

# Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

## Incremental Assignments Enhance Academic Writing Skills

### Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

An art history instructor uses a scaffolding approach to help students create a final paper for the course. This process covers two lessons that teach college-level academic writing skills. Starting four weeks prior to the final paper's due date, the first lesson teaches students how to start a paper. Topics include brainstorming ideas, turning thoughts into a thesis, finding credible sources, and starting the research process. The second lesson begins the following week, giving students time to develop and research a thesis. Focusing on building central arguments, the second lesson teaches students how to develop an outline, use evidence to support analyses, and analyze rather than summarize. At the end of each lesson, while students are developing their papers, the instructor circulates throughout the classroom, monitoring student engagement and offering immediate feedback.

After learning how to write an academic paper, students bring their rough drafts to class for a peer-review session. The instructor assigns learners to small groups where they read and review their peers' papers in accordance with the provided rubric. The rubric includes the quality of the thesis, significance of examples to the thesis, clarity of the writing, and relevance to the prompt. After completing the review, students meet with their groups to discuss each paper's strengths and weaknesses while offering suggestions for improvement. After the peer review, students are more confident in and better prepared for writing collegiate-level academic papers.