

GEOC Program Plan for Information Literacy

Major Program: Latin American Studies

Briefly describe how Information Literacy will be taught within your major program. List courses in which these skills will be embedded.

The major in Latin American Studies comprises a 15-credit interdisciplinary core (one course from Anthropology, History, Political Science, Humanities (i.e., Art History or Latin American Literature), and a capstone research course), plus seven additional Latin America-related courses, at least four of which must constitute a specific focus, such as history, development, arts and culture, etc. Majors must also develop intermediate proficiency in Spanish or Portuguese, demonstrated by taking and receiving grades of C or better in two upper division language courses (e.g., Spanish 278, 279, 290, 291) or by achieving a rating of “intermediate” on a proficiency test administered by the Department of Modern and Classical Languages.

The Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies offers only one course, LAMS 290W Latin American Studies Research Seminar, in which it can set standards for information literacy. This required course is taken by Latin American Studies majors and minors in the senior year. All other courses in the Latin American Studies major are taught by core and supporting faculty with appointments in departments in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the School of Business, and the School of Fine Arts.

LAMS 290W: Latin American Studies Research Seminar is the capstone course for majors and minors in Latin American Studies. In this seminar, students build on the information literacy they have gained in other courses and demonstrate their mastery by developing a research project and writing a 15 to 20-page paper using the methods and processes of original, library-based research. Throughout the semester, each student works on his or her own research and paper, and that ongoing work constitutes the material of the course. Seminar sessions are devoted to discussing and mastering the steps in the research process and group critiques of the papers-in-progress. By the end of the course, students enrolled in LAMS 290W have met the ACRL standards for information literacy.

STANDARD ONE: The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.

Students in LAMS 290W work through the process of defining a topic, refining it into a researchable question, developing a research strategy, and locating appropriate sources. Each student writes a preliminary problem statement for his or her research paper, which is discussed and critiqued by other students in the seminar.

STANDARD TWO: The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.

The third session of LAMS 290W meets in the library and is conducted by the Latin American Studies library liaison. In this session, students are introduced to general data

bases relevant to research in the social sciences and humanities as well as those devoted specifically to Latin American Studies. Students are introduced to the MLA and APA guidelines for documentation, and the importance of careful documentation is emphasized, as is the definition of plagiarism. During this session, the students begin searching for materials related to their research project, and each produces a working bibliography of at least 30 relevant sources.

STANDARD THREE: The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his/her knowledge base and value system. After compiling their working bibliographies, students in LAMS 290W discuss them in class with the aim of determining which sources seem most important to examine first, i.e., which sources likely to yield the most data or material relevant to their research topic and questions. Students revise and resubmit their problem statements and write a preliminary literature review of their sources, answering the question: “what does the current scholarship say about my particular research question?”

STANDARD FOUR: The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.

Having worked as a group through the fundamentals of the research process, students in LAMS 290W then work independently on their research. After three to four weeks, they meet again as a seminar, make brief presentations of their research, and submit a complete draft of their final papers.

STANDARD FIVE: The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

LAMS 290W addresses the importance of careful documentation and attribution in the presentation of research.

Are all these courses required of your students? If not, how will you assure that all students attain the exit expectations for Information Literacy?

LAMS 290W is required of all our majors and minors.

Date of Approval by Faculty or Appropriate Faculty Committee Sept. 16, 2004; April 10, 2006

Date of Approval by School/College C&C Committee October 12, 2004

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Date Submitted to GEOC October 13, 2004; April 10, 2006