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FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE

Writing to Learn (2014-2017)

CHALLENGES

In general, I felt the need to increase critical thinking skills among students. In the upper division Viewing a Wider World course, I also noticed a need to increase student awareness about research in the multicultural area.

“The most valuable thing I learned was that including more writing doesn’t have to be through long research papers. Shorter frequent writing proved more effective.”

MY PROJECT

I began implementing my project in 2014-15 in Family Ethnicities and Subcultures (FCS 449V). On average, the class enrolls approximately 50 students each semester. I designed multiple scaffolding writing activities and assignments that asked students to 1) evaluate concepts, 2) synthesize information from multimedia resources to answer specific questions, 3) conduct interviews (using StoryCorps) to investigate the level of awareness about multi-cultural issues among their families, and 4) synthesize and reflect on the interviews they conducted. I used the above strategies in both face-to-face and online courses.

RESULTS

Overall, I observed that as a result of these scaffolded writing exercises, students demonstrated greater comprehension and learning of course material, and were successful in connecting it with the outer world. Interestingly, at the end of the course, students wrote more feedback and comments about the class than they have in the past. It appears that the course content and the writing assignments made them think about problems and approach their learning in ways that they had not thought about before.