

# CURQ Vignettes

## Doing History: Undergraduate Research from Idea to Conference

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History Seminar (HIST 395) serves as the gateway course to research, analysis, and writing in the history major. The seminar offers a coordinated “nuts and bolts” introduction to historical methodology, focusing on identifying, selecting, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to present coherent history in oral, digital, and written formats. Students enter the course with an interest in history and become apprentice historians. The class has been enormously successful in teaching students how to “do history.” Most students who complete the course have indicated its lasting influence on their lives as critical readers, thinkers, and citizens.

Students begin with a research trail, a process for conducting an exhaustive search of extant materials in libraries, archives, and online databases. They then engage in a series of analytical exercises in which they learn which secondary sources are useful for historical and historiographical context and which primary sources are most reliable. Through a series of written drafts of a paper—from a sample first paragraph that presents a historical argument with a historiographical note, to a first draft, to subsequent drafts—students learn the dialogue between writing and research and the need for peer review to sharpen their skills in synthesis, analysis, and writing.

The course also includes elements of digital history. Students conduct much of their research using online digital databases. They build a simple website for their research using WordPress, develop an online e-portfolio that may be used as a resume or vitae, and create an audio podcast of their final paper that is available to the public (see <http://sites.jmu.edu/studio395>). Many students present the results of their research at local, state, regional, and national conferences. The course thus provides them with excellent preparation for their future. 

## Implementing Undergraduate Research in Dietetics

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The Nicholls State University Dietetics Program integrates undergraduate research into its curriculum through two research-methods courses that guide all dietetic students through the process of research. Students study a wide variety of topics, from body image to lactobacillus in sauerkraut. In Research in Dietetics I, students begin by learning the types of research typically utilized in the profession of dietetics. Each student is guided through a process of self-reflection that helps him or her to determine a main area of interest in the field. A literature review is undertaken on the topic, and, from this literature review, the broad topic is distilled into a more focused research question.

Students actively participate in a group critique session that assists them in developing their research question/objective and their hypotheses. The group-discussion aspect of this course is important. It not only allows students to learn about the research process but also enhances students’ ability to think critically about multiple research topics, increases their ability to give and receive constructive criticism, and promotes peer relationships. Students then develop their research methods and present their research proposals to the class. This allows for further critique from the course instructor and input from classmates. The proposal is also submitted to the instructor as a research proposal with a literature review. The research proposal must include an application for approval by the university’s Human Subjects Committee if the proposed project includes human subjects.

In Research in Dietetics II, students collect data. Each student performs data entry and analyzes data with the assistance of the instructor. The final project includes developing research conclusions/implications, possible evidence-based practice guidelines, and recommendations for further research. Each completed project also must be presented through poster/oral presentations or submitted to peer-reviewed publications.

Students are able to develop their own original research projects that demonstrate their ability to integrate dietetic information, products, and services for various individuals, groups, and populations. The process allows students to demonstrate the attainment of the expected level of knowledge, beliefs, values, and behaviors required for dietitians to develop research. 