For each case study, you can go online to get the assignment details. And if you've created an assignment that you'd like to share with other professors, just go online and add yourself!

<http://education.wikimedia.org/casestudies>

# Learning Objectives

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## Writing Skills Development

Students learn how to write for a diverse and interested readership that represents a significant percentage of the worldwide online population. During the process of contributing information to the encyclopedia, students must learn to write with others and to accept revisions of their work. Furthermore, with Wikipedia’s emphasis on verifiability and “no original research,” students gain a greater understanding of the difference between fact-based and persuasive writing style.



## Media and Information Literacy

Wikipedia’s transparent and collaborative content development process allows students to gain a deeper understanding of how information is both produced and consumed. This provides an excellent opportunity for students to reflect on available sources and their appropriate usage.



## Critical Thinking and Research Skills

Students learn to critically analyze Wikipedia articles to determine how well the article covers the topic, to assess what information is missing, and to evaluate to what extent the article is documented with reliable sources. In the larger context, the evaluation of Wikipedia articles helps your students learn how to evaluate different sources, not only Wikipedia. The process of assessing an existing article and deciding what information is missing is very similar to the literature review process that is crucial in scholarly research.



## Collaboration

Students learn first-hand how to collaborate with a community of active volunteer editors (including their fellow students) in the development of encyclopedic content. They often receive feedback on their work and learn to negotiate with other editors in building consensus on content.

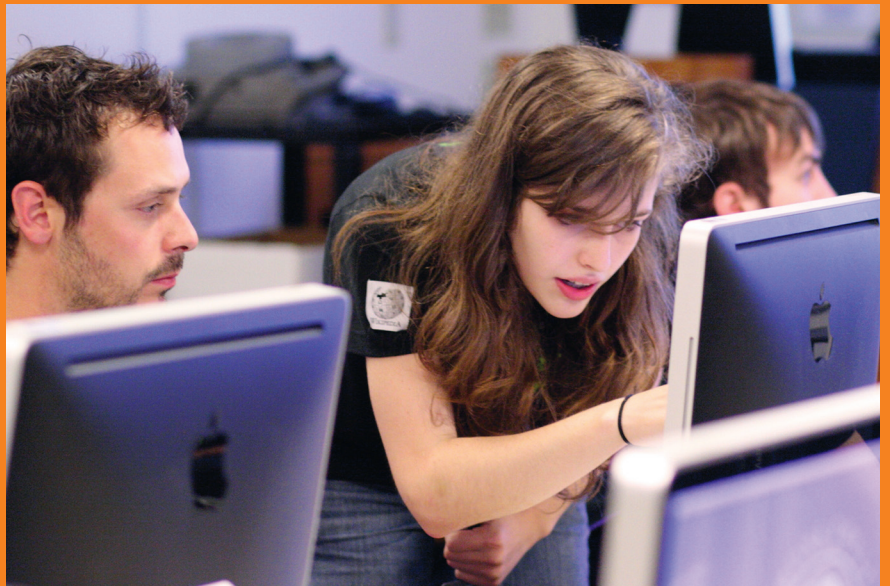


## Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills

Wiki software use is growing in both educational and corporate settings. Wikipedia assignments teach students how to use the popular MediaWiki software. Students communicate on article and user talk pages, developing skills and techniques appropriate for getting their message across to their intended audience.

# Case Studies: Assignments

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(CC-BY-SA 3.0) by Annie Lin



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Wikipedia Ambassadors are available in many countries to assist you and your students in learning the basics of editing Wikipedia. Ambassadors will help you work out the details of your Wikipedia assignment and provide support for students as they contribute to Wikipedia for the first time.

# Copyediting

**Adrienne Wadewitz**  
Visiting Assistant Professor  
Indiana University-Purdue University  
Indianapolis  
USA

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Course name

Argumentative Writing

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Course level (undergraduate/graduate)

Advanced undergraduates

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Learning objectives

Writing Skills Development ★★★★★

Media and Information Literacy ★★★★★

Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★★★★

Collaboration ★

Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★★★★★

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Discipline of course

Many

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Class size

20

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Individual or group assignment

Individual

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Duration of assignment

1 week

<http://education.wikimedia.org/copyediting>

## Assignment

**I asked students to copyedit Wikipedia articles, engaging editors in conversation about their writing and improving the clarity of the language of the material.**

In doing so, they had to consider the global audience of Wikipedia and the challenge of communicating with anonymous Wikipedia editors. Hopefully, by the end students realized that copyediting is a painstaking, necessary, and sometimes politically fraught process.

In *Argumentative Writing*, students learned to write in different voices for different audiences. In learning about the specific voice on Wikipedia, they learned about the “authoritative” voice and how its tone can convince, even if the content is questionable. The ways in which tone and content reinforce and/or undermine each other is a crucial media fluency for students to learn.



(CC-BY-SA 3.0) by Joseph C. Jones

# Definitions

**James M. Lipuma**  
Teacher Education Programs Director  
**Davida Scharf**  
Director of Reference & Instruction  
New Jersey Institute of Technology  
USA

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Course name  
Technical Communication

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Course level  
Advanced undergraduates

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Learning objectives

Writing Skills Development ★★★★★

Media and Information Literacy ★★★

Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★★

Collaboration ★

Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★

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Discipline of course  
English in a Humanities Department

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Class size  
100–150

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Individual or group assignment  
Individual

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Duration of assignment  
8 weeks

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<http://education.wikimedia.org/definitions>

## Assignment

We asked students to identify articles needing revision and improve them by editing definitions, adding content, and adding reliable and appropriate sources as references.

Students prepared a written response to a request for a proposal in which they made a case for why the changes were needed, why they were qualified to make them, and why their sources would provide adequate support. After revising the article, the students reflected on their work by persuading Dr. Lipuma in a formal letter that they actually accomplished the work they had proposed.



(CC-BY-SA 3.0) by Jay Walsh

# Write an article

**Juliana Bastos Marques**  
Professor  
Federal University of Rio de Janeiro State  
(UNIRIO)  
Brazil

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Course name

Special Topics in Ancient History — Roman History  
in Wikipedia

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Course level

Advanced undergraduates

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Learning objectives

Writing Skills Development ★★★★★

Media and Information Literacy ★★★★★

Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★★★★

Collaboration ★

Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★★★★★

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Discipline of course

History

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Class size

20

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Individual or group assignment

Individual

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Duration of assignment

13 weeks

<http://education.wikimedia.org/writearticle>

## Assignment

**For the first four weeks, I asked my students to write a 3-page report where they analyze the current state of the articles chosen for future revision, with critical reading of both content and form.**

I gave them seven weeks after this to edit their chosen articles in sandboxes with feedback from me and the Ambassadors. Finally, I asked them to complete a 3-page individual assessment and feedback for the course.

By far, learning how to interpret texts and write clearly and concisely in their own words, with references, was the most positive aspect of the activity. This is difficult, necessary, and comes with practice. Students were very apathetic at first, perhaps showing resistance to a very new activity proposed by the professor. Only close to the deadline did they understand the implications of what they were doing. The assignments were thus a paradigm shift for the students as well.



(CC-BY-SA 3.0) by Matthew Roth

# Write a Featured Article

**Jon Beasley-Murray**  
Associate Professor of Latin American  
Studies  
University of British Columbia  
Canada

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#### Course names

**Murder, Madness, and Mayhem — Latin American Literature in Translation**  
**North of the Río Grande — Latin American Civilization and Culture**  
**Magical Realism Reconsidered — Survey of Spanish-American Literature since the 1820s**

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#### Course level

**Advanced undergraduates**

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#### Learning objectives

**Writing Skills Development ★★★★★**  
**Media and Information Literacy ★★★★★**  
**Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★★★★**  
**Collaboration ★★★★★**  
**Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★★★★★**

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#### Discipline of course

**Spanish/Latin American Studies**

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#### Class size

**15–30**

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#### Individual or group assignment

**Group**

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#### Duration of assignment

**12 weeks**

<http://education.wikimedia.org/featuredarticle>

## Assignment

**In each of these courses, students were asked to work in groups to create or to improve Wikipedia articles related to the course topic.**

These articles were usually devoted to the books and/or authors that we were studying in what was in each case essentially a literature class. In many cases, but not all, the articles already existed in some form or another, of variable quality. Students were particularly encouraged to submit their articles to Wikipedia peer review and quality processes, such as “Did You Know,” “Good Article,” and “Featured Article” nominations.

It exceeded expectations in just about every area. I was perhaps most surprised by how much this also became an assignment about writing (and revising).



(CC-BY 3.0) by Ofelia Ros



# Translation

**Leigh Thelmadatter**  
Professor of English/Language Laboratory  
Coordinator  
Instituto Tecnológico y Estudios  
Superiores de Monterrey  
México

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Course name  
Sello A

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Course level  
First year undergraduates

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Learning objectives  
Writing Skills Development ★  
Media and Information Literacy ★  
Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★★  
Collaboration ★★★★★  
Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★★★★★

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Discipline of course  
Languages

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Class size  
4

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Individual or group assignment  
Both

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Duration of assignment  
16 weeks

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<http://education.wikimedia.org/translationspanish>

## Assignment

**I asked my students to integrate into the Spanish Wikipedia community by translating articles from the English Wikipedia to the Spanish Wikipedia.**

This assignment provided students an authentic immersion situation in which to use their English for communication and projects. The best part of the project was seeing Wikipedia as motivational, with real communication and with assignments that have consequences outside the classroom. While it was frustrating for them, students did experience a certain amount of culture shock as they interacted with Wikipedians from other countries.



(CC-BY-SA 3.0) by Alejandro Linares Garcia

# Translation

**Dalia Mohamed El Toukhy**  
Assistant Professor of the Faculty of  
Al Alsun  
Ain Shams University  
Egypt

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Course name

Specialist translations from French to Arabic

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Course level

Undergraduate

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Learning objectives

Writing Skills Development ★

Media and Information Literacy ★

Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★★★★

Collaboration ★★★★★

Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★★★★★

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Discipline of course

Translation

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Class size

6

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Individual or group assignment

Group

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Duration of assignment

10 weeks

<http://education.wikimedia.org/translationarabic>

## Assignment

**This project allowed students to master terminology in order to produce qualified translators who fulfill the needs of the job market.**

Students deepened their skills around translation of political, legal, and economic texts. My students were very motivated when it came to translating texts on Wikipedia.

The students learned to master specialist translations and know the theoretical and practical aspects of it. They understood the necessity of developing their skills and engaging in the ongoing practice of working in groups and working with technological tools like the internet in order to gather information.



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# Photos

**Jiří Reif**  
Assistant Professor  
Charles University in Prague  
Czech Republic

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Course name  
Nature Conservation

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Course level  
Advanced undergraduates

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Learning objectives  
Writing Skills Development ★★★  
Media and Information Literacy ★★★★★  
Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★★★★  
Collaboration ★  
Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★★★★★

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Discipline of course  
Environmental Studies

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Class size  
30

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Individual or group assignment  
Individual

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Duration of assignment  
8 weeks

<http://education.wikimedia.org/photos>

## Assignment

**Students chose a protected area in the Czech Republic and improved the Wikipedia article on that area, including taking photographs of the area.**

A personal visit to the area, its photographic documentation, citing from existing literature, and a talk in front of the class were all required to successfully complete the assignment.

Generally, I have a very positive feeling about the assignment. Students were really pushed into the game in most cases and worked more enthusiastically than during other kinds of courses. I am very glad that they realize the value of publishing their written work on Wikipedia — their schoolwork did not end up in the teacher's drawer. Last but not least, the complete availability of the article on the Internet and its critical assessment by independent Wikipedians made the students learn to work with sources — a skill that will be useful for them during further studies.



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# Illustrations

**Bruce Sharky**  
Professor  
Louisiana State University  
USA

Course name  
Regional Planning and Design

Course level  
Master's students

Learning objectives  
Writing Skills Development ★  
Media and Information Literacy ★★★★★  
Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★★★★  
Collaboration ★★★  
Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★★★★★

Discipline of course  
Landscape Architecture

Class size  
11

Individual or group assignment  
Individual

Duration of assignment  
12 weeks (part of a larger off-wiki assignment)

<http://education.wikimedia.org/illustrations>

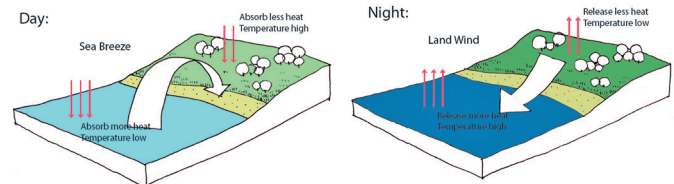
## Assignment

I asked my students to go on Wikipedia and find an article that could use an illustration that would explain graphically what was written in words.

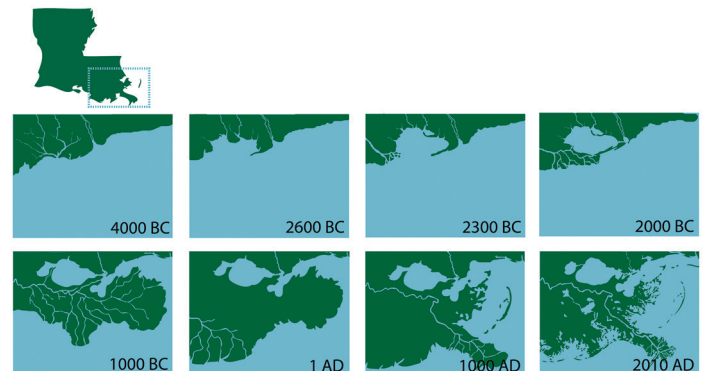
The topics had to do with natural processes in coastal Louisiana, such as wetland loss, hurricanes, etc. The larger assignment included a paper and an in-class presentation.

Students were very excited about the assignment because they were able to be published, they were treated as grown-ups, they were making a contribution to Wikipedia, and people all over the world were critiquing their work. I found that the quality of their other work was some of the best I've seen of my students, and I think it was because of the Wikipedia assignment. It made students think critically about the kind of graphic illustrations they do with all of their assignments. As landscape architects, we have to communicate to the public, and this assignment helped them gain those skills.

### Diurnal Wind Change in Coastal Area



(CC-BY-SA 3.0) by Yue Guan



(CC-BY-SA 3.0) by Dboutte

# Videos

**Jennifer Geigel Mikulay**  
Assistant Professor of Professional  
Communication  
Alverno College, Milwaukee  
USA

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Course name

Advanced Media Studies

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Course level

Advanced undergraduates, many of whom are returning students

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Learning objectives

Writing Skills Development ★

Media and Information Literacy ★★★★★

Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★

Collaboration ★★★

Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★★★★★

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Discipline of course

Communication

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Class size

20

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Individual or group assignment

Individual

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Duration of assignment

4 weeks

<http://education.wikimedia.org/videos>

## Assignment

**Students created an original informational video to illustrate a Wikipedia article dealing with a subject related to architecture, dance, heritage, landscape, machines, music, parks, or sports.**

The project was designed to facilitate the expansion and integration of media knowledge. Students experimented, problem solved, engaged aesthetic abilities, and applied insights from course readings and independent research. All images and music had to be original, out of copyright, or available with a Creative Commons Share-Alike license.

The assignment was designed to increase media literacy, provide experience with digital video, and encourage web content development. Students learned about Wikipedia as a digital project and as a collaborative community with a specific culture. They learned about the uneven gender dynamic in Wikipedia and tech fields generally. They also learned the value of sharing their work in a highly accessible venue. The feedback student got meant a lot to them. When Wikipedians left notes on their talk pages or otherwise commented on the videos, the students really learned from the engagement.



(CC-BY-SA 3.0) by Katy Lederer

# Case Studies: Grading

Grading Wikipedia assignments is challenging because students are often working collaboratively, and it's hard to tell just what each student has contributed to the article. Professors use a variety of approaches to assess the work their students have done on Wikipedia.



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(CC-BY-SA 3.0) by Annie Lin



(CC-BY-SA 3.0) by Annie Lin

# Content added to Wikipedia

**Anne J. McNeil**

**Seyhan N. Ege Assistant Professor of Chemistry  
University of Michigan  
USA**

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## Course names

**Organic Chemistry of Macromolecules  
Physical Organic Chemistry**

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## Course level

**Ph.D. courses, though advanced undergraduates also took the course and participated in the projects**

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## Learning objectives

**Writing Skills Development ★★★★★**

**Media and Information Literacy ★**

**Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★★★★**

**Collaboration ★★★★★**

**Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★★★★★**

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## Discipline of course

**Chemistry**

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## Class size

**10–36**

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## Individual or group assignment

**Groups of 2–3**

<http://education.wikimedia.org/content>

## Grading

**The students worked in small groups to edit a Wikipedia article that is related to the course material and not already adequately described in Wikipedia.**

I gave the students a set of minimum expectations: at least 3 sections, 3 figures, and 8 references must be added to the article. Then, during the two-stage peer review process, I gave the students a list of questions meant to provide more specific guidelines about what is expected. For example, “is the article suitable for first-time/general users as well as those looking to understand the topic in more detail?” I also used these questions when determining their final grade. I had the students present their individual contribution to the article, which allowed me to give students different grades within each group based on their individual efforts.

Breaking down the grading into sections (content, figures, references, presentation, peer reviews, etc) gave me a simple yet fair structure with which to evaluate the article. Each student received a unique grade, which is variable based on his or her individual contribution to the article and their peer reviews. This alleviates any concern by the students when someone does not pull their weight.



(CC-BY-SA 3.0) by Matthew B. Soellner

# Milestones

**Robert Cummings**  
Director, Center for Writing and Rhetoric  
Associate Professor of English  
University of Mississippi  
USA

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Course name  
Writing 101

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Course level  
First-year undergraduates

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Learning objectives  
Writing Skills Development ★★★★★  
Media and Information Literacy ★★★★★  
Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★★★★  
Collaboration ★★★  
Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★★★

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Discipline of course  
Composition

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Class size  
23

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Individual or group assignment  
Both

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<http://education.wikimedia.org/milestones>

## Grading

The purpose of the assignment was to further student progress toward the composition course outcomes of learning a writing process, building skills in intellectual exploration and argumentation, understanding rhetorical purposes and diverse audiences, engaging in effective research practices, and producing prose with acceptable conventions and mechanics.

Student work was evaluated both in terms of participation in each stage of the assignment process, and also in terms of a reflective essay. At each of the seven assignment stages students were asked to conduct some type of research and then to prepare a brief report for that day's assignment. And within the reflective essay students were asked to evaluate the project in terms of its usefulness of helping them reach the course outcomes. This strategy of creating small, incremental writing to learn assignments each day provided manageable tasks on a daily basis which did not detract from the research process.



(CC-BY-SA 3.0) by Kevin Bain



# Reflective papers

**Michael Mandiberg**  
Associate Professor  
College of Staten Island/CUNY  
USA

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Course name

History of Design and Digital Media

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Course level

2nd and 3rd year undergraduates

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Learning objectives

Writing Skills Development ★★★★★

Media and Information Literacy ★★★★★

Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★★★★

Collaboration ★

Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★★

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Discipline of course

Media Studies/Art History

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Class size

22

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Individual or group assignment

Individual

<http://education.wikimedia.org/reflectivepapers>

## Grading

I asked my students to write a short (2–5 page) reflective essay on their experiences using Wikipedia. The reflective paper was graded based on the thoroughness and depth with which they reflected on their experience, but the paper was also used as a lens to evaluate their final project.

Their final project was to add 1,200 to 2,000 words to a stub article related to the course. They were expected to create an info box, add images, and add at least 20 relevant and authoritative citations. While I was able to use the article history to evaluate the objective quality of each student's contributions, it was very useful to see the shifts in subjective self-awareness and perception that is a large part of why I had my students write on Wikipedia. I was able to confirm from the student's own voice the transformations I had witnessed (or believed I had witnessed) via the text they added: it empowered them, it transformed their research skills, it was rewarding for them to do something that was for the greater good, and most importantly, it made their writing better and kept them academically honest.



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# Five criteria

**Rochelle Davis**  
Assistant Professor of Anthropology  
Georgetown University  
USA

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#### Course name

Introduction to the Study of the Arab World  
Theorizing Culture and Politics

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#### Course level

M.A. and 2nd/3rd year undergraduates

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#### Learning objectives

Writing Skills Development ★★★★★

Media and Information Literacy ★★

Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★★★★

Collaboration ★

Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★★★★★

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#### Discipline of course

Multidisciplinary

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#### Class size

20

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#### Individual or group assignment

Individual

<http://education.wikimedia.org/fivecriteria>

## Grading

**Students chose a topic for the semester, researched it, contributed an entry to Wikipedia, and then wrote a research paper on the same subject.**

They also wrote five blog entries about their experiences over the course of the term.

I graded the assignment based on five criteria:

1. Vision for the entry content: Did you divide up the material in a way that reflects both the literature and neutral point of view? Did you make the appropriate headings?
2. Your research in thinking-beyond-Google to find relevant and diverse sources.
3. Your organization of the entry and the content: Did you organize the material or are there things in one section that belong elsewhere? Did you provide relevant material? Are there things missing?
4. Your writing of a well-supported, well-researched entry: Neutral point of view? Sources/footnotes? Grammatically correct? Paragraphs well-constructed?
5. How you address the comments you were given by me and others.



(CC-0) by Justin Secor

# Peer reviews

**Shamira Gelbman**  
Assistant Professor  
Illinois State University  
USA

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Course name  
U.S. Political Parties

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Course level  
Advanced undergraduates

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Learning objectives  
Writing Skills Development ★★★★★  
Media and Information Literacy ★★★★★  
Critical Thinking and Research Skills ★★★★★  
Collaboration ★★★  
Working on Wiki: Technical and Communication Skills ★★★

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Discipline of course  
Political Science

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Class size  
70

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Individual or group assignment  
Individual

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<http://education.wikimedia.org/peerreviews>

## Grading

**As part of a larger project that involved both Wikipedia and other components, students were required to evaluate and improve existing Wikipedia articles about state-level political party organizations in the United States.**

The students' improvements to their assigned state-party articles were evaluated twice: a month into their work, and again at the end of the semester. The one-month evaluation involved three kinds of evaluation: Each student self-evaluated his or her own progress; each student was assigned to peer-review one other classmate's work; and I provided an evaluation and suggestions for further improvement for each student based on his or her self-evaluations, peer-review report, and his or her article itself. The peer review component of this one-month evaluation was guided; that is, students received forms with pointed, open-ended questions to help structure their assessment of classmates' work.

I've found that self-evaluation and peer-review make assessment more meaningful; they become active participants in the process rather than passive recipients of a grade. Peer review has the added benefit of facilitating students learning from each other — both in terms of the content and the quality of their work.



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# Wikipedia Education Program

## Using Wikipedia as a teaching tool in your university class increases student motivation.

Independent research from the pilot of the Wikipedia Education Program showed 72% of students preferred a Wikipedia assignment to a traditional one. Students found that they were excited to do a useful assignment, rather than a throwaway assignment that nobody but their professor would ever read. Wikipedia assignments provide an authentic learning experience for students. They are able to share their work easily with their parents and friends. And many find working on Wikipedia is fun!

## Ready to join the Wikipedia Education Program?

Education programs already exist in many countries, and Wikimedia volunteers are creating new programs every term. In countries where the Wikipedia Education Program is in operation, volunteer Wikipedia Ambassadors are available to offer you and your students assistance in learning the best ways to contribute to Wikipedia for class.

Join us! For more details, visit  
<http://education.wikimedia.org>

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elemental chlorine-free process,  
produced using renewable power