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Assessment of Senior Theses for the Program in Integrated Studies

Assessor: Dr. George Schoemaker (Ph.D. Indiana University, folklore, currently Folk Arts Specialist for the Utah Arts Council)

Questions to be addressed, based on a random sample of each year's theses.:

Quality of research?
Quality of writing?
Changes in quality year to year?

Six theses per year, specific notes on every third thesis read.

1999

1. Domestic Violence. [REDACTED]. 23 pages.

No approval page.

Introduction of the problem is motivated by then recent instances of abuse presented in mass media; ie. OJ Simpson, and release of movie What's Love Got to Do with It? A movie based on the real-life abuse of Tina Turner by husband Ike.

The reader would have liked to see the problem contextualized within feminist social history. Abuse is not a MODERN problem.

The reader is not certain of the intent of the paper (thesis) before the writer begins presenting the problem. In what ways is the writer going to look at domestic violence that differ from the prevailing theories.

There is a lack of adherence to acceptable rules of documentation.

Transitions between paragraphs introducing new ideas are weak.

General structure of the paper is in question.

Using oral narrative sources from interviews is a nice feature; however, oral sources need proper documentation. Faculty readers need to be able to guide student to do proper documentation.

This paper lacks adequate research for a senior-level paper. It becomes clear early in the paper that the writer has read thoroughly one or two sources to which the writer refers

substantially throughout the paper.

Conclusions in paper only reiterate the presentation of facts about abuse. The reader has no sense of what it is the writer is trying to prove by writing the paper.

2. Legalizing Marijuana: Analyzing the Controversy, Accepting the Facts. [REDACTED]. 34 pages.

Unsigned Approval Page.

Introduction presents current arguments from the literature and a contextualization of the argument within cultural history.

Clearly articulated thesis.

Faculty advisors need to enforce politically correct writing.

Arguments are well articulated and supported by research.

Presentation of writer's position is well-supported.

Persuasive rhetoric in the Conclusion is weak at times.

2000

3. Genetic Diversity and Forest Aesthetics. [REDACTED]. 91 pages.

This Senior Thesis is well-documented, beautifully written, and thoroughly researched for a creative/scholarly work at this level. It is an interweaving of prose, poetry, and research.

I have a sense that this thesis was written by a non-traditional college student who brings to the writing a precious cache of human experiences and insights.

The thesis of this document is well-positioned and articulated.

Each chapter of the thesis is an integrated argument of the whole. The writer interweaves personal narrative, scholarly research, sound reasoning, illustrations, and creative works to form a pleasurable reading experience.

4. Diets: Are they Safe and Effective. [REDACTED]. 33 pages.

WIDE margins.

Introduction is an interesting personal narrative that takes the reader through several of the different kinds of dieting techniques and plans, and what ultimately worked for the writer.

No clearly articulated thesis statement. Paper is a report and presentation of different dieting plans and medications.

Thesis has good research of various diet fads, plans, and medications.

Thesis is well-written and interesting, combining research and personal narrative. There is nothing very compelling or controversial about this thesis.

There is good adherence to rules of documentation and citation.

2001

5. The Role of Crusader(sic) in the Army Transition. [REDACTED]. 28 pages.

This paper is a compelling topic about the new field artillery weapons (tanks) and their shortcomings.

No clearly articulated thesis.

Writer has great grasp of the subject matter and implications to warfare strategy, but paper is nothing more than a report on how Army is transitioning to the new Crusader system.

Paper is well-researched.

Good adherence to rules of documentation.

Conclusions only restate the talking points of the paper.

6. The History and Psychology of Baby Abandonment and Infanticide. [REDACTED]. 35 pages.

This is a too ambitious thesis to determine the causes of child abandonment or infanticide and solutions of future misdeeds. Scope is much too broad to adequately cover the topic, especially in 35 pages.

Because of the magnanimous scope of the topic, the thesis statement is subtle, but is too weak.

History of child abandonment from Greek and Roman times to present day gratuitously presented in five paragraphs. What about Moses? Narrowing the focus of the paper (only on Richmond, Virginia, for example) might make the historic enterprise a little more manageable.

Inconsistencies in rules of documentation.

General social reasons for child abandonment and infanticide presented well.

Conclusions are reportage.

7. Recreation and the Concept of "Rescue-Free Wilderness." [REDACTED]. 38 pages.

Great introduction and clear articulation of compelling thesis statement.

Clearly articulated talking points supported by good research.

Talking points have strong transitions between paragraphs and lead the reader to the writer's conclusion.

Adherence to rules of documentation.

Map graphic is difficult to read.

Good sub-headings.

Several suggestions made to address problem (thesis).

Extensive bibliography makes this paper well-researched.

2002

- . Project: Creating a Wireless Presence at UVU. [REDACTED]. 36 pages.

Project is part of real-life committee work, hence, good reporting of facts, but fails to present compelling thesis.

Talking points are presented well.

Good illustrations and appendices.

As is presented in the paper, the majority of the project is to educate the writer (and reader) to the Ageneralities and specifics of wireless and implement the objective of the committee."

- . Peyote: Holy Sacrament or Illegal Drug? [REDACTED]. 34 pages.

The thesis statement is presented as a series of closed-ended, moral, questions.

Rules of documentation are adhered to.

Great background information into the Peyote movement and issues relating to the NAC and constitutional rights of religious freedoms.

Good arguments from all sides of the issue.

Short, weak conclusion that attempts to persuade reader of the legality of Peyote.

Good research using both digital and published sources.

2003

Leadership, Not Advocacy, Training for the Deaf. [REDACTED]. 28 pages.

Clear and well-articulated thesis statement.

Adherence to rules of documentation.

Sub-headings make for easy road map.

Compelling arguments on talking points presented well.

Conclusions are adequate for the scope of paper.

A Vegetative Survey of a Sphagnum Lake in a Subalpine Forest of the Southeastern Uinta(sic) Mountains of Utah. [REDACTED]. 64 pages.

Model thesisCmore like an M.A. Thesis in scope and sophistication.

Well-articulated thesis, approach to the problem and research model.

Stellar adherence to rules of documentation.

Great supporting data drawn from field research and published materials.

Conclusions are strong and well thought out.

Assessment Conclusions:

Selecting at random theses from the years 1999 through 2003, there is evidence to support the gradual qualitative improvement of theses written during this time period. I would attribute this improvement to growing faculty involvement overseeing the quality of writing, thesis direction and content, and the students own curiosity to explore compelling and engaging topics that are manageable for this kind of assignment.