

## ASSIGNMENT II: EXPANDED READING

Our first assignment asked you to do a close reading of a particular passage of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. The second assignment asks you to use research to answer some question the book raised for you and hence expand your own as well as your colleagues' understanding of the book as a whole. You will present your research findings in 5-minute poster presentation that you will deliver to small groups of your classmates, each presentation followed by a Q & A period. You will also produce a written abstract of your talk and a review of the literature on your topic.

### AN OVERVIEW OF THIS ASSIGNMENT

The research you do, the poster presentation you make, and the abstract and literature review you write will all be modest in scope.

### Goals and Objectives

- practice working with a group to make decisions and determine appropriate research objectives
- gain familiarity with current means of information-gathering available to researchers
- increase skill in evaluating various types of information sources
- become conversant in accepted conventions of effective and ethical research
- practice brief, focused oral presenting
- practice attentive listening and effective responding
- become acquainted with the central cross-disciplinary conventions of documenting research, and writing an abstract and review of the literature.

**For more on framing appropriate research questions, evaluating sources, keeping research logs, and composing abstracts & literature reviews, visit the DBC Research Station on the DBC website <<http://www.comcol.umass.edu/dbc>>.**

### THE STEPS OF THIS ASSIGNMENT

#### In Class

- 1) After the class has engaged in an open discussion about *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, break up into four smaller groups.
- 2) In your small groups, create a list of areas of interest inspired by the book. These can be broad, for example, the incorporation of graphics in the novel, or the therapeutic community's response to terror survivors.
- 3) As a group, decide what area of interest your group will pursue.
- 4) Report out to the large group about some of the areas of interest you discussed and which particular area you chose and why.
- 5) Back in your small group, work together to come up with research questions for each group member that fit into your group's area of interest. Make sure each group member has a voice in the discussion and ends up with a topic that interests him or her. Think of your group as a team working to gather information about a topic that

will help the rest of the class to understand better some issue or idea raised by the book.

- 6) Finally, back in the large group, let your classmates know what research question you'll be working with. Your instructor might have various suggestions about narrowing or refining your question.

### Outside of Class

Your job now is to conduct research based upon your particular research question. You will

- Maintain and submit a research log or a RefWorks bibliography;
- Conduct your research according to the guidelines below;
- Prepare a 5-minute poster presentation on your research findings;
- Compose and submit a 100-200 word abstract of your research and intended presentation;
- Compose and submit a review of the literature found through your research.

### **PARTS OF THE ASSIGNMENT IN DETAIL**

#### **Keep a research log (worth 5% of the final grade)**

A research log is an informal but detailed record of the research findings that you will ultimately formalize in your **review of the literature**. Our online Research Station's How-to Guides give you a template for keeping your research log, along with a sample completed log. You may use the template provided, design one of your own, or use RefWorks, an online tool for keeping track of your sources and generating works cited and bibliographies. If you choose to use RefWorks, refer to the course website for specific instructions ([www.comcol.umass.edu/dbc/refworks.html](http://www.comcol.umass.edu/dbc/refworks.html)).

Your research log is not meant to be a polished document but rather a collection of research notes for your own use. It should contain all the information you'll need for your literature review as well as your oral presentation. For each book, article, or website you find, record all publication information—author, title, publisher or sponsor, URL, etc.—needed for a works cited list. Keep track of the search strategy that brought you to each source—key words, subjects, etc.—so you can easily retrace your steps if necessary.

Finally, under this information, jot down or copy-and-paste relevant facts, claims, or quotations you might use later, being sure to note the page (if given). Include any evaluative remarks you want to make about the particular source or its relation to other sources.

Record all relevant sources you find, regardless of apparent reliability or value. Since you will compare the merits of various sources in your literature review, it's crucial to keep an evaluative as well as substantive record here. (Refer to the How-to Guides from the DBC Research Station to find the research log template as well as MLA style guidelines for source citation.)

#### **Conduct research**

Because a major objective of this assignment is to gain familiarity with current means of information-gathering, you will be asked to use a variety of databases and indexes. Your research log (or RefWorks bibliography) and literature review should contain a minimum

of 8 sources drawn from at least 3 of the following categories. (For your presentation, you need only use the most relevant sources.)

**Link to databases from the Database Guide on the Dean's Book Course website <<http://www.comcol.umass.edu/dbc/dbcguide.html>>.**

- **“Sites of Interest” accessed from the Research Station.** Students working in last year's Dean's Readers seminar selected the books for this year's DBC and also compiled a wealth of books, articles, and online references, as well as their own research papers, for your use.
- **A “popular” commercial search engine** such as [Google.com](http://www.google.com) or [Yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com). These engines search the content of the public domain, which in many cases is of low quality. Be judicious in your selection. (See the DBC How-to Guides for tips on source evaluation.)
- **A broad-based UMass Library database** such as the [Expanded Academic Index ASAP](#), [Academic Search Premier](#), or [Google Scholar](#). These interdisciplinary databases contain articles from a wide range of scholarly journals and have been peer-reviewed for reliability.
- **A discipline-specific database** such as [PrimateLit](#), [PubMed](#), or [PAIS International](#). These databases are especially useful as you narrow the focus of your research question by allowing you to search a particular discipline in depth.
- **An alternative database** such as [Alt-PressWatch](#), [Ethnic NewsWatch](#), or [Gender Watch](#). As “democratic” as search engines like Google may be, ethnic and minority sites are often lost in the millions of entries each search produces. “Alternative” databases give you access to these important perspectives.
- **Lectures, personal interviews, surveys, films, and other media.**

**Compose a presentation abstract (worth 5% of the final grade)**

Once you have completed your research and formulated your presentation, compose a 100-200 word abstract, summarizing the purpose, results, and conclusions of your research. Writing your abstract in advance can help you organize and focus your oral presentation.

**Your abstract is due on the day of your presentation.** (For more on abstract writing, see the abstract How-to Guide on the DBC Research Station, <http://www.comcol.umass.edu/dbc/abstracts.html>.)

**Compose a review of the literature (worth 15% of the final grade)**

Presentations will take place throughout the final weeks of the DBC term. Following the presentation, you will submit a 750-850 word review of the literature. Literature reviews—required for Capstone manuscripts and other scholarly projects, as well as for most grant proposals—summarize and compare the various articles you've found in conducting your research.

A review of the literature is not an annotated bibliography. Nor is it what most think of as a “research paper,” though literature reviews are often included within research papers. In a research paper, you use sources to support your discussion of the research topic; in a literature review, the sources themselves are the topic of your discussion.

Written in the style of an expository essay, the literature review tells your reader what professional literature exists on your chosen topic and also organizes and evaluates that information. In composing your literature review, you must

- 1) Introduce your research question and your reasons for asking it.
- 2) Organize the information you've found and relate it to your own research question.
- 3) Categorize your sources according to general points of agreement, disagreement, etc.
- 4) Identify specific points of similarity and difference among sources.
- 5) Evaluate the usefulness of the various sources.
- 6) Include quotations from and paraphrases of your sources to support your claims.
- 7) Cite sources following Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines for both in-text citations and a "works cited" list.

(For more on the literature review, see the Literature Review How-to Guide on the DBC Research Station at [http://www.comcol.umass.edu/dbc/literature\\_review.html](http://www.comcol.umass.edu/dbc/literature_review.html).)

**Prepare (and give) an oral presentation (worth 10% of the final grade)**

You will have **FIVE MINUTES** to present your research findings orally to each group of students. Support your presentation with a modest poster-board display representing key findings visually through a combination of words and images, tables, graphs, maps, etc.

For more on oral presentations, see "Giving & Getting Effective Poster Presentations." For tips on designing effective posters, see poster design How-to Guide at <http://www.comcol.umass.edu/dbc/posterdesign.html>.

## **Poster Presentation Procedure**

On each presentation day, there will be several presentations taking place at the same time. It is important to get the room set up as soon as class begins and to be mindful of the other presentations going on around the room. Arrive on time and be prepared to set up and present. If you are not presenting a poster, be prepared to be an attentive, engaged audience for your peers' presentations.

### **Setting up the classroom**

1. If necessary, move desks and other obstructions out of the way, to allow everyone to move easily around the classroom. For much of class-time, everyone will be on their feet, whether giving or observing a presentation, as they would at a typical academic conference. If you have a small classroom, you may need to get the desks into a circle, against the walls or otherwise out of the way.
2. Each presenter should space herself as far as possible from the other presenters. Affix posters to the wall using masking tape or some other product that will be easy to remove and won't leave marks.

### **Giving and Responding to Presentations**

1. Before presentations begin, the instructor should hand Poster Presentation Feedback forms out to each student audience group member. A time keeper should also be designated to keep the class on schedule:
  - a. Presentations: 5 minutes
  - b. Q&A Period: 5 minutes
  - c. Time to complete Presentation Feedback Forms: 3-5 minutes
2. Audience members should form three or four groups, depending upon the size of the class. Each group should then take a position at one of the presenter's posters.
3. Audience Groups: As you listen to each presentation, jot down notes and comments on a Feedback Form. After each 5 minute presentation there will be a Q & A period, followed by several minutes to finish filling out Feedback Forms. Instructors will collect the forms at the end of class.
4. Presenters: Be mindful of your time. Also, be aware that there are other presentations going on at the same time as yours, so don't speak too loudly so as to distract others. Following each presentation round, there will be a Q & A period.
5. When your audience group is finished with its evaluation forms, move as a group on to the next presentation.
6. When all presentations have been seen by all audience groups, the class will return to the large group to discuss the presentations and have a follow-up talk about issues raised during the class.