

Research Paper Assignments

Short assignments to improve skills before students tackle drafting the research paper

- Brainstorm session to generate potential research questions; Peer session or professor conference to evaluate research questions
- Critical responses to readings: summary+evaluation; application; “tests” against personal experiences; compare/contrast
- Data-supplied essay¹: essay (or paragraphs) that analyzes & makes inferences from data supplied by the professor
- Short arguments (1-2 pages) using library sources for support

Break the assignment into manageable chunks to guide students and keep them on track

- Researcher’s Log/Journal: students track the development of ideas and decisions made (assign entries throughout the semester or unit)
- Prospectus, Progress Report, Letter to the Instructor, or Outline (due after an acceptable research question has been developed)
- Reflective Essay: students describe what they have learned about the research question/topic and what they would like to convey to the reader of their final report (due 2-3 weeks before final draft)
- Summary: title and major points (due 1 week before draft)
- Draft (due 1-2 weeks before final draft)
- Final draft

¹ From Bean, J. C. (1996). *Engaging Ideas*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Decrease the possibility of plagiarism

- a. Provide a definition of plagiarism. For example:

Plagiarism is the use, whether intentional or unintentional, of someone else's words, ideas, or images without correctly acknowledging the source of the words, ideas, or images. Plagiarism is serious academic misconduct and could result in failure of a course or expulsion from the university. See also pages 584-85 of the *2005-06 Catalog*.

- b. Require that students take a plagiarism quiz. There are many online quizzes, for example:

<http://school.discovery.com/quizzes14/lindalibrary/plag.html>

<http://library.camden.rutgers.edu/roberson/cddev/quiz.html>

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/plagiarism/Test.htm>

- c. State that plagiarism results in an "F" grade (either for the assignment or for the course) on the course syllabus and on the assignment sheet

- d. Provide a discipline-specific library orientation. A list of Hamilton librarians by subject area can be found at

http://www.hawaii.edu/emailref/selectors/selectors_by_subject.html

- e. Teach how to read critically; teach how professionals in your field summarize, paraphrase, and use quotations
- f. Use an alternative research paper assignment because these cannot be easily purchased or copied from the Internet. Examples:
- Diary or letters by a particular person or from a particular situation/event
 - Dialogue between two prominent people or two people representing different theories
 - Anthology with an introduction, critical summaries, and analysis
 - Brochure or pamphlet
- g. Require that different parts of the project to be turned in throughout the semester
- h. Require a photocopy of the first page of each source used
- i. Require reading notes, outlines, and preliminary drafts along with the final draft