

**Title**

Incorporating Wikipedia as an Experiential Learning Activity in an Editing Course

**Explanation of GIFT Idea**

Wikipedia, the crowd-sourced site used as a quick go-to source, historically is disregarded by the academic community as unreliable. However, journalism courses can help improve Wikipedia. This submission explains how a news editing course applied topics studied each week to edit Wikipedia articles throughout the semester to enhance the credibility and accuracy of the material in Wikipedia. These topics included grammar, punctuation, precision, accuracy, language and style, and legal and ethical concepts. Plus, students wrote articles and submitted them for peer review and possible publication in Wikipedia. Instruction and assessment also are discussed.

**Learning Outcomes/Goals**

The course learning outcomes pertaining to Wikipedia assignments were the following:

1. Demonstrate mastery of grammar, punctuation, spelling and sentence syntax.
2. Verify sources of information.
3. Edit for accuracy.
4. Edit copy for the online platform.
5. Edit copy according to legal and ethical issues.
6. Demonstrate proficient application of rules in *The Associated Press Stylebook*.

**How the GIFT Idea Works***Preparation*

A Wiki Education course page was created in November 2018. The instructor completed a tutorial required by Wiki Education. Students' spring 2019 accounts were created in the page so that the instructor could monitor in one portal the activities of each student's contributions. The students received instruction on how Wikipedia can build their editing skills. First, the class discussed the importance of their editing contributions to enhance the accuracy of Wikipedia content. Second, they discussed ways in which Wikipedia is used in academic and nonacademic environments. Third, instruction also centered on how Wikipedia content is based on established sources, that it's not original research, and how the writing must be neutral and free of bias. In addition, one of the university's librarians who completed a Wikipedia Fellowship in 2018 helped students navigate the Wikipedia edit pages and find articles to edit. Tutorials also were available for students to complete.

*Activity*

The news editing class met for 75 minutes on Mondays and Wednesdays. On Mondays, lectures and formative assessment applications were conducted on a particular content area. These areas included grammar, punctuation, precision, accuracy, language and style, and legal and ethical concepts. For 14 weeks, each Wednesday was designated Wikipedia Wednesday, when students applied what they learned on Monday by editing a prescribed number of articles on Wednesday. In addition to editing, the students spent a portion of Wednesday's class researching and writing their own Wikipedia articles. Students also conducted peer reviews of the Wikipedia articles they wrote. Students reflected on their experiences in weekly discussion board prompts.

### *Assessment*

Wikipedia assignments were worth 40 percent of a student's final grade and based on four components: 1. class participation during Wikipedia Wednesdays, 2. discussion board assignments, 3. article development, and 4. presentation of their experience at the university's scholars celebration. Rubrics were used to assess the editing, writing, and discussion assignments. A student's grade is not based on whether his or her article was published. Several drafts were submitted before the final one, with instructor feedback provided each time.

The instructor designed discussion board assignments in the course's learning management system for students to reflect on their editing and writing experiences that day and comment on the course material applied. Here is an example:

Editing language was discussed in class on Monday. This means we as editors strive to eliminate wordiness. Proper grammar, precision and accuracy also are important. Reflect on these concepts. Describe your editing process today.

Provide the title of the Wikipedia articles you edited and links to the articles. Strive to edit three articles today.

In addition, here are tasks for writing your article:

1. Develop your outline.
2. Find at least two sources for now to help you begin your research. Document those in your discussion post.
3. To begin writing your article in the sandbox, access the below link, and go to the section titled "Creating articles."  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Tutorial/Editing>.

In your post, discuss your progress on your article, as well as any other insights that you wish to provide.

Your response should be approximately 150-200 words and must be posted before the end of class. Respond to at least one other post before the deadline. Points will be deducted if no peer response is recorded.

In their posts, students had to provide links to the articles they edited and comment on peers' posts. The number of articles the students edited varied. For example, students might be tasked to edit three articles one week. The next week, the number could be higher or lower, depending on the content area discussed on the previous Monday.

### **Results/Student Feedback**

In spring 2019, 12 students edited 112 articles, making 321 total edits and adding 3,540 words. The articles they edited were viewed more than 4.2 million times. Two students had articles (Brizendine Brothers Nature Park; costume shop) published on Wikipedia, plus four photos. Having an article accepted for publication in Wikipedia is not easy; however, students can include their Wikipedia editing history as part of their portfolio, qualifying this activity as an experiential learning artifact.

Wikipedia use is planned for two other journalism and mass communications courses (in-depth reporting and media history) in fall 2019.

Here are selections of students' discussion posts:

"I've edited for things like wordiness and clarity like we've talked about in this class, but tone is another thing I look for. When an encyclopedia article starts telling you that you should do this because it's better, it's not an encyclopedia entry, it's an opinion piece."

"The biggest problem I still encounter with these articles is redundancy and grammar. People really think that the more words they add in, the smarter they sound, but it does just the opposite. They use adjectives that all have the same meaning and make the statement completely redundant."

"I attempted to shorten the sentences, making them less convoluted for readers. Grammar as well as precision and accuracy were important components when I was looking at each of these articles."