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Two for the Price of One: Assessing Student Learning—And One’s Own Teaching—with a Journal Assignment

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/karyn-hinkle/8/
## The Class

- **HIST 7405 (F 2014-Sp 2015):** Research Methods Workshop
- **Sarah Lawrence College**
- **Women’s History department**
- Required for all master’s students
- Composed of 13 first-year MA students with backgrounds in history, sociology, media, literature

### Learning Objectives

- Employ resources and services offered by the campus library.
- Identify useful research resources in online bibliographic databases.
- Analyze primary sources appropriate to one’s research papers.
- Master research trip protocols on class visits to repositories.

## The Journal Assignment

“…write a journal entry after each class meeting, reflecting on what surprised you about the workshop, what skills or resources were new to you, and what you already knew about the topic before the workshop. Finally, describe a specific idea each workshop has given you for your research process for a project you’re currently working on, such as a term paper for another class you’re taking this term.”

## Sample Journal Entries

### To Assess Student Learning:

- **When I was having trouble finding sources for my Latin American project, I thought back on our library tour and set up a librarian meeting.**
- **I had no idea something like architecture could be considered a source. The idea has contributed to my paper on Orientalist discourse.**
- **The jazz database that was mentioned made me realize that I could look in all sorts of places for Storyville sources—I found perfect lyrics!**
- **I have now visited the Tamiment Library at NYU, and I think I felt a lot more comfortable going there because of our N-YHS trip.**

### And One’s Own Teaching:

- **The visit to the New-York Historical Society was awesome! … I wish we had gone into an archive somewhere, though.**
- **It was helpful to list primary sources on the board so we could really understand how extensive the [types] of primary sources are.**
- **This exercise was especially helpful to me … doing these assignments made thinking about journals where I could submit my work much easier.**
- **I already knew that interlibrary loans were possible, but I didn’t realize how easy it was to do until today’s workshop.**

### Further Reading


### Assessing Journals

How does one analyze what Zita Wagner† calls a “mass of disparate comments”?**

- Read through all journal entries carefully, marking comments that help assess student learning or one’s own teaching
- Code and sort the remarks you selected, such as by which course goals they serve
- Identify themes, such as common struggles, or successful teaching activities

### Keywords

Student Journals, Instructional Effectiveness, Course Evaluation, Feedback (Response), Student Evaluation, Reflection, Journal Writing