

Assigned Research Questions Using the Internet

Margaret A. Johnson, Richard J. Daley College

Module #3

Course

Social Studies 102

Description

This module poses questions or issues for analysis and anticipates that students will use the Internet as a primary information source in preparing their responses. Such assignments have been used for many years, with students expected to use library books, periodicals, or other “tangible” materials in their research. The Internet makes easily available a range of materials that would be difficult to duplicate in even the best of libraries, but it requires new skills which many students, particularly in community colleges, may not have sufficiently developed. The assignments, therefore, include suggested Internet sites for each question, to get the student started. In line with the emphasis on technology skills, it is strongly suggested that students be required to prepare their responses electronically and submit them via e-mail or to an instructor’s website (say, using *Blackboard* software if available).

Transferability

This approach can be used in virtually any course, as the Internet includes useful material in all areas.

Faculty Technology Skill

Competence in the use of Internet search engines, e-mail, and word processing (to read student responses)

Student Technology Skill

Ability to operate a computer and web browser and to send e-mail with attachments

Faculty Equipment

Computer with Internet access, e-mail, and/or faculty website are highly recommended.

Student Equipment

Computer with Internet access, word processing software, and e-mail are highly recommended. Students can access the Internet in most school libraries at this point.

Cost

No specialized equipment and software is required, unless Internet access is nonstandard. Minimal costs for Internet access are a modem (\$30), Internet Service Provider account (\$22/month), and phone line (cost varies).

Improvement on Teaching and Learning

The Internet can provide easy access to an incredible range of material, far more than most students will be able to access locally. With proper use of search engines and following the instructor’s recommended links, this material can be organized more efficiently for the students’

needs than materials distributed by a physical library. More information and better organization will let students master the course more quickly and thoroughly. A secondary benefit is for students with limited backgrounds in computer technology to learn how to use the Internet and related tools. Another benefit accrues to such students by submitting their assignments electronically and becoming comfortable with e-mail systems.

Nontechnology Comparison

Although this general assignment can be done using available print library resources, the benefits of using the Internet and e-mail can only be realized by actual experience.

Pertinent Issues

In most community college applications, the Internet will provide far more information than can be used; students and instructors will need to recognize the varying quality and applicability of the websites they find, as instructors develop assignments, students perform, and instructors evaluate. Another critical factor is that the Internet is wide open, with no authority regulating content. It is not hard to stumble upon erroneous information, so instructors and students need to pay attention to the sources of information and to finding independent verification of key points. Instructors need to be aware that websites come and go and should verify the links each time the assignment is given. Instructors should also actively search for new and better sites with some frequency. Finally, students need to document their responses so the instructor can verify what the students saw (esp. on the Internet) and that they interpreted it correctly.

How to Use This Module in the Classroom

See example. The instructor would prepare the assigned questions and include current websites that will help students prepare their responses. If possible, the instructor should establish a means for students to submit their papers electronically, via e-mail or to a faculty website using software such as *Blackboard*. Students would research the questions, using books, the recommended websites, and other sites as they deem appropriate; prepare their assignments; and submit them to the instructor. In evaluating the assignments, the instructor should check out all referenced web links to confirm that the students used them correctly.

Research Questions

You must answer at least six research questions during the course of the semester. Each question must be typed and submitted via e-mail or on disk. Use the word(s) in italics as the title. Be sure your answer is at least one paragraph (i.e., 3-5 sentences). Also, be sure to cite your source. Full credit will only be given if these instructions are followed in full.

1. *A Different Calendar*: It is the year 2002 CE (in the Christian or Common Era). What year is it using another cultural calendar? What event is the calendar based on?
<http://webexhibits.org/calendars/>
<http://www.ecben.net/calendar.shtml>
2. *The Week*: A year is one revolution of the earth around the sun. A month is one revolution of the moon around the earth. A day is one rotation of the earth around its own axis. What is a week based on?
<http://webexhibits.org/calendars/week.html>
<http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~stephan/Astronomy/7day.html>
3. *Waltzing Matilda*: "Waltzing Matilda" is a uniquely Australian song. Who wrote it and when? What are the lyrics about (for example, define words like "waltzing Matilda," "jumbuck," "tucker bag," "billabong," etc.)
<http://www.ozramp.net.au/~senani/waltz.htm>
4. *European Union (worth two research questions!)*: As of January 2002, the countries making European Union (EU) have a single currency, the euro. The EU is a supranationalist organization of countries joining together for political and economic power. How is the EU like a super-sized country? How is it different? What are the advantages and the disadvantages of the EU for the USA?
<http://europa.eu.int/>
<http://www.eurunion.org/>
5. *Russian Empire (worth two research questions IF you also do map portion)*: Draw a timeline illustrating the growth and decline of the Russian/Soviet Empire. Using a map of Russia, shade in the growth using different colors to represent different eras.
<http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/chrono.html>
http://dmoz.org/Society/History/By_Region/Europe/Russia/
6. *Jerusalem*: Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs both claim Jerusalem for their capital city. If you were counseling the two groups during peace negotiations, what would you advise them to do about the problem of who owns Jerusalem?
7. *African Aid*: Sub-Saharan Africa is a poverty-stricken region with several serious endemic diseases. What are they? How are they spread, and how many are afflicted? Do wealthy countries such as the U.S. have an obligation to provide aid? How much aid does/ or should the U.S. provide to this region?
<http://www.usaid.gov/regions/afr/regactiv.html>
<http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/tech.htm>
<http://www.whoafr.org/>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/2027079.stm>

8. *U.S. Regions*: Regions are based on common characteristics of surrounding areas. The shared characteristics can be cultural, economic, historical, political, etc. The U.S. can be divided into many types of regions. For example, Illinois may be part of the prairie (vegetation) region, the Great Lakes (location) region, the Manufacturing Belt (economic), the Snow Belt (climate region), and the Central Division of the Western Conference of the National Hockey League. Choose a way to “regionalize” the U.S.; then identify the characteristics for your regions and what states or parts of states are in your different regions.

http://www.fs.fed.us/land/ecosysmgmt/ecoreg1_home.html

http://dir.yahoo.com/Regional/Countries/United_States/Regions/

http://www.census.gov/geo/www/us_regdiv.pdf (this is over 1MB!)

<http://www.sierraclub.org/ecoregions/>

<http://geography.about.com/library/misc/blregions.htm>

9. *Maquiladoras*: What are maquiladoras? In what ways do they help *and* hinder economic development of a region? Should the concept of maquiladoras be spread to Caribbean countries?

<http://www.citinv.it/associazioni/CNMS/archivio/lavoro/maquiladoras.html>

<http://www.electriciti.com/~espinosa/productions/tijuanapr.htm>

10. *Chinese Dynasties*: China is an ancient country. Draw a timeline with at least five dates. Above the timeline, list the various Chinese dynasties and their accomplishments. Below the timeline, include events in other parts of the world that took place at the same time.

http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/time_line.html

<http://www.asterius.com/china/>

11. *South Asia Conflicts*. Choose one of the current or recent political conflicts of this area to describe. There are many to choose from: India/Pakistan, 1947; East Pakistan/West Pakistan, 1972; and very recently, Sri Lanka Tamil/Sinhalese, Pakistan/Iran, Pakistan/Afghanistan, Pakistan/India.

<http://www.satp.org/>

12. *Religious Patchwork (worth two research questions IF you also do map portion)*: What major religions are found in Southeast Asia? Describe both the historical and contemporary patterns for each religion. Fill in a map using different colors to represent the different religions.

<http://www.asiasource.org/religion.cfm>

<http://newton.uor.edu/Departments&Programs/AsianStudiesDept/general-phil.html>

<http://www.atlapedia.com/>