

Helping 201/301 Students with Sources

One of the major roadblocks for many students in 201/301 is finding appropriate sources. As these advanced courses demand that students work on extended academic projects, sources become quite important. However, quite a few of our students are unfamiliar with searching for academic sources (“Google” and “Wikipedia” are not sufficient, as we know).

- Ask the student if s/he knows how to use IRIS. If s/he says yes, sit down with the student and watch him/her use the IRIS (<http://iris.rutgers.edu>) portal for their research. If the student knows how to use IRIS properly (can search for books, can use IRIS to jump to major journal databases like EBSCO or JSTOR, etc.), then allow the student to research independently for the some of the period. If the student is unaware of how to use IRIS, then you can demonstrate the book search functions and introduce the student the main journal databases.
- After demonstrating the proper use of the IRIS portal, allow the student to search for citations (that will have to be printed later). If the student is looking for books, show him/her how to recall or request that the book be delivered to the most convenient campus library.
- It is important to talk with the student about the sources that s/he is selecting. You may have to recruit your fellow tutors, as your student may be doing research in an area that is unfamiliar to you, but try and make sure that your student is search across an appropriate range of sources.
- Talk about more unusual sources, like phone interviews. Students who are working on local projects (which often happens in the Science/Technical Writing class) may have a difficult time finding specific information on the area (while there are newspaper databases like LEXIS/NEXIS, it is notoriously difficult and time-consuming to search local papers). Phone interviews are especially helpful in these cases, as local authorities are generally quite friendly and willing to talk with students. Help students generate a list of questions while in session if you decide to use this approach.
- If you happen to know any faculty members (or other professionals) who would be willing to help your student, you should have the student generate an email (similar to preparing for the phone interview) asking for assistance/names of potential sources.

The key is to help your student diversify and move beyond what can be accessed via a computer.