# LIB 180 Research for the 21st Century Course Guide

### EXPLANATORY NOTES:

**Research for the 21st Century** (RFTC) is a course that can be linked to other courses and used in part or as a whole. It is designed to be fully online but could be adapted to a hybrid or face-to-face class. A prerequisite of eligibility for ENG 101 or its equivalent is strongly recommended.

Students taking this course must have access, either electronically or physically, to information resources such as periodical databases, monographs, and reference books/tools. There is no required textbook for this course.

### GOALS FOR THE COURSE:

RFTC is a college-level course for lower-level undergraduates. It is meant to develop a framework for research in the online and print environments and helps students to build skills and techniques for success as online learners. Through a quarter-long research project on a **global issue,** students will examine various strategies for locating, evaluating, and applying information resources in the research process with attention to information issues like privacy, identity theft and information overload. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Develop and research a topic of global significance
2. Recognize authors’ arguments and the political, social and economic motivations behind their work
3. Exhibit an understanding of significant information-related issues
4. Demonstrate the ability to locate, interpret and cite the relevant and appropriate information resources on a topic
5. Demonstrate an understanding of the information research process

These learning objectives will be accomplished through their:

1. Active participation in the course
2. Careful attention to all course readings and media
3. Thoughtful completion of all assignments
4. Regular self-reflection on their work
5. Peer review of their classmates’ work

### HOW THIS COURSE WORKS:

Each week has three parts. There is a summary of the week’s work, called the "Weekly Overview," that includes the week’s objectives and notes about the week.

Second, there is a list of assignments for the week. Each assignment includes required "readings" or links to them. Readings might consist of text, audio files, PowerPoint presentations, videos, or online tutorials. When assignments are completed they are turned in via a "drop box" or a "Discussion Forum." The "drop box" goes directly to the instructor and is not shared by the students.

However, when students turn in an assignment to the Discussion Forum, it will be seen by their classmates so that they can review each other's work and learn from each other. In a Discussion Forum, there will be a description of the assignment. After someone completes an assignment, they post it to the Discussion Forum which is on the same page as the assignment.

One type of assignment is, after reading the assigned material, to write a reflection essay on an information issue such as internet fraud and identity theft. Students may also reflect on their views about censorship, intellectual property, privacy, or information overload.

Third, at the end of each week, students also assess their own learning by completing a “weekly journal” entry and placing it into the Angel drop box. The weekly journal assignment also asks students to reflect on their experience of doing that week’s assignments. In addition, students are asked to reflect on how what they have learned applies to their life. This is an opportunity for students to ask the instructor questions in confidence.

### PATHFINDER, THE FINAL PROJECT:

The weekly assignments are meant to help each student learn a piece of the research process. All of the assignments work together to prepare students for the culminating project, the “Pathfinder,” which is completed in the last two weeks of the quarter. They will also assess the Pathfinder of a classmate in the final week.

The Pathfinder details a research process that could be used by the reader to find high quality information resources on a defined topic. It defines the topic and what it includes and does not include. It identifies important subject headings and keywords that would help a searcher find information to support a research project, and it provides annotated citations to a wide range of selected information sources. In short, a student’s ability to create a strong research topic, select appropriate sources, evaluate those sources and cite them correctly is reflected in how well the Pathfinder would help the reader to find relevant information that supports the defined research statement.

### RESOURCES USED IN THIS COURSE:

As mentioned, students are not asked to buy a textbook. Instead, we have integrated the tutorials from IRIS (Information and Research Instruction Suite from Clark College, WA) using links. We have selected the tutorials from IRIS that best support the assignments. At the present time, we do not have graphics, videos or images. We are lucky that librarians have created many useful educational tools and then share them. If you choose to teach this course or adapt it to your needs, you many find many other supportive instructional materials at: the following sites:

LOEX: Clearinghouse for Library Instruction. “Instruction Resources.” <http://www.emich.edu/public/loex/resources.php>

ACRL: Association of College and Research Libraries. “Information Literacy in Action.” <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/issues/infolit/resources/inaction/action.cfm>

We also use a small number of links to stable sites. We also integrate information into the course from sites that have given us permission.

### FUTURE PLANS:

We plan to add more graphics to the course to make it more interesting in appearance and appeal to visual learners. In addition, we would like to create videos to demonstrate search strategies in some of the research databases that students use. We would also like to automate some of the assignments that could be turned into surveys, such as the “My Biography” assignment. A course like this needs regular updating to take advantage of new technologies and creative ideas. One idea that we will probably use next year is to have the students use a wiki to post their final Pathfinder project. That way, anyone who plans to do research on the same topic can benefit from the Pathfinder that, theoretically, will lead them to good sources of information.

In conclusion, we would be delighted if other instructors and course designers would make use of our work and build on it. We value your suggestions and innovations and would love to hear from you about what you do with the course materials and any updates you make to them.

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