

Collaborative Knowledge Creation and Student-Led Assignment Design: Wikipedia in the University Literature Class

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Abstract

This case study outlines how writing for Wikipedia can benefit students in an undergraduate literature class by having them undertake scholarly research, read unmediated texts, and write for a real-life audience. In keeping with the collaborative spirit of Wikipedia, the rubrics provided here were primarily created by the class as a whole. Estill demonstrates how this assignment encouraged students to question received notions of literary canon and to engage critically with Wikipedia itself. Perhaps paradoxically, writing for Wikipedia gave students ownership of their writing and research. Ultimately, this assignment facilitated students to become experts on understudied topics and helped them learn about how to do literary research.

“But my other professors told me not to use Wikipedia!” my class chorused, upon hearing that we were going to be writing Wikipedia entries. In an unscientific straw poll conducted through a show of hands, they all admitted to using the online encyclopedia despite their professors’ warnings.^[1] This article explores the benefits of and rationale for having students in a literature class write Wikipedia articles^[2]: in this case, students in a third-year Renaissance Drama class analyzed existing Wikipedia articles about early modern plays, devised the rubric for how their articles would be evaluated, adopted and researched a play, presented their work to the class, and had the option of publishing their writing on Wikipedia. Ultimately, being part of the assignment design process and writing for a public audience led students to undertake primary research, to question received ideas of literary canon, and to take ownership of their writing. This research-based writing project relies on the digital humanities principle of having student-scholars leverage digital publication in order to participate in social knowledge creation that benefits both the students and the larger (often academic) community.

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This is not the first article about using Wikipedia as a pedagogical tool. For years, advocates have touted Wikipedia’s usefulness in composition classrooms [Haley-Brown 2012] [Vetter 2014]. The “Wikipedia Education Program” that encourages “educators and students around the world to contribute to Wikipedia... in an academic setting” [Wikipedia Education Program 2016].^[3] The Wikipedia Education Program offers instructors guidelines on “How to Use Wikipedia as a teaching tool,” with sample assignments and case studies by professors who have successfully had students write, edit, expand, or translate Wikipedia articles. Professors who ask students to write for Wikipedia agree that having an actual public audience for their writing galvanizes students to research more thoroughly and to write better [Kill 2012]. Recent academic interventions have focused on the need for clearly theorized and inclusive (of race, gender, sexuality, language, and more) approaches to this digital platform [Edwards 2015] [Gruwell 2015] [Koh and Risam 2013]. Indeed, as Amanda I. Seligman argues, writing for encyclopedias is a scholarly and valuable pursuit [Seligman 2013]. Erin Glass points out that “the benefits of integrating NPS [Networked Participatory Scholarship] in higher and graduate education are clear”; yet too few undergraduate literature classes take this approach [Glass 2015]. This case study serves as an example and template of how writing for Wikipedia can be productively incorporated into an undergraduate literature course.

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With over three hundred classes that have used the Wikipedia Education program, and many others classes that were not officially affiliated with the program that also wrote articles, why do we need an article about Wikipedia in the

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university literature classroom? Because discipline-based Wikipedia editing initiatives have been very successful pedagogically. The American Sociological Association has had more than 3,300 students write and edit Wikipedia articles, with three goals: “(a) to develop communication skills for general audiences; (b) to discover the importance of logic, strength of argument, flow and clarity of writing, and the need to cite the appropriate literature; and (c) to experience the significance of accuracy in scientific writing” [Vandendorpe 2015]. As outlined below, by writing for Wikipedia, literature students can gain general and transferable research and communication skills, while also considering the nature of digital texts (particularly hypertext and ontologies) and literary texts (with a focus on canon and textual studies). Furthermore, the assignment outlined here takes the collaborative nature of Wikipedia’s platform one step further: students collaboratively created their own learning goals by choosing the rubric on which their Wikipedia articles would be graded.

Writing for Wikipedia in a literature classroom engages students to question the literary canon, to consider the role of editors and editions, and to undertake research using primary and secondary sources. As is often the case with writing Wikipedia articles, this research and writing helped students develop a sense of mastery of the material and provided exigence for real-world writing. The stakes of defining a literary canon and understanding editorial interventions are always high, but especially so when confronting Renaissance Drama, that literary period and genre dominated by Shakespeare.

Almost ten years ago, Michael Best surveyed information about Shakespeare studies on Wikipedia, and found that, predictably, Wikipedia “does a good job of dealing with the facts about [Shakespeare’s] life and works, and provides some good starting places for further studies in the main articles,” yet, “as links take the intrepid explorer into the byways of Early Modern minor writers the quality becomes more uneven” [Best 2006, 109, 114]. Best concludes by exhorting *Shakespeare Newsletter* readers to “take the plunge and wade into Wikipedia waters to update, improve, and extend the information Wikipedia is making available to our students, and to the world” [Best 2006, 114]. A decade later, Best’s call to action still holds true: “minor writers” and anonymous works are often entirely overlooked. As Matthew Steggle notes, “Wikipedia’s coverage of the Renaissance varies considerably from article to article and even within articles” [Steggle 2010]. In writing Wikipedia articles about these lesser-known plays, my students responded to a genuine need — they were not writing the traditional paper for an audience of one, the professor. The professor-as-audience is, furthermore, someone who presumably already knows the material, whereas those reading a Wikipedia article are actively seeking new knowledge. Writing for Wikipedia means students have to consider what readers might know before coming to that particular article; they learn to consider audience and rhetorical situation in concrete ways that improves their writing.

Before the digital age, scholars attempted to make early modern plays accessible by editing and publishing editions that would not, like the original playbooks, be safeguarded in rare book rooms. Digital projects followed this model, making works findable and searchable in even more ways. Early digital projects began with canonical texts: for instance, Best founded the *Internet Shakespeare Editions (ISE)* in 1996, to meet the demand for scholarly, edited, online versions of Shakespeare’s plays [Best 2012]. In 2015, Brett D. Hirsch launched *Digital Renaissance Editions (DRE)*, a “kindred project” that moves beyond Shakespeare’s plays to publish works by lesser-known or anonymous authors, including John Redford, Walter Mountfort, and Richard Edwards [Hirsch 2015] [Hirsch 2011].^[4] Wikipedia has traced a similar trajectory: the earliest and most detailed entries deal with canonical authors and plays. I contend that Wikipedia entries not only reflect the current literary canon but also help to shape it. As a first stop for undergraduates, graduate students, and even at times professors [Knight and Pryke 2012], Wikipedia offers at-a-glance information that can be used as a starting point: and without even a “stub” (a short placeholder article that needs to be expanded), overlooked works are absent from the literary landscape and commonly- and communally-held cultural narrative Wikipedia presents.^[5] Without conscious interventions such as this that seek to expand the canon, Wikipedia and other digital projects will only reinscribe our existing canon [Earhart 2012].^[6]

Many undergraduate literature students have never heard the term “canon.” They have not questioned why there are entire courses listed in the university catalogue about Shakespeare, yet none on Ben Jonson or Mary Sidney. Students instinctively want to begin any written assignment with “William Shakespeare is the greatest writer of English literature”

(or words to that effect), while instructors help students see the historical reasons the Bard has been positioned over other writers. Finding and researching understudied plays for Wikipedia helped students start to question the shape of the English literary canon and consider how anthologies and university course catalogues reify canon.^[7]

In the spirit of Wikipedia, students collaboratively created the rubric on which their assignment would be graded. I determined that a portion of their grade would be established by their presentations and their pre-research. The bulk of the pre-research was a short “Wikipedia Analysis,” where they analyzed existing articles about Renaissance plays and evaluated what made the articles most useful (see “Process Elements” in the rubric in Appendix A). I encouraged students to read the Wikipedia pages about the plays we were reading that semester. Some of the questions they considered were: “What should every Wikipedia page about a Renaissance play have? What headings? What information?” and “What kind of notes are most useful? What sources are cited?” When prompted to suggest which articles would make good or bad templates, the response was almost unanimous: lots of plays we read that semester had strong Wikipedia pages (such as *The Spanish Tragedy* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*), but *The Tragedy of Mariam*, the only play we read by a female author, had an inadequate page. This led students to discuss the treatment of women writers both historically and today.^[8] Reading the well-written write-ups, furthermore, gave students valuable background information that allowed them to engage with the canonical texts we studied in deeper ways. Much of the information on a Wikipedia page about a Renaissance play will appear in a modern introduction to that play; reading either an introduction or a Wikipedia page can be a passive experience. Analyzing Wikipedia pages, however, encouraged students to think about the value and reasoning behind the information presented. Furthermore, as we discussed together in class, with its hyperlinking, Wikipedia can facilitate deeper research than a print introduction: students can be easily drawn into related fields of inquiry as they click through to new pages on (literally and figuratively) linked topics.

After handing in their 300-500 word Wikipedia Analysis, students brainstormed in class what makes an effective Wikipedia page on a Renaissance play and what headings and content need to appear in the page. We grouped their suggestions into categories and finalized their rubric for the written component (see Appendix A). This assignment gave students ownership over their material in two ways: one, they were responsible for a play that nobody else would read; and two, they decided the desired outcomes for this assignment by collaboratively creating the rubric.^[9] Students determined that introductions to each play needed to contain some basic, key information (when available): the play’s title and alternative titles, genre, playwright(s), setting, initial performance information (date, company, theatre, patron, occasion), and initial publication information (date, publisher, location). This is the kind of information that students take for granted: they skim over it when reading a play’s introduction; they glance at it on Wikipedia. Finding this information when it is not made readily available, however, gave students the opportunity to undertake true scholarly research. Students also start to see the holes or slippages in the narratives we have of Renaissance theatre history: often, scholars cannot agree on where or when a play was first performed, let alone who wrote it.

Before they could undertake their research, however, students had to adopt a play. I gave students a list of eighty-nine plays that had no Wikipedia pages (or, in some cases, stubs).^[10] As their guidelines read, “There’s no Wikipedia page, and you can’t read all of these... so what should you do?” (see Appendix B). I suggested they pick two or three plays based on their title and do a little research on the play. I also advised choosing a play they could access in a way they would feel comfortable. In order to adopt a play, each had to locate an edition: some chose plays that can only be found on *Early English Books Online (EEBO)*, *Literature Online (LiOn)*, or in facsimile reprints of the first editions, whereas others opted to read plays that were recently recuperated by online publication (some edited, some not) in *Early Modern Literary Studies* or Risa Stephanie Bear’s *Renascence Editions*.^[11] *EEBO* and *LiOn* are both subscription resources that we were fortunate to have access to at my institution, but they are not required for completing this assignment: HathiTrust, Google Books, and the Internet Archive are online repositories that have open-access editions of early modern plays: sometimes, even, facsimiles of the original publication.^[12]

As the plays my students adopted were generally under-studied, my students had to learn both new ways of reading and new research methods. For many, this was the first time facing an unedited early modern text: for students used to anthologies of Shakespeare, even the non-standard orthography could come as a surprise. Some students learned that

act and scene breaks could be editorial. By comparing how plays have been historically treated (or ignored), my class began asking questions about scholarly editing, that is, about how the texts we read are mediated in ways we often take for granted.

Beyond reading the play itself in order to write a summary, students had to undertake primary research to write the introductory paragraph about their play. As we had established, a good Wikipedia entry always gave a play's initial publication, and, when known, details about the first performance, such as the company, theatre, and date. I devoted an entire 50-minute class and to how to research their plays. Although my students undertook research using primary and secondary materials, this assignment did not violate Wikipedia's "no original research" policy, which "all material in Wikipedia must be attributable to a reliable, published source": it did, however, challenge the standard research undergraduates are asked to undertake.^[13] I encouraged students to use both print tools such as the *Annals of English Drama* [Harbage et al. 1989] and the *Records of Early English Drama*^[14] and online resources like the *Database of Early English Playbooks* and the *English Short Title Catalogue*. In their assignments, students favored digital resources over print: none, for instance, cited *The London Stage* (a suggested resource about performance history).^[15] All, however, learned to navigate *The Database of Early English Playbooks*, and many turned to *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and Gale's *Dictionary of Literary Biography*.

As a class, we looked at *EEBO* to find what the physical play-texts looked like. Upon finding that we had access to three digital facsimiles of Samuel Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* in quarto, my student who adopted this play exclaimed, "I'm going to compare all three!" The last portion of the research methods class was devoted to finding secondary sources, an important skill that would also serve them in good stead for their other university classes. Although scholars talk about digital natives,^[16] in this class period I was reminded that students do not actually have an innate understanding of how to search for things effectively. Searching, however, is not endemic to online sources, and students similarly needed guidance with how to search using print sources. Showing students how to find the information they seek and discern its value (rather than telling them the answers) empowers them to come up with even more exciting research questions. Furthermore, these research skills are foundational to writing a Wikipedia article.

Equipped with the ability to use new research tools, students had two main parts of the assignment to complete: write the Wikipedia page, and present about their play in class. We all know the old adage that you learn something best by teaching. In this context, student presenters benefited from having an in-person audience to speak to as well as their online audience. As audience members, students learned about a variety of plays and genres that we would not have had time to all read together, including domestic tragedy, farce, roman history, and pastoral. Taken together, these presentations offered an overview of English Renaissance drama that no single anthology could provide. Indeed, students in this class gained a more realistic view of what was actually available to audiences in Shakespeare's day, as well as the key genres that preceded and followed.

For their presentations, I encouraged students not to give a plot synopsis. Some, however, could not resist the temptation, as they had put in quite an effort to learn all of the details of, in some cases, very intricate plots. Others, however, managed to keep to the main points we wanted to hear: the themes in the play, why this play is interesting (or not), and why this play has been neglected so far.^[17] For instance, one student who discussed Ben Jonson's *The Irish Masque at Court*, taught the class about masques, those performances designed especially for the King or Queen; she also explained Ireland's political turmoil in the early modern period, and, most importantly for this text, examined the English audience's attitudes towards the Irish and the anticipated reactions to Jonson's harsh portrayal of uneducated, ill-mannered, and ridiculous-accented Irish. Exploring non-canonical plays led to student-driven discussions that reflected on an array of primary sources and that truly supported classroom dialogue and critical thinking.

During these presentations, I discovered that my students had taken the "adopt" a play metaphor seriously. Some students felt protective of their plays and wanted to justify their play as worth studying. One student wrote about *Cupid's Whirligig*, a city comedy by Edward Sharpham that nobody reads.^[18] She expressed her shock that *Cupid's Whirligig* was not regularly taught or anthologized. This possessiveness, born of truly caring about the texts they read, was a recurring theme in the presentations. Upper-level English majors were, some for the first time, grappling with ideas of

canonicity because they had identified gaps in both in the curriculum and what seems like Wikipedia's universal content.

Reading non-canonical works, presenting "their" adopted play to the class, and writing for Wikipedia gave students an incentive to excel: specifically, writing for Wikipedia increased the exigency of their work, as they were addressing an actual lacuna. As Wikipedia advertises, writing in the classroom can be "the end of throwaway assignments and the beginning of *real-world impact* for student editors" (emphasis in the original). These students created Wikipedia articles that, in some cases, actually contributed to a broader knowledge community.

I qualified my previous assertion about student contributions because I did not require that students publish their writing on Wikipedia. Asking students to share their work, even pseudonymously, is an ethical quandary. Posting on Wikipedia is different from, for instance, our course website: on a course website, I can protect all of the material by requiring a password and, even if the site were open-access, it would not get much traffic. As Wikipedia acknowledges, it is one of the most popular sites on the internet. Ultimately, I required students to write a Wikipedia-style article, but I did not require them to post it to the online encyclopedia for credit.^[19] Some students creatively formatted their word document submissions, such as this entry on *The Costlie Whore* — a title I would not suggest Googling, as there is still no Wikipedia article on this anonymous play from 1632 (see Figure 1). Even though posting to Wikipedia was optional, about a third of my students gave it a try. Those students, on their own, created a Wikipedia username and learned enough about the wiki markup to upload their articles.^[20] See Figure 2 and Figure 3 for images of the opening of Wikipedia articles my students wrote about *Johan Johan the Husband* and *The Dumb Knight*.



Figure 1. A Wikipedia article submitted as a word document



Figure 2. The opening part of the Wikipedia page on *Johan Johan The Husband* (February 2017)

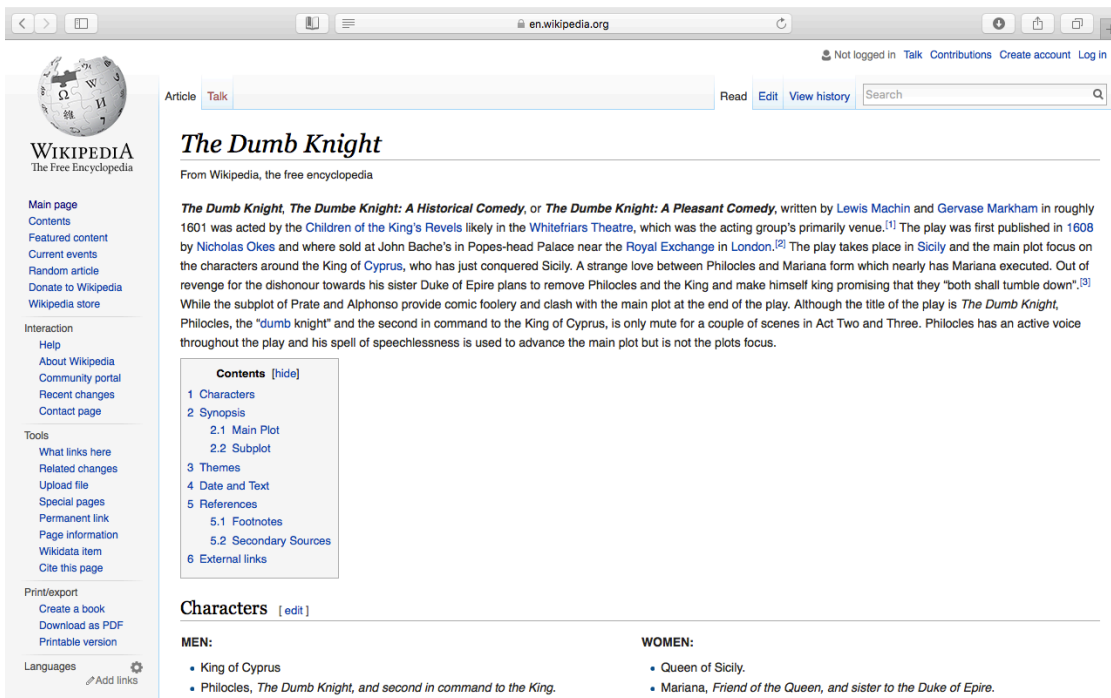


Figure 3. The opening part of the Wikipedia page on *The Dumb Knight* (February 2017).

Initially, some of the write-ups my students created and uploaded to Wikipedia were marked as “orphans,” that is to say, no other pages linked to them. Even though students were not required to upload their work to Wikipedia, we talked about how they should categorize their plays and where their articles should both link to and be linked from. They had to indicate what links they would include even if they handed in their paper in a word document. While most students were able to include appropriate links, many did not understand the “categories” of articles on Wikipedia, nor what the benefit of linking *to* your page versus *from* the page might be. Uploading new pages to Wikipedia (and writing as if your work were to be uploaded) leads students to consider how to classify information. Exploring ontologies and taxonomies —

those categories that we apply (“1631 plays”) or sometimes choose not to apply (“plays published in quarto”) when creating a Wikipedia page — helps students approach disciplinary knowledge systems. Wikipedia’s categories makes assumptions about how users will navigate the pages and what might interest them; Wikipedia’s explicit organization can prompt students to interrogate implicit ontologies in literary studies.

Adding new Wikipedia pages about early modern plays includes other people beyond the classroom in the learning experience and can lead students to continue to learn beyond the short time they are in class. As the revision history of a page created by a student on Thomas Heywood's *The Fayre Mayde of the Exchange* demonstrates, a dozen Wikipedians read and edited the page (see Figure 5): most of the post-assignment edits involved normalizing the spelling to American, and, yes, sometimes adding or changing the categories. Beyond those Wikipedians who actively edited the text, there are the users who simply read this page and made no changes, which we cannot track. Perhaps most impressively, the most recent update to the page (15 November 2014, Renaissancefan) is from the same person who created it in 2012: no longer a student, this person is still engaging with the texts and ideas from their class. Although it might seem counterintuitive, writing for Wikipedia — that is, putting your work on the internet for all to use and change — can allow students to feel intellectual ownership. Renaissancefan is not just a consumer of knowledge shared by a professor, but an expert contributing to broader discussions.

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Figure 4. The opening part of the Wikipedia page on *The Fayre Mayde of the Exchange* (February 2017).

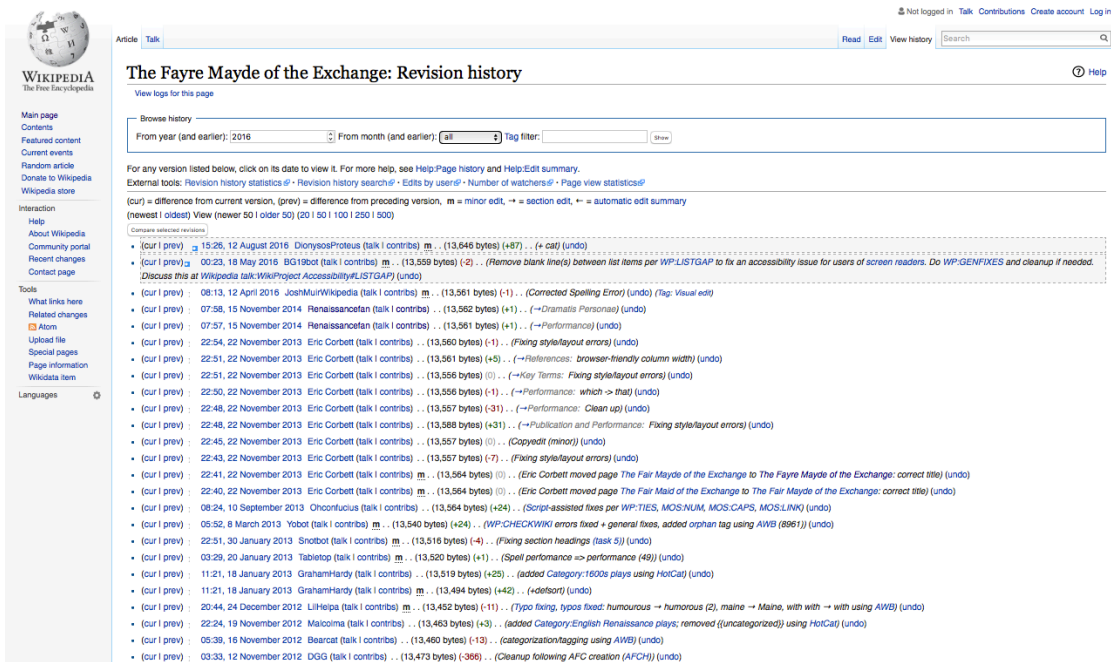


Figure 5. The complete revision history of the Wikipedia page on *The Fayre Mayde of the Exchange* (November 2015).

With her Wikipedia page on *The Fayre Maid of the Exchange*, Renaissancefan is participating in collaborative authorship. Steggle suggests that we can perhaps better understand models of early modern writing by engaging with Wikipedia:

It is one thing to know that, in principle, Renaissance drama is at home with co-authored, repatched plays; with plays that plagiarize pieces of earlier plays; and with plays that change radically from version to version. But to realize that we happily use Wikipedia articles whose status is comparable helps us to see how well that might work in practice. [Steggle 2010]

We might tell students about the highly collaborative practice of writing early plays for a public audience; this assignment helps students engage with the largest collaborative writing project ever undertaken. Of course, all collaborative modes of writing are not the same: an early modern playwright revising an older work is not the same as a student contributing to Wikipedia. That said, writing for Wikipedia can help students think of authorship models beyond the often fallacious idea of the single-author-genius.

Admittedly, writing about Renaissance plays on Wikipedia is a finite project. At some point in the future, all the plays listed in the *Database of Early English Playbooks* could have complete entries. If and when that halcyon day comes, class projects in this field can move to new related topics that are not yet covered adequately, such as royal progresses and processions, acting companies and actors, and even manuscript sources for early modern drama. The future of digital pedagogy projects that promote editing Wikipedia is, at its heart, one that both defines and reflects future avenues for scholarship.

This article has demonstrated the concrete benefits of having students write pages for Wikipedia, including self-motivated learning, improved communication skills, writing for a real-life audience, and undertaking scholarly research. Some of the benefits to writing articles discussed here are field specific, such as reading unedited plays, considering notions of literary canon, and exploring how and what we study as literary scholars. Beyond the values that Wikipedia itself touts and those discipline-specific skills that students gained, this assignment fosters critical thinking about Wikipedia itself: what's in, what's out, and what these bounds suggest about our cultural values. Learning about Wikipedia prompts students to question how other, sometimes seemingly monolithic, sites are conceptualized and created, as manifested in our class discussions. Analyzing Wikipedia also promotes what might be called digital civic engagement: this kind of action can help make digital spaces more inclusive and representative, although this is

currently an uphill battle.

Even after writing their own Wikipedia pages, my class agreed that for final papers, Wikipedia was best used in the pre-research phase, and not cited in the bibliography. As I overheard one of my students comment to a classmate on the way out of class, “this is more work than a research paper.” Yes, doing scholarly research, reading unmediated texts, and writing for a real-life audience is work: it is the work we undertake as literary scholars. As the students in my Renaissance Drama proved, students are eager to learn to undertake real literary scholarship when we offer them the chance to gain and share their expertise by writing for Wikipedia.

Appendix A: Rubric

This appendix presents the Rubric used. I assigned the process elements and presentation elements values. (CourseRoster was about joining our class wiki and learning to participate in discussion.) My students developed the “WikiProject Written Component” section of the rubric as well as the explanatory information.

Rubric (see below for clarification)

Process Elements (Total: 15%)

- CourseRoster: 3%
- Adopt-a-Play: 2%
- WikipediaAnalysis: 10%

Presentation Elements (Total: 45%)

- Handout: 15%
- Presentation: 15%
- Discussion Questions and Leadership: 10%
- Participation 5%

WikiProject Written Component (Total: 40%)

- Intro Blurb: 5%
- Synopsis (including Character List): 12%
- Themes/Motifs: 5%
- Other: 8%
- References: 5%
- Linking: 2.5%
- Organization: 2.5%

The Handout is the handout you give on the day of presentations. Please make enough for the whole class (21 including the instructor). This handout should include key points about the play, including a brief (one paragraph) summary. Other key points include authorship, performance venue, and when the play was written, performed, and published. Elements from your handout can be taken from your WikiProject. You can also include other useful information like character charts, timelines, plot graphs, etc.

Please include at least one image on the handout: at minimum, please include an image of the play's title page, which you can get from Early English Books Online (EEBO, available through the UVic library page).

Remember to add a bibliography of the play (are there multiple editions? Is there an edition that is most useful?) as well as secondary sources (including online) that were most useful to your presentation.

The handout should include a glossary of unfamiliar terms both relating to and used in the play.

If you would like, you can also include some of your more salient discussion questions.

You can choose to do an "online handout" by creating a wiki page/prezi/powerpoint for your presentation and including all of the above. You can also choose a "mixed handout" that presents some material online and some material on paper. If you choose to include a digital component, you will need to send the link to me, which I will circulate to the whole class.

Presentation

Length: 4-5 minutes + 3-4 minutes of discussion. Total Length = 7-10 minutes.

Key points to mention:

1. what genre is your play?
2. when was it written, performed, and published? (does it connect with any interesting historical moments?)
3. where was it performed?
4. who wrote it?
5. what are the themes of the play?
6. why is this play interesting or important? (conversely, why not?)
7. why has this play been neglected so far?
8. what information is presented and what information is omitted on the title page?

Possibly relevant points to consider:

- was it performed for a particular occasion?
- was it dedicated to a particular patron?
- does your play connect to any particular literary movements?
- is there anything special about the way your play was published? (Is there, for instance, a woodcut on the title page?)

The presentation grade will account for your "stage" presence (the clarity of your discussion, the way you present yourself) as well as the content of the presentation. Part of your presentation grade will also include the "interest" factor: is your presentation interesting?

If you would like to show youtube videos in class, you can set up a webpage on the wiki with the videos (or do whatever you'd like).

Part of your presentation grade will reflect the research, effort, and preparation that you undertook. The content of your presentation should introduce the class to a new play and hit the salient points above.

Discussion Questions and Leadership

You will hand in a page with your discussion questions at the end of your presentation. You will need to come up with at least 3 questions about your play, author, period, etc. You might consider giving a short piece of text (14 lines or less--even a couplet would be strong) and asking a question about a particular textual moment.

Class discussions, however, often go to places you don't expect so part of your grade will be based on how well you navigate hard-to-charter waters.

Remember to ask the group if we have questions for you: part of your grade depends on your answers to our questions.

Participation

Your participation grade depends on your participation during other people's presentations.

- Do you listen carefully?
- Do you have interesting questions to ask them at the end of their presentations?
- Do you thoughtfully answer the discussion questions the presenter asks?

Intro Blurb

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Includes (if appropriate and if known; remember to organize your information)

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- a one-to-two sentence synopsis
- title and alternate titles
- dates (performance/publication if known; who published)
- setting of play (period/place)
- a mention of the play's genre
- author if known
- patron/occasion for performance
- company & theatre of initial performance

Synopsis (including Character List)

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- Use subheadings

Themes/Motifs

52

This seems pretty evident

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Other

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This might include (but is not limited to):

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- Important Adaptations/Films/Performances
- A broader discussion of the play's genre
- Sources/Influences
- Intertexts/Allusions

References

56

These should follow Wikipedia's house style (follow other articles as a template).

57

This should include both the primary source (editions of the play), bibliographic sources (like the *Annals* or Greg's *Bibliography* or the *Database of Early English Playbooks*), as well as any secondary sources (that is, literary criticism)

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Linking (Please note, this has been updated)

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- This includes the links you would want to have to other articles. What connections/comparisons are you drawing?
- This also includes how you suggest bookmarking your own page and the categories you would like to include on your page.
- Please also include a list of places you would add links to your page. (This can be in a note to me at the end of your essay)
- Remember: you might want to include target links to pages on Wikipedia that do not exist. This is tantamount to suggesting a page be created. (You can indicate this to me in a note in your word document or simply create the links, which will appear red, on your Wikipedia page.)

Organization

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What sections you choose to include, the order you put the sections, and the general presentation of your information.

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Appendix B: Adopting a Play

Below are the instructions my students used to find a play.

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How to Choose a Play

63

There's no Wikipedia page, and you can't read all of these....so what should you do?

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1. See if any titles interest you.
2. Google them and make a shortlist of 4-8 plays that interest you.
3. See if there's a modern edition of the play. This will make your life easier.
4. Narrow your choice to just one and claim it for your own! (See below on claiming your play).

You can choose any of the plays below. You can also propose to write about a play that isn't on this list. If you choose to write about a play that is not on this list, please send me an email with the title, date, and author (if known) of the play you'd like to adopt. Then include a short explanation of why the wikipedia article needs expanding or why this play should be considered.

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How to find a Modern Edition

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- Check SEEDIE, but be careful, because this site is in beta, so is not complete (doesn't have a lot of, say, anonymous plays, or even some by canonical authors).
- Do a google book search.
- Search the internet archive for edited versions.
- Remember: some of these plays will be in the collected works. Some key editions include The Oxford Middleton; G. B. Evans's collection of works by William Cartwright, etc.
- An edition from the 19th century might be a good one, so long as it has notes. (Grosart, for instance, has a good edition of the Samuel Daniel plays).
- There might be an edition online (especially at EMLS, Renaissance Editions, Early Modern Literary Studies).
- Consider what will help you most. Do you need modernized spelling? Do you want a print play to read rather than an online one? Do you feel comfortable reading a play without notes?
- And, sadly...there might not be a modern edition of some of the plays below. If you're up for it, you can get the play from EEBO and LiOn (via the library) and use that copy.

Getting Your Play

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- First, try the library. If we don't have it, use inter-library loan.
- If you want to buy a copy, make sure that you're not buying an OCR'd version of the play; be sure you're buying an edited version. (If you want an OCR'd play, you can get that for free from Literature Online via the library.)
- Consider: do you need a physical copy? Can you work with Literature Online and Early English Books Online?
- You will be able to find a facsimile of your play (likely the first edition, which could be difficult to read) via EEBO.

Plays that need reading and writing about! (in no particular order)

68

- John Heywood - *The Four PP*
- John Heywood - *Johan Johan The Husband*
- John Marston - *Antonio and Mellida*
- Ben Jonson - *The Irish Masque at Court*
- Ben Jonson - *The Newcastle Entertainment (The Entertainment at Blackfriars)*
- Thomas Goffe - *The Raging Turk, or Bajazet the Second*
- Thomas Goffe - *The Courageous Turk*
- Thomas Killigrew - *The Pilgrim*
- Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton - *Patient Grissel*

- William Davenant - *The Just Italian*
- William Davenant - *The Cruel Brother*
- William Davenant - *News from Plymouth*
- John Denham - *The Sophy*
- John Suckling - *Brennoralt*
- Richard Edwards - *Damon and Pythias*
- Thomas Middleton - *The Masque of Heroes*
- Thomas Middleton - *The Triumphs of Love and Antiquity*
- Anon - *The Tragedy of Nero (not Chapman's play)*
- George Wilkins - *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage*
- Thomas Drue (Drewe) - *The Duchess of Suffolk*
- Robert Greene - *Selimus, Emperor of the Turks*
- Robert Greene - *Alphonsus*
- John Day - *Law Tricks*
- John Day - *The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green*
- John Day - *Humour out of Breath*
- Samuel Daniel - *Philotas*
- Samuel Daniel - *Cleopatra*
- Thomas Dekker - *The Whore of Babylon*
- Thomas Dekker - *If This Be Not a Good Play, The Devil is in it*
- Anon - *Look About You*
- Thomas Dekker and John Ford - *The Bristow Merchant*
- Collaborative - *The Mountebanks Masque*
- Mary Sidney - *The Tragedie of Antonie*
- Nathaniel Richards - *The Tragedy of Messalina, the Roman Empress*
- Anon - *A Warning for Fair Women*
- Anon - *Wiley Beguiled*
- Anon - *The Wit of a Woman*
- Anon - *Captain Thomas Stukeley*
- Jasper Mayne - *The City Match*
- Jasper Mayne - *The Amorous War*
- William Peaps - *Love in Its Ecstasy*
- William Cavendish - *The Variety*
- William Davenant - *Love and Honour*
- Francis Quarles - *The Virgin Widow*
- Anon - *The Valiant Scot*
- William Cartwright - *The Royal Slave*
- William Cartwright - *The Lady Errant*
- William Cartwright - *The Siege, or Love's Convert*
- William Cartwright - *The Ordinary*
- Henry Porter - *The Two Angry Women of Abington*
- Thomas Kyd (?) - *Soliman and Perseda*
- George Peele - *The Arraignment of Paris*
- George Peele - *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe*
- Edward Sharpham - *The Fleir*
- Edward Sharpham - *Cupid's Whirligig*
- Anon (Heywood?) - *Fair Maid of the Exchange*
- Lording Barry - *Ram Alley*
- Thomas Tomkis - *Work for Cutlers*
- Fulke Greville - *Mustapha*

- Fulke Greville - *Alaham*
- Robert Armin - *The Italian Tailor and his Boy*
- Anon - *Every Woman in her Humour*
- Gervase Markham and Lewis Machin - *The Dumb Knight*
- Gervase Markham and William Sampson - *Herod and Antipater*
- Thomas May - *The Heir*
- Thomas May - *Julia Agrippina*
- Thomas May - *Cleopatra*
- John Mason - *The Turk*
- Nathan Field - *A Woman is a Weathercock*
- Nathan Field - *Amends for Ladies*
- Anon - *Two Wise Men and the Rest all Fools*
- Anon - *Heteroclitonomalonomia*
- Robert Taylor - *The Hog Hath Lost His Pearl*
- Phineas Fletcher - *Sicelides*
- Peter Hausted - *The Rival Friends*
- Thomas Randolph - *The Jealous Lovers*
- Richard Zouch - *The Sophister*
- Anon - *The Costly Whore*
- Thomas Heywood - *A Maidenhead Well Lost*
- Thomas Heywood - *The Tragedy of the Rape of Lucrece*
- Thomas Heywood - *A Challenge For Beauty*
- Thomas Heywood - *The Wise-Woman of Hogsdon*
- Thomas Nabbes - *Tottenham Court*
- Thomas Nabbes - *Covent Garden*
- Thomas Nabbes - *The Bride*
- John Tatham - *Love Crowns the End*
- John Tatham - *The Distracted State*
- John Tatham - *The Scots Figgaries, or a Knot of Knaves*
- John Tatham - *The Rump*

“Maybe” Plays

69

These plays have short Wikipedia articles. If you want to write about one of these, send me a short email that explains why the Wikipedia article is lacking and how you plan to improve it. Some of these (especially the Jonson plays) have a lot of secondary criticism and so would be very challenging choices.

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- Thomas Goffe - *The Tragedy of Orestes*
- John Marston - *Jack Drum's Entertainment*
- Jonson - *Sejanus*
- Jonson - *Catiline*
- Marston - *The Dutch Courtesan*
- Marston - *Sophonisba (The Wonder of Women)*
- Marston - *Histriomastix*
- Marston - *What you Will*

Notes

[1] I would like to thank Diane Jakacki, Sarah Potvin, Kailin Wright, Emily Murphy, and Shannon Smith for their insightful advice that helped make this a better paper. In 2010, Alison J. Head and Michael B. Eisenberg demonstrated that 52% of university students used Wikipedia “always” or “frequently” when undertaking research related to their courses. This figure rises to 75% when we include students who “occasionally” use Wikipedia [Head and Eisenberg 2010].

[2] This paper builds on the extensive scholarship by scholars on the value of writing for Wikipedia in the composition class. See especially [Cummings 2009].

[3] As their site explains, the WEP is “run by Wikimedia chapters, affiliate organizations, and dedicated volunteers worldwide” [Wikipedia Education Program 2016].

[4] As Steggle has argued, it is not just editions, but also bibliographical data that lead to canon development [Steggle 2008]. Some of the strongest digital resources for researching Renaissance drama have begun to challenge notions of canonicity by offering inclusive (if bounded) content, such as the *Database of Early English Playbooks (DEEP)* and the forthcoming *Compendium of Renaissance Drama (CORD)* [Lesser and Farmer 2007][Corrigan 2015].

[5] Although Wikipedia might lack write-ups about Renaissance playwrights and their works, these are often listed (without links) in the “List of Years in Literature” page, which links to specific pages such as “1607 in literature.” See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_years_in_literature.

[6] For more on the (often lost) potential of digital projects to expand canon, see [Mandell and Gamer 1998] [Ezell 2010].

[7] On the value of teaching canonicity, see [Bacon 1993], [Graff 1990], and [Hentschell 2002]. On the canon of early modern drama in particular, see [Bevington 2012] and [Lopez 2014].

[8] Positioning women’s writing in relation to the changing early modern literary canon is an ongoing scholarly concern. Consider collections such as [Woods and Hannay 2000] and [Ostovich and Sauer 2004].

[9] Having students behave as experts in both the genre of writing and the topic they wrote on draws on Dorothy Heathcote’s drama in education technique, “Mantle of the Expert.” Although students are not experts when they embark on this assignment, in a university classroom, they can truly become experts (whereas Heathcote anticipated an audience of younger students). See [O’Neill 2015].

[10] For my list of plays and instructions on how to choose a play, see Appendix B. I generated this list using *DEEP*. As of this writing, some of these plays now have write-ups (including those by my students).

[11] As of this writing, both *Renascence Editions* and *Early Modern Literary Studies* sites have not been maintained in years, and so have broken links that the students needed to navigate in order to find their plays, or, in some cases, turn to another resource.

[12] HathiTrust has some of its material freely available, but some books are accessible only by users at subscribing institutions.

[13] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:No_original_research and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability>.

[14] *Records of Early English Drama* is a series published by the university of Toronto. Many of their volumes are available as pdfs from the Internet Archive: [http://archive.org/search.php?query=records of early english drama AND collection%3A+toronto](http://archive.org/search.php?query=records+of+early+english+drama+AND+collection%3A+toronto).

[15] At the time this course was taught, *The London Stage* had not yet been digitized. It is now available via HathiTrust: <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000200105> [Van Lennep et al. 1965-68].

[16] For a discussion of the problematic understanding of “digital natives” that proposes a more nuanced view of undergraduate knowledge and preparation, see Erika E. Smith’s *The Digital Native Debate in Higher Education* [Smith 2012].

[17] Each presentation was short, only 4-5 minutes, but it was followed by 3-4 minutes of discussion. The presenters prepared three questions for discussion and also solicited questions from the class. When I teach this assignment again, I will give a sample presentation on a play that we have not read together in order to offer students some models for how to initiate a discussion about a work that their audience has not read. Some of the best techniques students used include linking their play to plays we read as a class, aligning the play to historical events, or giving a short passage or paratext (such as the title page) to discuss.

[18] As I was writing this article, I could not remember who wrote this obscure play, so I did what everyone does: I googled it. The Wikipedia page my student wrote was the first result.

[19] Personally, I have had students request to have their written assignments removed from publicly facing websites when they went on the job market; allowing students the choice to publish their work (rather than requiring it) is respectful of their privacy and ability to make decisions. HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory) suggests that students be encouraged to write under a pseudonym and not be required to publish their work online because of legal ramifications, including America’s FERPA: Family Education

Rights and Privacy Act [HASTAC 2015]. Erin Glass acknowledges that “privacy, control, and ownership” are not yet “adequately addressed” in relation to online student writing [Glass 2015]. Neither Glass nor this HASTAC post focuses on Wikipedia, which allows students to publish pseudonymously. This assignment does, however, participate in what Glass terms “Networked Participatory Scholarship” by being “open, peer centric, user-friendly (comparatively), and enabl[ing] users to engage with exponentially larger networks” [Glass 2015].

[20] Of those who chose to post to Wikipedia, not a single student emailed me for technical help. On the course website, I provided Wikipedia’s help documents for writing articles and creating a user account. The students who wanted to learn the Wikimedia markup system had not used it before, but were self-selecting and self-taught.

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