

The Syllabus (12-week timeline)

This full-term sample syllabus incorporates many of the best practices for running major Wikipedia assignments. You can use it as a starting point for your own Wikipedia assignments, or take bits and pieces to adapt to your course. For a more detailed version, which includes links to handouts, tutorial videos and other resources to use in class, visit http://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Education/The_Syllabus.

Wikipedia assignments work best when integrated with the theme of the course. Instructors can engage with the questions of media literacy and knowledge construction raised by Wikipedia throughout the term. For example, if you are teaching a course on presidential elections, delve into the controversies on Wikipedia that have the best the Barack Obama article and subarticles. In addition to a useful starting point for learning about new topics, Wikipedia itself is a rich primary source for the construction and contestation of public knowledge.

3 Exploring the topic area

Students should begin researching their Wikipedia topic early in the term. Finding topics with the right balance between lack of prior good Wikipedia coverage and available literature from which to build new Wikipedia coverage can be tricky.

In class

- Wikipedia Campus Ambassadors explain the many options for finding help and getting feedback on Wikipedia.
- Handout: Advice for choosing articles

5 Drafting starter articles

Once students have gotten somewhat of a grip on their topics and the sources they will use to write about them, it's time to start writing on Wikipedia. You can assign them to jump write in a new edit live, or start in their own sandboxes.

In class

- Campus Ambassador talk about Wikipedia culture & etiquette, introduce the use of sandboxes
- Q&A session with about interacting on Wikipedia and getting started with writing
- Video resource: Sandbox tutorial

7 Did you know

A good 3-4 paragraph summary can serve as the lead section for a full length article, following the summary style of Wikipedia articles, and will get students thinking from the beginning about the overall structure of their articles. New articles of that size (and short existing articles that have been expanded) should be eligible to appear on Wikipedia's Main Page as hooks in the "Did you know..." (DYK) section. This gives students an early chance to show their articles to a substantial audience and get feedback from Wikipediaers.

In class

- Handout: Moving into main space, Submitting articles to Did You Know

9 Getting and giving feedback

Collaboration is a critical element of contributing to Wikipedia. For some students this will happen spontaneously; in other cases there will be little spontaneous interest from other editors before the end of the term. Fortunately, a class full of fellow learners is a great pool of peer reviewers. Have them review each other's articles soon after full-length drafts are posted, to give students plenty of time to act on the advice of their peers.

In class

- As a group, have the students offer suggestions for improving one or two of the students' articles, setting the example for what is expected from a solid encyclopedia article.

11 Class presentations

Having students explicitly reflect on their experiences with Wikipedia can help draw out and solidify what they've learned. Such assignments, when they include explicit summaries or documentation of what students did or tried to do on Wikipedia, can also serve as the lens for evaluating and grading students' Wikipedia work.

In class

- Students give in-class presentations about their experiences editing Wikipedia.

1 Wikipedia Essentials

The key to a good Wikipedia assignment is to start early; students need to acquaint themselves with the technology, and have plenty of time after they first post their work to seek and respond to feedback.

In class

- Overview of the course
- Handout: Welcome to Wikipedia, including wiki code cheatsheet (available in print or online from the Wikimedia Foundation)

2 Editing basics

Students should start editing Wikipedia right away so that they become familiar with "wiki code." You can teach it yourself, invite Wikipedia's Campus Ambassadors, or contact a teaching and technology center on your campus and ask for their assistance.

In class

- Campus Ambassadors introduce the basics of editing, what makes a good article, and how to find an article to work on
- Handouts and videos: Talk pages tutorial video, Evaluating Wikipedia article quality brochure, Account and user page creation handout

4 Using sources

As they start using sources to improve Wikipedia articles or write new ones on Wikipedia, it is especially important for students to understand Wikipedia's policies on plagiarism and copyright violation. Any form of plagiarism or copyright violation is likely to result in students' work being removed from Wikipedia.

In class

- Handouts and videos: Referencing handout, Referencing: Wiki code handout, Plagiarism handout, Citing sources tutorial video, Ref Toolbar citation tool tutorial video

6 Choosing articles

By this week, ideally, the instructor will have evaluated the students' article choices and given them feedback, helping them to choose articles that are appropriate for the assignment. Because students often wait until the last minute to do their research or choose sources unsuited for Wikipedia, we strongly suggest that the students put together a bibliography of materials they want to use in editing the article, which can then be assessed by you, the instructor and other Wikipediaers.

In class

- Discuss the range of topics students will be working on and strategies for researching and writing about them.

8 Building articles

This is a good time to do a quick scan (at least) of what each student has contributed so far. Many students will have "gotten it." From there, the most important thing is giving feedback, both on the work they're doing—what is missing, what sources could be used to improve it, whether the balance is appropriate—and on how to keep within Wikipedia's guidelines, particularly Neutral Point of View and No Original Research. For students who have stumbled with some element of getting their initial work live on Wikipedia, this is the time to point them on the right track.

In class or outside of class

- Campus Ambassadors lead Wikipedia workshop, covering: Wikipedia article ratings, uploading and adding images
- Handouts and videos: Uploading images handout, Uploading files to Wikimedia Commons video, Evaluating Wikipedia article quality brochure (handed out originally in week 2), Article assessments video, Evolution of an article video

10 Responding to feedback

At this point, students should have produced more or less complete articles. Now is the chance to encourage them to wade a little deeper into Wikipedia and its norms and criteria for great content. Consider bringing in a guest speaker, having a panel discussion, or simply having an open discussion among the class about what the students have done so far and why (or whether) it matters.

The next step for students' articles can be nominating them for Good Article status. Some instructors have awarded automatic high marks for any students who successfully write articles that achieve Good Article status. (Getting there generally takes more than enough effort to deserve an 'A'.)

In class

- Open discussion of the concepts of neutrality, media literacy, and the impact and limits of Wikipedia

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4

Week 5

Week 6

Week 7

Week 8

Week 9

Week 10

Week 11

Week 12

Assignment

(due week 2)

- Read Five pillars, a explanation of Wikipedia's basic rules and principles

Assignments

(due week 3)

- Create a Wikipedia account, create a user page, and sign up on the list of students on the course page
- On their user talk pages, introduce yourself to one of the class Ambassadors and leave a message for a classmate.

Milestone

- All students have Wikipedia user accounts and are listed on the course page

Assignment

(due week 5)

- Add 1-2 sentences of new information, backed up with a citation to an appropriate source, to a Wikipedia article related to the class.

For next week

- Instructor evaluates student's article selections, by week 5.

Assignments

(due week 7)

- If you are starting a new article, write a 3-4 paragraph summary version of your article (with citations) in your Wikipedia sandbox. If you are improving an existing article, write a summary version reflecting the content the article will have after it's been improved.
- Begin working with classmates and Online Ambassadors to polish your short starter article and fix any major transgressions of Wikipedia norms.
- Continue research in preparation for expanding your article.

Milestone

- All students have started editing articles or drafts on Wikipedia.

Assignments

(due week 9)

- Expand your article into an initial draft of a comprehensive treatment of the topic.
- Select two classmates' articles that you will peer review and copy-edit. (You don't need to start reviewing yet.)

Assignments

(due week 11)

- Make edits to your article based on peers' feedback.
- Nominate your article for Good Article status.
- Prepare for an in-class presentation about your Wikipedia editing experience.

Milestone

- Students have finished all their work on Wikipedia that will be considered for grading, and have submitted reflective essays.



Assignments

(due week 4)

- Critically evaluate an existing Wikipedia article related to the class, and leave suggestions for improving it on the article's discussion page.
- Research and list 3-5 articles on your Wikipedia user page that you will consider working on as your main project. Ask your class's Online Ambassadors for comments.

Assignment

(due week 6)

- Select an article to work on, removing the rest from the course page.
- Compile a bibliography of relevant research and post it to the talk page of the article you are working on. Begin reading the sources.

Assignments

(due week 8)

- Move sandbox articles into main space.
- For new articles or qualifying expansions of stubs, compose a one-sentence "hook," nominate it for "Did you know," and monitor the nomination for any issues identified by other editors.
- Begin expanding your article into a comprehensive treatment of the topic.

Milestone

- All students have working on live Wikipedia articles.

Assignments

(due week 10)

- Peer review two of your classmates' articles. Leave suggestions on the article talk pages.
- Copy-edit the two reviewed articles.

Milestone

- All articles have been reviewed by others. All students have reviewed articles by their classmates.

Assignments

(due week 12)

- Add final touches to your Wikipedia article. Try to address issues from Good Article reviews.
- Write a reflective essay (2-5 pages) on your Wikipedia contributions.

Grading

This is a basic grading scheme appropriate for a syllabus similar to this one. For more ideas on how to grade Wikipedia assignments, see the grading rubrics section of the *Wikipedia as a Teaching Tool* brochure.

- 5% each (x3): Participation grade for early Wikipedia exercises (weeks 2, 3, and 4)
- 10%: Participation in Wikipedia discussions in class
- 10%: Peer reviews and collaboration with classmates
- 15%: Presentation and reflective essay
- 50%: Quality of main Wikipedia contributions, evaluated in light of reflective essay

The Syllabus

http://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Education/The_Syllabus
Made available by the Wikipedia Ambassador Program. Freely shareable under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 license.

12 Due date
COMPLETED