



Assignment 1: Become a Wikipedian

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Three Classes, Three Universities

- **University of Washington - Hill (COM 428)**
- **Northwestern - Shaw (COMST 378)**
- **Northeastern - Reagle (COMM 4624)**

Shared course topic: Online Communities

Wikipedia one community among many

(All three professors are arguably more experienced Wikipedians than professors!)

Wikipedia in Higher Ed: *Classic Model*

Primary learning goal:

- Learn about a particular topic area covered by the class (Identical to the “pre-WP” version of class.)

Assessment:

- Students make contributions to WP articles in the particular topic area
- Graded like traditional papers

Wikipedia in Higher Ed: *Our Model*

Primary learning goals:

- Learn *about* WP as an example of online communities.
- Build practical (online) collaboration skills and experiences.

Primary criteria to assess WP contributions:

- Demonstrate knowledge of WP processes, norms, procedures
- Critical reflection on Wikipedia participation
- Apply theories & concepts from the course to explain WP experiences.

How This Looks Different

- Emphasis on deep engagement with Wikipedia (and other communities).
- Students focused on understanding and critical reflection on Wikipedia processes.
- Topic and content of WP articles is relatively unimportant (e.g., students might write about *anything*). **Students are evaluated on their mastery of Wikipedia itself.**

Example Class Concepts

Commitment (Kraut and Resnick, ch=3 pp=77-102)

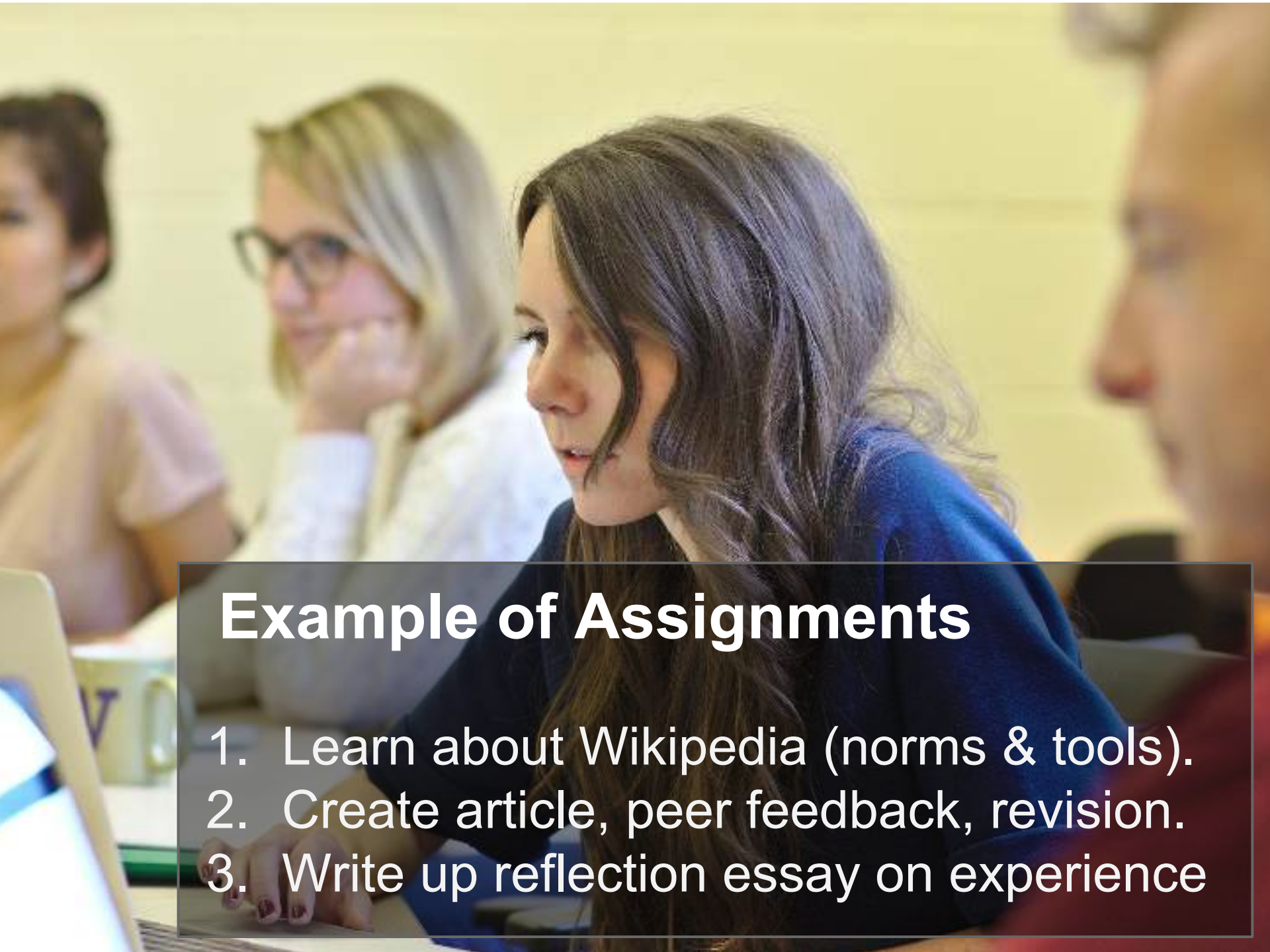
- Discussion of why people feel commitment to (e.g., Guild of Copy Editors, Wiki Women's Collaborative, WikiProject Military History)
- Evaluation of WP Fundraisers

Newcomers (Kraut and Resnick, ch=5)

- Comparison of *The Wikipedia Adventure*, "normal" welcome templates, WikiEd Student Tutorial

Gratitude

- Spread "wikilove" beyond class. Reflect on process and experience.



Example of Assignments

1. Learn about Wikipedia (norms & tools).
2. Create article, peer feedback, revision.
3. Write up reflection essay on experience

Related Class Exercises

A photograph of a classroom where several students are gathered around a table, focused on a task. In the foreground, a young man in a grey hoodie is looking intently at a young woman in a black top who is holding a thin wooden stick. Another young man in a blue and white plaid shirt is leaning over the table, also looking at the stick. In the background, other students are visible, some holding similar sticks. The room has light blue walls and a door. On the table in the foreground, there is a smartphone, a pair of glasses, and a white disposable cup.

- visits from local wikipedians
- visiting University archives
- creating wikiHow articles
- participating in Citizen Science projects.
- teamwork activities

Approaches

	Class Size	Topic Selection	Group Individual Projects
UW	35	Totally open	Individual
Northwestern	41	Totally open	Group
Northeastern #1	19	University archives/	Individual w/ feedback
Northeastern #2	20	University archives/ open	Individual w/ Feedback

Results



Example Article



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The Free Encyclopedia

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Catherine Furbish

A C-class article from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Catherine 'Kate' Furbish (May 9, 1834 – December 6, 1931) was an American botanist who collected, classified and illustrated the native flora of Maine. She devoted over 60 years of her life, traveling thousands of miles throughout her home state and creating very accurate drawings and watercolour paintings of the plants she found.

She discovered two plants which were named after her: *Pedicularis furbishiae* (Furbish lousewort) and *Aster cordifolius* L., var. *furbishiae*.^[1]

Contents (hide)

- Early life and education
- Personal life
- Career and discoveries
- Legacy and impact
- References
- Further reading
- External links



Catherine Furbish

Early life and education | edit source | edit

Kate Furbish was born on May 19, 1834 in Exeter, New Hampshire, the eldest child and only daughter of Benjamin and Mary Lane Furbish.^[2] The family relocated to Brunswick, Maine, shortly after her birth.^[3] As a child, her father would take Furbish and her five younger brothers for walks in the local woods. Even as a young child, Furbish showed a knack for botany as she was able to identify many of the area's native plants.^[4]

Furbish pursued a general education in painting and French literature. This resulted in her spending one year in Paris to perfect her painting. Though she did not receive a formalized higher education, in 1860, Furbish would attend George L. Goodale's botany lectures in Boston.^[5]



WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

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Creepypasta

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Creepypastas are horror-related legends or images that have been copy-and-pasted around the Internet.^{[1][2][3]} These Internet entries are often brief, user generated ghost or alien stories intended to scare readers. They include gruesome tales of murder, suicide, and otherworldly occurrences.^[1] According to *TIME* magazine, the genre had its peak audience in 2010 when it was covered by *The New York Times*.^[1]

In the mainstream media, creepypastas relating to the fictitious **Slender Man** character came to public attention after the 2014 "**Slender Man stabbing**", in which a twelve-year-old Wisconsin girl was stabbed by two of her friends; the perpetrators claimed they "wanted to prove the [Slender Man] skeptics" wrong.^{[4][1][5]} After the murder attempt, some creepypasta website administrators made statements reminding readers of the "line between fiction and reality".^[1] The result of actions caused by the stabbings have created a negative image for creepypastas in the media.^[citation needed]

Other notable creepypasta characters and stories include Jeff the Killer, Ted the Caver, and Psychosis.^{[1][6][7]} In October 2014, a book called *Creepypasta: Spökhistorier från Internet (Creepypasta: Ghost Stories from the Internet)* was published in Sweden.^[8]

The term originates from "copypasta", a word used on **4chan** in 2006 to describe viral copy-and-pasted text.^[1]

Examples of creepypastas [edit]

Slender Man [edit]

*Main article: **Slender Man***

Slender Man is a thin, tall man with a blank face, wearing a black suit who is said to stalk and traumatise people. The character originated in a 2009 **SomethingAwful** photoshop competition, and creepypastas were written shortly afterwards.

Squidward's Suicide [edit]

Squidward's Suicide is a video posted to YouTube that depicts the **SpongeBob Squarepants** character, Squidward Tentacles committing suicide. The episode allegedly depicts scenes of "violence and gore", as well as quick flashes of dead children and other disturbing imagery. A story that provides background for the video states that the episode was created in 2005 and was viewed by a select test screening at **Nickelodeon**.^[9] Show writer Casey Alexander debunked

Challenges



Shortcomings in Current Material

Traditional introductions (e.g., Wiki Ed tutorials) focus on writing good articles and spend much less time on interacting with community.

- Most tutorials don't emphasize interaction with others.
- Creating space for interaction is difficult in 10-12 week course.

e.g., One student aimed to create an article for a topic (clearly notable given recent events) that had been “salted” years previously.

Students Ran Into More Problems Than In Other Classes

- Students were overwhelmed by rules, norms, etc.
- Onboarding processes were extremely heavy compared to other communities.
- Feedback *at all* was rare.
- Nearly all feedback was coarse and negative. e.g., several new articles were nominated for deletion.
- Asking for help was often counterproductive:
 - Asking for help on #wikipedia-help led to AfD's of material from students, classmates, instructor!

Self-Selected Topics

1. Students struggled to select topics
2. Open topic selection led to many content related challenges:
 - NPOV when users choose topics they care about
 - Notability issues

Of course, this is much better training for what “real” Wikipedia work consists of, it reflects a major challenge.

Student Reflections



Student's General Impressions

- Students felt empowered and inspired!
- Students enjoyed the practical skill and knowledge of Wikipedia
- Open topic selection allowed students to connect directly to their course work in ways that motivated learning
 - e.g., A Gambian student wrote a biography of the most notable Gambian traditional musician
 - A typically less motivated student was able to create a fantastic requested article on a American sports related topic.

Student quote (Northwestern)

“What I enjoyed most about the Wikipedia assignment was that as a group, **we contributed content to one of the most widely used sites around the world...**

While we in the class had an incentive to contribute to Wikipedia, **eventually we performed tasks that weren't necessarily part of our assignment;** partially because we wanted Wikipedia readers to utilize the work that we helped create...

As I mentioned before, **joining as a part of the class made the experience easier overall,** but had I done it on my own I would have had a very different experience.”

Things We Would Change

- Scaling up?
 - Ideally, yes. But only with experienced Wikipedians as instructors and TAs
 - “Become a Wikipedian” MOOC?
- Middle ground in topic selection?
 - e.g., select article from list of requested articles
- Sharing reflections on Wikipedia as a course requirement?
 - Yes!

A man with dark hair, seen in profile from the chest up, is speaking. He has his hands raised in a gesture, with fingers slightly spread. He is wearing a dark-colored shirt. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be a whiteboard with some faint writing. In the top left corner, there is a dark rectangular box with the word 'Thanks!' in white text. At the bottom, there is a larger dark rectangular box containing three lines of white text, each listing a name and an email address.

Thanks!

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