

Teaching Demonstration, Lesson Plan – Synthesis

Rollins College | English 140 – Writing About Science & Technology

Overview

This teaching demonstration will focus on the topic of academic synthesis: the ability to identify and reproduce (in writing) patterns and differences across multiple textual sources. While synthesis is especially useful (and necessary) in research contexts, it is a method of organizing, understanding and presenting information across different contexts beyond the academic. Accordingly, this lesson captures students' attention by beginning with a popular metaphor for synthesis, that of music sampling. Such a metaphor is a useful springboard for definitional discussion of synthesis, how it differs from analysis, and how it can be used for exploratory or argumentative purposes in academic writing. With this basic understanding of the concept, students examine an example synthesis in the form of a literature review, using an analytical tool known as a "synthesis matrix" to identify patterns and differences in the research discussed in this review. The synthesis matrix is then discussed as a tool students can use when working on their own synthesis projects. This lesson plan uses multiple instructional techniques, interactive discussion, and collaborative, group work to create inclusive and accessible opportunities for learning.

Materials

Student handouts include example literature review and "synthesis matrix" hand-out.
Google Slides Presentation in Multiple Media.

Lesson Process

Metaphors for Synthesis: Music Sampling

What Is Synthesis?

Synthesis vs. Analysis

Academic Synthesis Example, "Lit. Review"

Synthesis Matrix – A tool for creating and analyzing academic synthesis

Group Activity

Applying the Lesson to Project 2

Learning Outcomes

Students participating in this lesson should:

Gain an understanding of the purpose and definition of synthesis and be able to apply it to academic and popular contexts

Understand the function of a "synthesis matrix" as useful for creating and analyzing academic synthesis

Gain practice synthesizing and analyzing an academic text

Relate their new knowledge of synthesis to the project 2 essay

Learning Accommodations

Handouts provided

Oral participation is voluntary, rather than forced. Students who cannot or do not feel comfortable participating orally can take notes and listen

Visuals and audio/visual approaches to presenting the material provided in the presentation