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Progress Report Fall 2013 Innovative Course Development Grant Summer 2013

The purpose of this class is to increase student learning and the ability to write academic entries, such as an encyclopedia entry. The fall 2013 class used a writing-to-learn approach, that is, writing assignments and the review thereof will be used to master the course material and improve formal writing skills within their major. For this purpose, students completed a substantial amount of writing that enhances learning and demonstrates knowledge of the correctional system and its interrelated parts. The final writing assignment for this class was to write an encyclopedia article that would be published in the Encyclopedia of Criminal Justice Ethics.

Students were asked to choose a topic from a list of seven topics: prison corruption, Thomas Hobbes, *Atkins v. Virginia*, *Simmons v. Roper*, brutalization theory, torture, and drug courts. These topics/entries came from the Encyclopedia of Criminal Justice Ethics published by Sage. Students received the writing guidelines from the encyclopedia and two example entries.

During the first class we discussed the task at hand and analyzed the example entries provided to the students. Students learned how the entries/articles were structured and the tone of voice used to write them. They also learned about the correct citation style – as requested by the publisher. Following, students completed a low stakes writing assignment on citation style and it was discussed in class together with the students. Students then had time to correct their example and use the help of their classmates if needed.

The main writing assignment consisted of an encyclopedia article of 1,000 words. This main assignment was scaffolded into four graded assignments. Each assignment contributed one part to the encyclopedia article.

For the first assignment students were asked to find five scholarly articles that have appropriate material for their topic, write a summary of the articles, and evaluate their articles based on critical information literacy. To help students with this task I invited Barbara Quarton, to talk about critical information literacy and the CSUSB library resources. After the presentation students completed an ungraded example assignment in class. Following, students began working in their first assignment for which they had two weeks. After one week students were required to bring their paper with at least two articles and the completed assignment. The students first exchanged their assignment drafts and completed a peer review using grading categories provided to them. Following, they received feedback from the instructor for their assignment. Students then had another week to complete their assignment. The assignments was graded and returned to students with comments that would help them in assignment two.

The second assignment was to write the introduction of 100-120 words. In class, we read two encyclopedia articles published in that encyclopedia and analyzed the structure of the introduction. Students were given an introduction that was disorganized, had irrelevant information, and opinions. In class, students worked in groups to re-write the introduction. The ungraded assignment was then discussed as a class. Following, students had two weeks to complete the actual assignment two of writing the introduction for their own article. Students were instructed to first make an outline of the most important points of their article and bring it to class at the end of the week. Students reviewed each others outlines and then received feedback from the instructor. Students then had another week to write their introduction. The assignments was graded and returned to students with comments that would help them in the next assignment.

Assignment three consisted of writing the main part (body) of the encyclopedia article of about 800 words. Students were prepared for this task by analyzing encyclopedia articles in class in a group setting and subsequent class discussion. Students were then asked to prepare an outline of their body and bring it to class the next week. Students discussed the outline and received feedback from the instructor. During week two students finished their assignments. They received feedback and suggestions for the final assignment. For assignment four students wrote the conclusion using the same scaffolding used for the introduction and main part of the article.

The study will be continued during the winter quarter by asking students to write an encyclopedia article without scaffolding, and without peer- or instructor review. Following, the quality of the articles will be compared to determine whether scaffolding, peer-, and instructor reviews enhance student writing.