

Research Assignment Stipend Final Report

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Introduction

I created this assignment, and implemented it with the help of the library (Sylvia Jones), in order to give my students the opportunity to do some self-directed research that required them to discover and engage with geospatial information derived from historical and/or archaeological sources. This represents a departure from my carefully curated list of examples of geospatial archaeology.

First, students were introduced to basics in using GIS (Geographic Information Systems) in computer labs. Next, students choose an area of the world to research. Finally, they presented to the class on what they had found. This supported the information literacy learning goals of the course in that it put them on a path to interact with archives of historical/archaeological data.

Description of the information literacy assignment or activities

The central assignment was a presentation (see Appendix A). Students were asked to give some pre-research information in order to determine how far their knowledge progressed. Presentations were 10 to 15 minutes with no more than 10 power point slides allowed.

Method of assessment

Students did well on the assignment (see example, Appendix B). They demonstrated considerable progress from pre-research baseline when it came to the timeline for the region's culture history. This was not surprising given this information is not well covered, or not covered at all, in K-12. On a 1-to-5 point assessment scale the majority scored at the top of the scale (66%, n=27). The rest scored high-middle range (4.5 points: 5%; 4.0 points: 7%; 3.5 points: 7%; and 3 points: 15%). Powerpoints were uploaded to Canvas and presentations were recorded to aid in assessment.

Results and impact on student learning

From the student's point of view, they were clearly pleased to be talking about topics/places that specifically interested them, and that helped drive some of the main points of the course home. From my perspective, the free-form approach left much to be desired in terms of rigor and in a small number of cases led to confusion.

Summary and next steps

This was a useful exercise in trying to improve my course. I specifically appreciate the library's support through both maintaining a computer lab that had the specialized GIS software needed and four guest GIS lab taught by Sylvia Jones. To address information literacy goes in future I plan to organize this into an assignment with more formal structure, centering on specific times and places, and increase the level of achievement expected from students.

Appendix

Appendix A. Assignment Sheet

Appendix B. Example of Student Work