Guide to Scaffolded Final Project for Introductory Freshmen Courses
Challenging Introductory Writers: Scaffolding Discipline-Specific-X-2 Research Papers for First-Year Learners
SHSU 17th Annual Teaching and Learning Conference TLC20 – August 13, 2020
Presenter: Nadia J. Arensdorf

Your beginning students can learn advanced writing tasks and simultaneously begin to consider themselves professionals in their own careers. Use the following to help guide you to scaffold several elements of a major project over the course of a semester using your own content knowledge while challenging students to think more deeply about their chosen disciplines.

What is your course content?

What are the majors of typical freshmen in your course?

What specific final deliverable, product, or project do you see your students doing? A power point presentation? Research paper? Conference poster?

To connect your course content with students’ own disciplines, reconsider this final project to imagine it presented by students with different majors. Can this project bring together both your students’ future professions while learning your subject matter and methodology? See the next page for some examples of research focuses. Modify your project as needed.

Consider your final project. What elements make up that project? A bibliography? A rough draft? A preliminary report? Name these elements, and be specific.

What other, smaller tasks should students know for them to successfully complete this project? For example, should they learn the task of integrating sources? Gathering statistics? Creating bibliographic entries? Designing a chart, graph, or table? Write these smaller tasks down.

Use these specific tasks to develop your schedule. Working backwards from the end of the semester and starting with your final project, place these tasks on your calendar, allowing the appropriate time for each element. This scaffolded plan can help you guide your freshmen incrementally towards your advanced assignments that also highlight their aspirations.
Incorporate these ideas into your research papers, conference posters, oral presentations, or other advanced assignments for your beginning level students.

**Sociology professor** with **History students**: **family structures** in **preferred historical time period**

**Philosophy professor** with **Chemistry students**: **ethics** in **oil industry**

**History professor** with **Physics students**: **history** of **time**

**English professor** with **Criminal Justice students**: **analysis of Charles Dickens’s prisons**

**Math professor** with **Sociology students**: **statistics** of **family populations**

**Biology professor** with **Philosophy students**: **medical practices** and **ethics**

**Chemistry professor** with **Business students**: **drug testing companies’ business models**

**Geology professor** with **Political Science students**: **environmental issues** and **the law**

**Geography professor** with **Math students**: **populations** and **statistics**

**Physics professor** with **Geography students**: **physics** of **mountain climbing**

**Language professor** with **Geology students**: **international issues** of the **environment**

**Art professor** with **Biology students**: **artistic renderings** of **microbes**

**Political Science professor** with **Language students**: **government structure** in **preferred country**

**Music professor** with **Economics students**: **music industry’s financial strength**

**Economics professor** with **Art students**: **government funding** of **the arts**

**Psychology professor** with **Music students**: **medical results** of **music therapy**

**Business professor** with **English students**: **financial status** of **certain university presses**

**Criminal Justice professor** with **Psychology students**: **prisons’ methods of care and ethics**
Portions of Four Scaffolded Tasks for Research Paper for Introductory Level Writing
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Research Topic Ideas Assignment
English 1302 - Mrs. Nadia Arensdorf

For this assignment, search for three potential problems or controversial topics that you are interested in writing about. Since you will be writing about the background, issues, and solution(s) surrounding this problem in your research paper, you should consider these aspects to make sure there is enough information available for you to write on and to ensure you are interested enough in the subject.

What You Will Turn In:
You will turn in a sheet of paper in hard copy that lists THREE potential topics, along with a little information that describes these topics. Include the following for each topic:

1. Describe succinctly in a phrase what the problem or controversy is.
2. Describe in 2-3 sentences what the primary concern or concerns are regarding this controversy.
3. Explain in 1-2 sentences how this topic relates to your career and why it interests you.
4. Cite in simple MLA format one article, book, web resource, or other source that helped you consider this idea.

Essay 3: Prospectus and Bibliography
English 1302 - Mrs. Nadia Arensdorf

PROSPECTUS
In a nutshell, a prospectus is a short description of what the research is saying and what your arguments will be regarding your Research Argument “problem” topic. For your prospectus, you will write a 300-word essay in which you describe the research you are discovering regarding your Research Argument topic.

To do this, seek out sources that will help you answer the questions you are asking about your research. Then, think about what these sources are saying. What do your sources suggest are the key issues and potential solutions to your problem? The answers to these types of questions are what you will clarify in your prospectus. The prospectus is like a plan that explains where you are headed in your research.

Structure of Prospectus Essay
Your essay will probably be one to three paragraphs in length. You do not have to develop an introduction or conclusion, nor do you need to include a traditional thesis, but your paragraphs should be organized clearly around the issues and solutions you are discovering.

Include the following information about your “problem” in your prospectus:
- Your problem in 1-2 sentences
- The issues succinctly
- The solutions succinctly
- The types of sources you are learning from
- What you think will be your solution to the problem in 1-2 sentences

BIBLIOGRAPHY
The second part of your assignment is to provide a “working bibliography” of the research you have been looking at for your Research Argument topic. You are required to have 10 sources in this assignment’s bibliography. Use MLA formatting for your sources, but the title of this list will be “Bibliography,” instead of MLA’s standard title, “Works Cited.”
**Essay 4 – Annotated Bibliography**
English 1302 - Mrs. Nadia Arensdorf

For this assignment, you will annotate two online sources from your Essay 3 Bibliography. Furthermore, your annotations will have a specific format: You will write two paragraphs for each source, consisting of the following information:

- The **first paragraph** in your annotation will be a short summary of the source (book, article, etc.). This first paragraph should have five to seven sentences in it, and you should speak in a third person, neutral tone.

- The **second paragraph** will explain how you can use that source in your research argument paper. This second paragraph should have three to five sentences in it, and you may use first person in this paragraph. You can write more personally in this paragraph.

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**Essay 5 – Research Argument Paper**
English 1302 - Mrs. Nadia Arensdorf

**Research Argument Paper Assignment**
You will write an essay of 1000 words minimum (plus MLA headings and Works Cited) on a “problem” or controversial topic in your field of expertise (your major) or in a career you see yourself in once you graduate from college. In your paper, you will explain the background of your problem, describe the most important issues surrounding this problem, discuss potential solutions, and then suggest your own preferred solution for this problem. You will discuss your research with well-thought-out and reasoned arguments.

**STRUCTURE OF YOUR ESSAY**

**Introduction** – Give the background and description to your problem. Include your thesis statement, in which you will state the problem or controversial topic you are considering. The intro can be one paragraph.

**Early Body Paragraphs** – Describe the issues surrounding your problem. Here is where you will communicate the research you have done, integrating support from your sources. This is where you will “prove” there is a problem and explain it. Maintain a neutral, informational tone, handling fairly all aspects of the issues you are describing.

Some questions to consider to help you research and develop this section:
- What is the problem being addressed?
- Why does this problem exist? What are the root causes?
- Whom does this problem affect?
- Why does the problem persist?

**Later Body Paragraphs** – Here you will describe potential solutions to your problem, including your preferred solution. Explain them carefully, and, again, remain neutral.

Some questions to consider to help you develop this section:
- What are the solutions others suggest to solve this problem?
- What is your solution to the problem?
- What steps or specific actions should be taken to solve this problem?
- Who is involved in these actions or this solution?
- Why would this solution work? Specifically, why would your solution eliminate or alleviate the problem that exists and persists?

**Conclusion** – Here you will step back from the problem and the solution you’ve suggested and discuss the broader implications of your solution. What will be different if your solution is used? What’s at stake if your solution is not used? As you discuss these concerns, you can also sum up the overall issues, tying them in to this conclusive section.