

GRC FINAL REPORT

INSTRUCTIONS: GRCs should fill out the following form and email it to cur@ku.edu by **Friday, December 19th, 2014**. Keep in mind that the intended audience for this document will be future GRCs and/or instructors wanting to do similar projects, so keep your comments brief and focused on what will be most useful for other GRCs and instructors.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION:

- a. **Your name:** Courtney Sanchez
- b. **Course number & name:** FMS 177/LAA 177: Latin American Documentary

2. **OVERVIEW:** *Provide a one sentence summary of your GRC project.* I helped the students of LAA 177/FMS 177 to complete the final research project, which had two parts: first, each student wrote an individual research paper on a Latin American documentary of their choice; then, groups of three worked together to craft 20-minute presentations about how their different films and filmmakers approached common themes and issues.

3. **BACKGROUND:** *This section should give the reader just enough context to understand your project.*

- a. **Course description:** *Provide 1-3 sentences describing the course overall.* The course encourages students to engage with important issues and debates in Latin America through the medium of documentary film. Students watched films from across the region, spanning from the silent era to the present, and considered how the films they watched utilized the formal potential of the medium, crafted an argument, and addressed their subjects/audiences.
- b. **Typical students:** *Provide 1-3 sentences describing the typical student and their experience level doing research.* All of the students were first-year freshmen at KU, so though all claimed to have some experience doing research from high school, the kind of inquiry we expected of them was quite different than what they were used to – they were accustomed to collecting facts about a topic, but less familiar with the idea of humanities research that requires interpretation and analysis.

4. GOALS & OBJECTIVES:

- a. **Need for project:** *Provide 2-4 sentences describing the need for the research project in the class. What were students not learning before that you would like them to learn with this project? Where were students struggling? I have not worked on this specific course before, but our department strives to help students learn to engage with media in meaningful ways. First-year film students often struggle to understand the complexity of the documentary genre and the process of construction that goes into any finished film (documentary or otherwise), so we encouraged students to think about the process of documentary production as analogous to the academic research process: both require individuals to ask questions, collect evidence, synthesize information, and share their perspectives on a specific issue or topic.*
- b. **Learning goals & objectives:** *List the learning goals and objectives for your GRC project. Add more rows if needed.*

LEARNING GOALS	CORRESPONDING LEARNING OBJECTIVES
Students will understand what the documentary genre is and how documentary films are produced.	Students will be able to define the term “documentary film” and will be able to differentiate the six modes of documentary through familiarity with the conventions and purposes of each.
Students will be familiar with Latin American geography, culture, and history.	Students will be able to identify the nations of Latin America on a map. Students will demonstrate substantive knowledge of key concepts, actors, events, and processes pertaining to analyses of the Latin American Region.
Students will develop good research skills appropriate to the fields of Film Studies and Latin American studies.	Students will be able to identify research questions in the work of other scholars and will be able to form research questions to guide their own work. Students will engage KU library resources in their own research. Finally, students will incorporate the analysis of visual evidence (either motion or still images) into their research.

5. IMPLEMENTATION:

- a. **Activities:** *Describe the activities you designed for the class. What did you have students do? Please include any materials (slides, worksheets, etc.) that others might find useful as attachments.*

All of the activities I did with the class were designed to help them build the skills necessary to complete the final project. Before the semester began, I helped Dr. Falicov (the course

instructor) to prepare a list of potential themes for the group project and to identify films that would be appropriate for the assignment. After administering a survey to gauge students' familiarity with the research process and observing the class for a couple of weeks, I guided an activity to help the students form research questions about their chosen topics (the handout from that activity is attached). In the following weeks, we had representatives from the Writing Center, KU Libraries, and IT talk to the class about writing thesis statements, accessing/evaluating scholarly sources, and incorporating media into PowerPoint. Throughout this time, I met individually with the groups (10-15 minutes per group, per week) to check in on their projects, review progress, and offer feedback. At the end of the semester, I developed and distributed a rubric to help the students evaluate the presentations of their peers (attached) and this was the same rubric I used to evaluate the presentations. We had a "dress rehearsal" of the presentations the week before they were due, and at that time I offered verbal and written feedback to help the students refine and improve their projects.

- b. Activity log:** *Fill out the following table to give a general sense of how your 30 GRC hours were spent.*

ACTIVITY	# HOURS (estimate; leave blank if not applicable)
1. Facilitating activities in class.	6 hours
2. Meeting with students individually.	4 hours
3. Facilitating group activities outside of class.	
4. Developing activities & assessments.	8 hours
5. Providing written feedback to students (through email or written comments).	2 hours
6. Developing online content for students.	2 hours
7. Evaluating student final products.	3 hours
8. Coordinating instruction from other KU units (libraries, CUR, etc.).	2 hours
9. Meeting/planning with main instructor of course.	3 hours
10. Other (please list).	

TOTAL HOURS: 30

Assessment (can combine with “activities” if that makes more sense): *Describe how you assessed student learning (a final paper, presentation, etc.). Please include any assignments or rubrics as attachments.*

I designed and administered two surveys (one for the first day of class, one for the last) to assess student’s evaluation of their own knowledge and learning. The surveys (attached) include both Likert scale and open-ended questions.

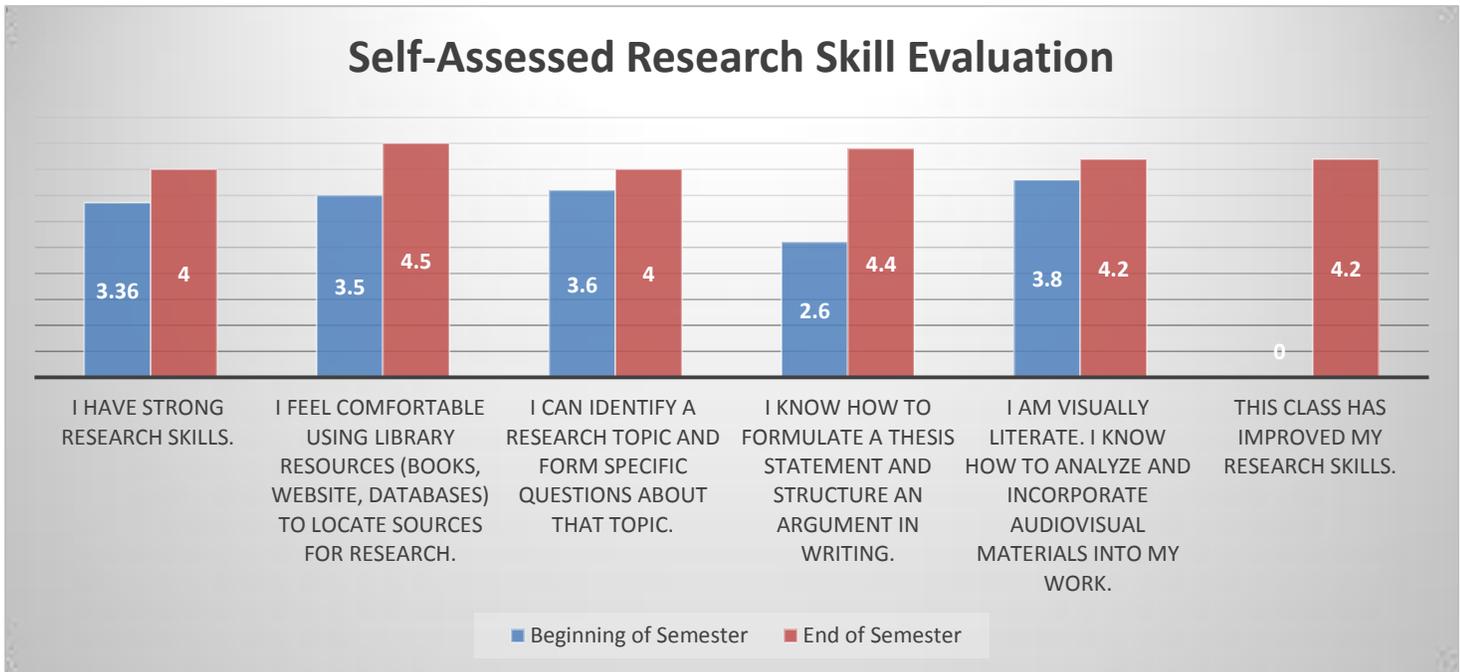
I also assessed student learning through their final group research presentations (the research papers individual students completed as part of that larger project were turned in to the lead instructor for grading). In groups of three, the students gave 20-minute presentations analyzing the ways different documentaries from Latin America engage common themes or topics – one group, for example, researched the representation of Che Guevara. The rubric I used to assess those presentations is attached.

6. STUDENT PERFORMANCE: *Note: we ask that you try to assess at least **one** learning objective for the GRC program. If you assessed more than one, please include that information as well.*

a. Narrative description of student learning: *Provide a short paragraph summarizing student learning on the project.* While most students came into the class with some knowledge of documentary filmmaking, their knowledge of Latin America was much less developed – on the first day of class, for example, the class tried to name the countries of Latin America and falsely identified Bolivia as Guatemala. Toward that end, the biggest gains in student performance were in knowledge of Latin American geography, culture, and history. On the final survey, I asked the students “What was the most important or interesting thing you learned in this course?” and all but one indicated that learning Latin American history was their biggest takeaway from the class. That said, the students did demonstrate improved knowledge of documentary practice in their final projects – the students were able to identify the modes their chosen films worked in and could discuss the way filmic technique was used to communicate a specific perspective on reality.

b. Visual representation of student learning: *If possible, provide a visual representation of student learning as a whole, such as a chart that includes student performance on different levels of a rubric (can look at past GRC reports for examples, or ask Nikki).*

Self-Assessed Research Skill Evaluation



7. DISCUSSION:

- a. **Effectiveness of research project:** *Provide a short paragraph reflecting on the results presented above. How effective was the project in achieving the desired learning objectives? Were there unexpected benefits or logistical problems that you encountered?*

I was surprised that students were so confident in their research abilities at the start of the semester! However, after speaking with more experienced instructors, I think this is to be expected – the students over-evaluated their research capabilities in the first survey because they didn't know what they didn't know. One of my open-ended survey questions asked "What resources would you use to complete a research project for this course?" and answers at the beginning of the semester were limited: Wikipedia, Google, and the library. By the end of the semester, the students identified specific research databases and KU library resources when asked the same question, and I saw improvements in the ways they searched for information and evaluated their sources over the course of the semester. Further, students' ability to generate multiple research questions about a single topic demonstrated to me that they were beginning to grasp the analytic/interpretive quality of humanities research as distinct from the kinds of research they had done in high school.

- b. **Plans for revision:** *Provide 1-3 sentences describing what changes, if any, you will make the next time you do this project with a class.*

If I am fortunate enough to do this again, I would require students to run drafts of their projects by me much earlier in the semester – perhaps before the Thanksgiving holiday. I spoke with the students briefly in class each week and offered to meet with them outside of class to help them work through their projects – but nobody took me up on it, perhaps because they knew I would not be grading the assignment. I think the students’ projects improved greatly from the rehearsal to the final presentation, but there was only a week in between and the students’ finished projects would have been even stronger if I had had more time to work with them one-on-one.

I would also build in an activity to help students develop effective presentations. Judging from the surveys I administered, the students had little experience presenting information to a group – and so, though Dr. Falicov and I tried to model effective presentation skills throughout the semester, I don’t think that was enough to help them understand things like what makes an effective PowerPoint or how to engage an audience when presenting.

8. **PERMISSION:** Please indicate in which of the following ways, if any, that you would be comfortable with the Center for Undergraduate Research sharing this report with others.
- a. I am willing to have this report shared on the Graduate Research Consultant Blackboard site (for future GRCs and instructors). We would include your name with your report.
 - b. I am willing to have this report shared with others on a public website (on CUR website, etc.). The Center would contact you and the instructor of the course for final approval before publishing content online. *Note: if you are willing to share this report on our website and have any photos of class activities, please email us those photos along with this report.*