

GENERAL DIRECTIONS FOR THIS CLASS

This is a one-credit class that is designed to be taken at your own pace. That means you may finish the class or do it in one week if you are able, or take longer, according to the contract you have signed with the instructor. Expect to spend roughly 30 hours on this course. **Plan your time well.** Use the calendar application to make a schedule for yourself.

This class is one of 5 classes that are designed to help you become an effective library user who can plan and conduct research and communicate the results of your search. You will develop confidence as an information consumer who can find and evaluate information to make informed decisions for personal, educational, and professional needs. Each course requires that you define a research topic. If you are taking more than one *INFO in Action* course, you may use the same topic or choose different ones for each course.

IN THIS COURSE YOU WILL:

- DEFINE A RESEARCH TOPIC AND DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO IDENTIFY AND RETRIEVE RELEVANT INFORMATION
- DISCOVER, EVALUATE, AND USE A VARIETY OF INFORMATION RESOURCES
- DEMONSTRATE YOUR ABILITY TO SELECT HIGH QUALITY INFORMATION RESOURCES, APPROPRIATE TO YOUR TOPIC.
- DOCUMENT INFORMATION SOURCES USING THE MLA (MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION) STANDARD BIBLIOGRAPHIC CITATION FORMAT

This course will require you to think critically, solve problems, evaluate information and, hopefully, achieve the joy of discovery. You will develop knowledge and skills to support your academic work as well as life-long learning.

HELP

Even though this is a self-paced class, help is available as needed. Please contact me if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions. You may reach me via email at kmchenry@sccd.ctc.edu or by phone at 206-546-2599. Please call me if you would like to make an appointment. Help is also available from the librarian on duty at the reference desk. A Q&A discussion board has been set up for you to ask and answer questions. Students who are first to correctly answer another student's questions will receive one extra credit for each question that they answer.

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS CLASS

READINGS, TUTORIALS AND ASSIGNMENTS DO THEM ALL! 😊

Assignments are each between ten and twenty points. If your work demonstrates thoughtfulness, creativity, understanding, and real effort, you will earn full credit. The grading rubric available under "Class Content" will give you a good idea of what is expected. I will respond to your assignments within three days. All assignments will be turned in via the "Assignment Drop-box" and must be spell-checked, clearly written, and carefully organized.

Get a head start. Take one unit at a time in sequence. Try to finish that unit before moving on to work on other classes. It will be easier if you don't have to restart it in order to complete it.

Read everything carefully! Do the assigned reading and tutorials before you take on the assignment. For more information about this course please read the Syllabus. It is located under the tab marked "Syllabus."

COMMUNICATION

Stay in touch with the instructor. Please let me know how you are doing and about any problems you encounter. I want you to succeed in this class!

TAKING MORE THAN ONE INFO IN ACTION CLASS?

If you are taking more than one class in this series, you may be able to save yourself some time by choosing a topic that you can use for all of these classes. Each class requires choosing a topic and citing your information sources in the MLA format. Doing this well in one class will make it much easier for you in the next class. Do the courses in sequence. For example, complete INFO 102 before you take INFO 103.

GO TO THE LIBRARY!

Why are you being asked to visit an academic library when so much information is available on the Internet? One of the goals of this course is to explore a broad spectrum of information systems, resources, and modes of access. The Internet is just one of the information systems to consider. Libraries offer access to others. The Internet is enticing because it offers so much information, but much of that information is incomplete, disorganized, and unfiltered. So, to be successful and to get the best information for your needs, you need to be aware of other options.

Consider that all research is done "standing on the shoulders of giants"; that is, research is about building your knowledge on what came before you. If you limit yourself to the Internet, the shoulders you stand on may not be the strongest or the best.

I am very confident that most of you have explored the world of the Internet through Google and other search engines, but I am not sure everyone has had the opportunity to explore the information available through your academic library. Libraries provide access to important information resources that simply are not available online for free. Some important information is not available online at all; or, in the case of books and audiovisual media, online access is impractical even when it is possible. Take advantage of the opportunity to meet a librarian and learn the value of using library resources to save time and to find high quality information.

Libraries specialize in providing organized access to high quality information. In some cases, this information can only be found in printed books, reference books, audiovisual media (DVDs, CDs, video) and periodicals; in other cases, libraries provide access to subscription-based services such as Encyclopedia *Britannica Online* or periodical databases. So, you'll explore your library both virtually and physically.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE SEATTLE CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE LIBRARY:

☐ Reference Librarians help you develop search strategy and refine your search. They can refer you to resources and approaches that you may not be aware of. Librarians are trained to help you find and use the most

appropriate information resources. SCCC also provides online chat and email reference services as well as in-person service.

☒ Academic librarians teach students how to find, use and evaluate information. They offer classes like this one, as well as one-on-one instruction. Most academic libraries also teach workshops for other classes.

☒ Library database subscriptions provide access to information that you won't find for free through Internet search engines.

☒ Interlibrary Loan (ILL) services provide access to books and articles from thousands of library collections. If you come across a book or article that is not available through your library, your librarian can help you request these items through ILL.

RESEARCH IN THE LIBERAL ARTS

In the world of higher education you are guided not only by your own experience, but by the collective experience of those who have explored the world of knowledge before you. The liberal arts comprise the collected and enduring reflections of those fellow explorers who have helped develop, organize, and support research and inquiry into the human condition.

One of the aims of this course is critical thinking, an approach to information that searches for reasons, documentary evidence, and experiments of thought that have withstood the test of time. But critical thinking does not occur in a vacuum; a critical mind must have something to think about. In the college and university that something is the liberal arts. Liberal comes from the Latin word liber which means "to free." An art (from the Latin root ars) is a skill or ability. The liberal arts, then, are those skills or abilities that set us free. Pythagoras, an ancient Greek mathematician and philosopher, can be considered the founder of the liberal arts. He taught music, astronomy, geometry, and numbers theory as the four core subjects that he considered important for every educated person to know. Three more areas of study supplemented these subjects in the Middle Ages -- logic, grammar, and rhetoric -- to comprise what were then accepted as the seven liberal arts. On this foundation of subjects -- or disciplines -- was built the modern university with its curriculum of the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. Only in recent times has training in law, medicine, engineering, and business administration been separated from a broad liberal arts environment.

Research in the liberal arts involves critically selecting, reading and evaluating information from a variety of sources and perspectives.

SEARCHING

KEY VOCABULARY

access tool: any source (print or electronic) that can lead you to information on a topic. Some examples are library catalogs, which help you find books, films and sound recordings; periodical indexes, which lead you to articles in magazines, newspapers, and journals; and bibliographies, lists of books or other materials on a topic.

access points: the ways you can look up information using a particular tool. For example, when you use a library catalog you can usually search by author, title, subject, key words, and some times by date or call number.

search terms: the actual words that describe your topic and which you use to find information in electronic indexes, catalogs, or bibliographies whether. For example, if your topic is the spread of Islam to the western world, you might use the search terms: west, Islam, Muslim, Diaspora...there are many other relevant 'search terms' for this topic. Good 'search terms' successfully lead to relevant material.

SEARCH PRINCIPLES

Make sure you are using the right tool for the job! Each tool has a defined purpose and you need to know what it is. Ask yourself these questions about the database:

Does it only look for periodicals?

What time period does it cover?

Does it only cover certain subject areas and are they relevant to your topic?

The other important point is that you understand what kind of information you are getting when you use the tool. Some tools actually provide you with the information you want, ProQuest, for example will actually retrieve full-text articles about 70% of the time. Some periodical indexes may only provide the author, title, source, date, and page numbers of articles. If this is the case, you'll need to find out who has the source before you can get to it. Similarly, book catalogs do not contain books, only descriptive information about each book, where it is located, and (maybe) if it is available.

DATABASES

Each database has its own format for recording the information it presents.

Book catalogs have a standard for the information describing the book which is not the same standard as MLA citations.

Each periodical Index has its own rules about how the information for each article is presented. While you can often find the same article listed in different indexes, the way the information is presented, while it is essentially the same information, is different for each index. Your job is to recognize the parts for what they are (author, title, date, pages...etc.). With that understanding you can successfully analyze the information found in your search.

Clues to the quality of information: The more time you spend doing research, the more clues you will recognize as indicators of good quality information. If you do research in a certain field long enough, you will start to recognize the names of the key people doing research in that area. You can often tell from the title of a book or article how relevant it is to your topic. You will begin to recognize scholarly publications in contrast to popular ones. Be alert to these clues and develop skill in recognizing what they mean. This takes time and practice. This is one of the central teachings of this course.

Now let's get on with applying these ideas to YOUR research!