**Research Assignments: Alternatives to the Research Paper**

There may be times when you don’t want to assign a formal research paper or project, yet you want students to be able to situate their thinking on an issue within a scholarly conversation. Consider an alternative assignment that asks students to demonstrate some of the same learning.

1. You want students to be able to appropriately and effectively quote and paraphrase from scholarly articles in support of an argument.

   **Assignment idea:**
   Have students write a 3-5 page paper supporting an assigned argument. Require them to support their argument using any 2 (or more) articles from an assigned selection of 5 articles. Ask them to integrate their own ideas and those of the scholars whose work they have used, to attribute sources appropriately, and to be consistent in using MLA style for notes and bibliography.

2. You want students to be able to integrate their own ideas into a scholarly conversation.

   **Assignment idea:**
   Have students write a response (“close reading,” no research) to an issue, reading, artwork, etc. Then have them research the issue/reading/artwork to find scholarly perspectives. Have them choose 2-3 articles to use in moving from their individual response to becoming part of a scholarly conversation in a second paper on the same issue/reading/artwork.

   Note that in the second paper each student is writing the paper for someone who may not be aware of that conversation, so the conversation itself must be identified/reported/summarized as well as the student’s contribution to the conversation.

3. You want students to be able to write a literature review.

   **Assignment idea:**
   Have students choose, or select from a list, a research focus. Then have them research that focus, developing a bibliography of 10-15 articles. Have them write a 2-3 page paper summarizing the variety of perspectives they discovered and identifying at least 2 questions that still need to be answered/issues that still need to be resolved related to this area of research.
4. Your course assignments are creative (choreograph a short dance, paint a portrait, write a story or poem, direct a one-act play, compose a sonata). You would also like students to be able to recognize and to use influences from other eras, other artists, other genres.

**Assignment idea:**
Have students base their creative project on research: a poem or story set in 1920s Los Angeles, a ballet for the court of Catherine de’ Medici, a portrait reflecting the techniques and practices of the Impressionists. Have them write a 1-2 page paper describing their research path and a bibliography of the 3-5 sources that most informed their creative work. For each source in the bibliography, have students write a paragraph explaining what information that source contributed to their work.