Creating Effective Library Assignments

What do you want the assignment to accomplish?
What do you want your students to learn?

Consult with your liaison librarian while developing your assignment to:
- brainstorm about assignment possibilities
- insure availability of library resources to support assignment requirements

Learning Objectives:
- **Clarify and state learning objectives** so that students understand the purpose of the assignment and how it will benefit them.

Library Assignment Tips
- **Write clear and complete instructions**. Detailed instructions are helpful for all students but are essential for international students and students with disabilities. Try asking another faculty member or a librarian to read your assignment and then explain to you what *he/she* thinks it means.

- **Topic selection**.
    - Assigning a broad topic to students is frustrating and difficult for students, E.g., "Write a 3-page paper on civil rights and support it with 2 or 3 journal articles." Guide students to focus their topics to a manageable level.
    - Have students identify the question that they intend to answer.
    - From the Writing Center: Make assignments open enough for the students to question and decide a thesis but closed enough that a student has some idea of where to begin.

- **Specify the level of research expected**: Popular vs. scholarly sources? Number of references? Types of references (books, journal articles, websites?)

- **Define an audience for the writing/project:** Professors? Fellow students? The recipient of a letter? Newspaper readers?

- **Be specific about use of websites**: The restriction that students "may not use websites" can be confusing. Be specific about the limitations you are placing (e.g., "Electronic journal articles from library databases are acceptable but websites are not.")

- **Try doing the library research for your own assignment(s).** This will identify areas of the assignment that work well and/or areas that don't work well or may be unclear. You may find that your assignment is impossible or excessively difficult to complete.

- **Plan the project to be realistic in terms of time required for students.**

- **Create assignments which promote critical thinking**. Encourage students to go beyond locating information to analyzing or evaluating the information content (e.g. comparing/contrasting).

- **Encourage students to ask a reference librarian for assistance (online or in person).**

08/10