

NSCI 208H: Science of the Day

Dr. Robert A. Spalletta
Physics & Electrical Engineering Dept

Katie S. Duke
Consulting Librarian

Key to any course in which civic engagement plays an important role is a strong working knowledge of Information Literacy. This is particularly true in a course such as NSCI 208H, where students must, on a weekly basis, identify current events issues in science and technology, investigate them, formulate a position on some aspect of that issue, and then take a meaningful action on it to further their position. Specifically, students must be able to quickly find information on an issue, assess the quality of that information, and finally, communicate that information in a way that reflects the high standards of academic integrity the University of Scranton demands.

To meet these needs, a series of classes were developed to present students with the tools they needed to utilize the information resources available through our Library. Students were taken through case studies, where issues were identified, and then information (both detailed background and current status) was obtained. This information was then assessed as to its quality and reliability. Students were given tools and procedures to make this assessment on all of the data they obtained.

Finally, students were presented with a series of academic integrity questions and situations which helped them recognize and avoid questionable practices when using this information in their own work. At that point, the tools available at the library to assess academic integrity violations were presented to the students, so they could assess their own work and their understanding of the code of academic integrity as implemented at the University of Scranton.

The outcome of this series of classes was extremely positive. A comparison of student work, before and after the series of classes, demonstrated a marked improvement in the accuracy, depth and breadth of the information students used in developing their positions and actions. Students also found the tools and discussions regarding academic integrity to be extremely useful in helping them organize their research and writing techniques so as to fit within the University's policies.