



INQUIRY LOG RESEARCH PROJECT

OSUN Connected Learning Contest Winner

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**Course: Women & COVID-19—Leadership, Activism
and Global Engagement**

This independent research project was assigned in the first week of this 5-week summer course, and students contributed installments to the log weekly, culminating in a final product of at least 2000 words. The IQL provided students with the chance to pursue their own questions and concerns relevant to our overall topic, and to share their research weekly with their peers. This was in addition to class readings and response journals, and a separate short final project.

Women & COVID-19: Leadership, Activism and Global Engagement

This summer course will explore the historical, cultural, and social reasons why the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected women, particularly poor women and women of color. Depending on class, race, and gender as well as age and ability, who has access to high-quality health care and who does not? Who is taking up the burdens of care and how is that form of leadership valued and supported? The course will also identify solutions that exist for individuals and groups, and what has been done historically and presently to improve the path to leadership for women. Widening the lens, this course will also look at female leaders handling the coronavirus pandemic. How is their leadership different from that of male leaders? What lessons can we take from both, including solutions for a number of areas and groups?

Practical and pedagogical value

I have been impressed with the enthusiasm with which students take up this project. They enjoy being able to write about their research process in their own voice, rather than in dry third-person "academese," and they are excited to share their findings with each other, as well as to give each other feedback. I have been working with variations of this assignment for quite a few years at Simon's Rock, and I find it adapts to the online context beautifully.

I had live Zoom presentations as this is a synchronous class, but as I noted on the assignment, students could also present to each other using Zoom recordings or narrated Powerpoint presentations.

The Assignment

INQUIRY LOG PROJECT

Description

The inquiry log (IQL) is an extended research project that includes a detailed record of the entire process of research and writing: the questions that led to choosing the topic; sources consulted, with citations; comparison & contrast of information from different sources; relation of your research to the central concerns of the class; further questions that arise, as well as dead ends and frustrations; how your topic evolved and redefined itself in the course of the research; and your closing statement on the fruits of your inquiry. In other words, an inquiry log tells the story of your exploratory research through first person narrative, including all the information you discover (with proper citations). You should plan to write in a detailed, engaging manner, bringing the reader along on your journey through the research process.

Research & writing process

You'll find your starting topic through an initial list of questions, which we'll discuss and consider; your topic may very well shift and change as you get into the research process, and such evolution is to be welcomed. You will be asked to post weekly updates to your IQL, and share your research-in-progress with the class. The minimum weekly word count is around 500 words, based on your consultation of at least 3 sources besides our shared class readings; there is no maximum, you are welcome to write more if you wish, especially in terms of your personal/political/planetary reflections as you dig into your particular line of inquiry.

Project submission guidelines

At the end of this short summer seminar, you will combine your separate entries,

polishing and revising if you wish, into one longer Inquiry Log paper, which describes your investigative journey in detail, relating what information you gathered along the way, and how it has contributed to your thinking about our class focus on “Women & COVID-19: Leadership, Activism & Global Engagement.”

The finished log should be at least 2000 words (the 3 weekly entries, plus a short introduction and conclusion), plus your bibliography of sources consulted, cited consistently in your favorite format (mine is MLA but I am happy to accept any correct, consistent citation format you prefer). In your conclusion, sum up the most important things you learned from the inquiry log process. What sources were compelling enough that you will want to keep following them? How has your thinking about your topic changed since the beginning of the project? What do you see as the next stage of your on-going engagement with your inquiry log topic?

Evaluation criteria

The final inquiry log will be evaluated on the basis of the quality and quantity of SOURCES you consulted (should be a minimum of 9 reputable sources); the thoughtfulness of your QUESTIONS (questions count at least as much as answers in this kind of project—the best research opens up new questions, rather than shutting down inquiry); the quality of your WRITING (clear, lively first-person prose is the object here—you’re telling a story to inform and educate in a thought-provoking, entertaining style); and CORRECTNESS OF CITATION FORMAT.

Pedagogical Notes

Working with the Inquiry Log (IQL) project during class time online

I have the students post installments of their log weekly, using a Google Classroom discussion board. During class we break into small groups using the Zoom breakout rooms feature, and students present the results of that week’s research, using the following guidelines:

1. Appoint a timekeeper—15 minutes max per person.
2. Each person shares their starting research questions, research process and what they learned, as well as their ideas for further research.
3. As each person presents, other group members listen and comment in the discussion board under the presenter’s IQL installment.

Suggested peer feedback:

- What do you find most striking/surprising/interesting/disturbing about

the information being presented?

- What would you like to learn more about?
- What suggestions do you have for sources to consult?

4. If a group member has not yet posted their IQL, they should still start a thread in the IQL Inquiry Log 2 discussion board, talk about what they plan to research, and the group members can post their ideas or suggestions for questions, research directions and what they'd like to learn more about.

Final presentations

I plan to have them do final presentations to each other as well, during the last week of class.

If this were an asynchronous class, the peer feedback work could be done using the discussion board only, and presentations could be pre-recorded in Zoom or using a narrated Powerpoint, and posted to a discussion board for viewing and feedback.