TEACHING PROJECT-BASED ASSIGNMENTS
SUPPLEMENT 1: RESEARCH OPTIONS FOR PROJECT-BASED ASSIGNMENTS

One of the most exciting things about project-based learning is how much choice students and instructors have in terms of topics and genres. How you teach students to conduct and demonstrate research depends on key factors that include the discipline you are teaching in, the goals you have set for the project, and each student's prior knowledge and interest base they bring to the classroom.

Because there are so many different project combinations and possibilities, this resource lists some of the basic genres common in university-based projects and ends with some options for how students might document their research in a genre-relevant way. Within each of these basic genres, there are suggestions for research the student might conduct to better understand the problem their project is addressing (*content-based research*) and suggestions for research the student might do to better understand the primary genre their project will take (*genre-based research*). Many projects combine genres, and it is perfectly acceptable to combine modes and methods of research accordingly. For student samples of such projects, see the Minor in Writing Capstone section of the Sweetland Center for Writing's website. The Minor in Writing Program offers students in disciplines across the university an opportunity to devise a semester-long project of their own making.

Resource-based Projects (i.e. educational and/or promotional pamphlets, websites, speeches)

Content-based Research Might Include

- Background on the history of your topic or problem
- Debates or misunderstandings about your topic or problem
- New breakthroughs or challenges regarding your topic or problem
- Other educational sources, promotional sources, or speeches for the topic or problem you are working on in order to understand what has already been done and what your project can uniquely offer
- Field research including interviews or film/photography footage

Genre-based Research Might Include

- Rhetorics of argument—including learning more about pathos, ethos, logos, warrants, and logical fallacies
- Multimedia rhetorics—including how readers approach online sources, effective practices to combine images, links, videos, sound, with words
- Other educational sources, promotional sources, or speeches for any topic or problem in order to learn basic composition techniques and strategies you would like to borrow or avoid
- Technological research—including anything you need to learn about the software, templates, or equipment you'll be using for this project

Analysis-based Projects (i.e. topic analysis, media analysis, process analysis, academic analysis)

Content-based Research Might Include

- Background on the history of your topic or problem
- Debates or misunderstandings about your topic or problem
- Close reading of primary or secondary texts
- Other analytical sources for the topic or problem you are working on in order to understand what has already been done and what your project can uniquely offer
- Compare/contrast pieces about the topic or problem

Genre-based Research Might Include

- Rhetorics of other analysis-based arguments—including options for how to identify and separate different visual or verbal structures for analysis
- Multimedia rhetorics—including how readers are affected by images, links, videos, sound, word combinations that are relevant to what you are analyzing
- Other analytical sources on any topic of issue to learn their basic composition techniques and strategies you would like to borrow or avoid
- Technological research—including anything you need to learn about the software, templates, or equipment you'll be using for this project

Investigative Projects (i.e. immersive journalism, ethnographies, case studies, long-form feature journalism)

Content-based Research Might Include

- Background on the history of your topic or problem
- Debates or misunderstandings about your topic or problem
- A compilation of previous experience to understand your subject position within this topic or problem
- Other investigative sources for the topic or problem you are working on in order to understand what has already been done and what your project can uniquely offer
- Field work including interviews, surveys, observations, film/photograph footage

Genre-based Research Might Include

- Rhetorics of other analysis-based arguments—including options for how to identify and separate different visual or verbal structures to analyze
- Multimedia rhetorics—including how readers are affected by images, links, videos, sound, word combinations that are relevant to what you are analyzing
- Other investigative sources on any topic or issue to learn their basic composition techniques and strategies you would like to borrow or avoid
- Technological research—including anything you need to learn about the software, templates, or equipment you'll be using for this project

Creative Projects (i.e. creative nonfiction, fiction, poetry, screenplays)

Content-based Research Might Include

- Background on the history of your topic or problem
- Other creative writing that deals with the topic or problem you are working on in order to understand what has already been done and what your project can uniquely offer
- Field work including interviews, surveys, observations, film/photograph footage

Genre-based Research Might Include

- Literary devices and techniques—including information about how to create successful choices in terms of point of view, character, dialogue, and scene setting
- Other creative writing on any topic or issue to learn basic composition/structural techniques and strategies you would like to borrow or avoid
- Technological research—including anything you need to learn about the software, templates, or equipment you'll be using for this project

Options for Documenting Research in All Genres

Have students document the research they've done in a way that is appropriate for their project genre. For instance, if they are writing an academic article, it would be appropriate to have in-text citations and a bibliography or list of works cited at the end of their project. If they are making an educational resource, it would be immensely useful to have annotated links to other resources. If they're doing a creative piece, they might write short, reflective pieces about their research throughout, or they might choose to write an introduction or afterword. Asking students to research the way the genre they're working in refers to other sources will help them see there are already standards and pre-existing expectations they should follow.

In addition, asking students to consider their audience as they think about what research they want to show and how will remind them that their project is one point in a larger conversation. How can they demonstrate their research in a way that invites their audience into this conversation?

Options for Demonstrating Research:

- Bibliography (if it's clear elsewhere in their project how they were using these sources)
- Annotated bibliography
- Reflective Introduction or Afterword
- Annotations throughout the piece
- Blog entries
- Annotated links
- Drafts or project-in-process documents