Abstract

Folkstreams.net: A National Preserve of Documentary Films about American Roots Cultures is an online archive of documentary films.

For my Fall 2011 & 2012 ENGL 1100 sections, I used Folkstreams.net as a springboard for an individualized, intercultural research writing assignment that satisfied course outcome goals in a fun way. The first time, I established a film analysis angle for the paper. I noticed, however, that writing an informed analysis of these documentaries required the students to do research. So, the next year, I expanded the options for students to approach and develop the paper, and enhanced the research requirements to help the students prepare for the research-focused ENGL 1200.

For the assignment, students browse the archive and the additional resources provided there. They then use the films as inspiration for topics that require them to use more online resources to conduct research and write a paper.

ENGL 1100 Course Outcome Goals

• Discover significant resources to improve and enhance the writing
  • Self-Guided/Film-Inspired
  • Explore different purposes of writing, including narrating, analyzing, investigating, evaluating, etc. & Increase awareness of organizational strategies and the ability to apply them
  • Purpose and structure develop from questions students want to pursue
  • Practice drafting and revising & Schedule and meet deadlines
  • Conference, Draft deadl, Final Paper
  • Become attentive to free audience and purpose affect content, tone, and style & Incorporate sufficient and appropriate details and examples
  • Consider level of detail & content to include
  • Express ideas with clarity and with effective syntax and punctuation
  • Proceed, Draft, Conference, Editing
  • Gain competence in using computer technology in the writing process
  • Internet for research (films themselves + other sources) + typing paper

Assignment Steps

• Class in Computer Lab – Film Selection
  - guided exploration of film categories and subject listings to facilitate broad examination of possibilities
  - short answer explanations of interest for each possibility to encourage choices related to personal/academic interests
  • Homework – Film Watching for Summary/Commentary/Quotes
  • Conference – At least one is required. More are possible.
  - early, idea clarification & research question articulation
  - later, additional research strategies, organization, editing

Research & Writing Approaches

Popular Choices for Structure & Content

• Analysis of Film
  - content/perspective
  - production elements
  • Argument/For/Against issues Presented in or Present in Films
  - health
  - society
  - business
  - community
  - environment
  • History & Significance of Films Themselves and/or Subjects
  - exploration of historical beginnings of contemporary traditions
  • Compare/Contrast
  - more than one film on the same subject from Folkstreams, documentary films from Folkstreams & elsewhere (i.e. PBS)
  - films and pop culture television (content/approach, etc.)
  - films and pop culture phenomena
  - methods (fishing, hunting, dance)
  - narratives (versions of legends in films with others, etc.)

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