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# Wikis and Wikipedia as a Teaching Tool: Five Years Later

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## About the author

Piotr Konieczny is a PhD student at the Department of Sociology, University of Pittsburgh. He is interested in the sociology of the Internet, in particular in topics such as wikis - their impact on individuals and organizations; decision making processes and organizational structure of Wikipedia; patterns of behavior among its contributors; relation between wikis and social movements; and teaching with new media.

## Abstract

Just a few years ago Wikipedia was seen as a barbarian invading the ivory tower. Now, an increasing number of academics recognize that it can be used as an effective teaching tool.

The following paper is divided into two parts. It begins with a discussion of the advantages of using Wikipedia as a teaching tool, an activity that goes beyond a simple addition to the teaching repertoire, and allows contributing to our society through service learning and participation in an online

community of practice. Contributing to Wikipedia benefits the students, the instructors and the wider community.

The second part focuses on practice of teaching with Wikipedia. Building on my five years of experience in teaching with wikis and Wikipedia and holding workshops on the subject, I will discuss the most efficient ways to incorporate Wikipedia into one's teaching curriculum, highlight common problems and their solutions, and describe a number of new tools enhancing the “teaching with Wikipedia” experience.

The following paper is divided into two parts. It begins with a discussion of the advantages of using Wikipedia as a teaching tool, an activity that goes beyond a simple addition to the teaching repertoire, and allows contributing to our society through service learning and participation in an online community of practice. The second part that follows gets into the gritty details of how one can actually do so. Building on my five years of experience in teaching with wikis and Wikipedia and holding workshops on the subject, I will discuss the most efficient ways to incorporate Wikipedia into one's teaching curriculum, highlight common problems and their solutions, and describe the plethora of new tools enhancing the “teaching with Wikipedia” experience.

### Background

Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia is a non-profit, open content encyclopedia, edited collaboratively by volunteers. It employs the wiki technology, which allows anybody to edit webpages directly through the browser without the need to install any additional software. It is also an increasingly popular platform for educators, who assign their students to contribute to various areas of the project.

In 2007 when I published my first paper on teaching with wikis and Wikipedia (Konieczny 2007), I was just beginning my research into the subject, inspired by my first teaching experiences. Back then, among scholars and educators, Wikipedia was still a stranger, an enemy even, intruding into the ivory tower, and news stories were rife with reports of it being banned from schools and campuses (Jaschik 2007). Several years down the road, the tide has changed; instead of stories about students told not to use Wikipedia, we see reports on how professors are using it as a teaching tool (Pollard 2008; Wilson

2008, Cummings and Barton 2008, Cummings 2009a, Chapman 2010, Wright 2012). A number of professional publications, from journals to entire books, have transformed the idea of Wikipedia as a teaching tool from a preposterous idea to a respected innovation (Callis et al. 2009, Cummings 2009b, Corbyn 2011, Burnsed 2011, Reilly 2011). It is not uncommon to see panels, workshops, and even entire tracks dedicated to the educational use of wikis in general and Wikipedia in particular; they can be found not only at conferences such as Wikimania and WikiSym, but also at the major, long established conferences (Konieczny 2011). Most visibly, since late 2010, professional academic organizations have actively begun promoting the teaching with Wikipedia approach, beginning with the American Psychological Society and the American Sociological Association. (Banaji 2010, Wright 2011, 2012).

As Wikipedia is steadily ranked among the Internet's Top 10 most popular websites, there is a growing recognition that students are and will be using Wikipedia to acquire knowledge (Head and Eisenberg 2010, Fiore 2011, Menchen-Trevino and Hargittai 2011, Knight and Pryke 2012); that barring them from doing so is impossible to enforce and is in fact even counter productive (Lim 2009, Knight and Pryke 2012), and that Wikipedia itself is no less reliable and credible than other encyclopedias (Giles 2005, Chesney 2006, Menchen-Trevino and Hargittai 2011).

However, while a small proportion of students do have an in-depth knowledge of Wikipedia, having already contributed to the website, the vast majority do not even realize that the site can be edited by anybody (Menchen-Trevino and Hargittai 2011). Despite having been often advised by instructors not to rely on the site as a single source for their research assignments, most students do use it to a significant extent; or worse, will use obsolete, ad-ridden clones (forks) of it (Head and Eisenberg 2010, Menchen-Trevino and Hargittai 2011). Fortunately, students do show a growing awareness that

Wikipedia is not totally reliable, think about credibility of their sources, and use it as a starting point for more advanced research (Head and Eisenberg 2010, Sok and Simon 2011).

### Why teach with Wikipedia?

There is a growing recognition that it is the task for educators to teach the students how to responsibly engage with Wikipedia. As Lim (2009) notes: “educators and librarians need to provide better guidelines for using Wikipedia, rather than prohibiting Wikipedia use altogether”. He is echoed by Knight and Pryke (2012): “a significant proportion of what we would see as enlightened academics [...] realise that it is pointless to try to hold back the online tide of Wikipedia. Instead, they try to give guidance in the way that students consult it: for clarification, references, comparison and definitions.”

The first stage in adopting Wikipedia for one's course is the realization that it can be used as an educational tool, with benefits for the students, the educator and the larger community. In contrast to traditional writing assignments working with Wikipedia has several advantages for the students:

- students are held accountable to a global audience for what they are doing, at the same time realizing that their work is not being wasted, but is useful to the entire world, a fact they appreciate and that increases their enjoyment of the course. Increased student motivation in assignments that they see have a visible impact on the real world has been noted before (Jones 1998), and is confirmed both by my experiences and other reports on the use of Wikipedia in the classroom (McNeil 2008, Brundage 2008, Hill 2011, Chen and Reber 2011, Reilly 2011). Reilly (2011) makes a very pertinent observation, noting that while students could contribute to smaller, classroom-only wikis, editing Wikipedia provides a much less artificial and much more rewarding option. This approach also fits within the paradigm of the service learning – a

subtype of structured community work that has academic attainment as primary goal (Weiger 1998, Hollis 2002, Forte and Bruckman, 2006; Konieczny 2007);

- most Wikipedia editors contribute to the site because they find contributing “fun” (Oded 2007). While we cannot expect all students to share that opinion (just like we cannot expect all Internet users to contribute to Wikipedia), there are precious few other educational assignments that are carried out by volunteers who think what they are doing is “fun”. As such, the Wikipedia assignment, through its novelty and real-world usefulness, has a potential to be more enjoyable than most other traditional assignments, and some studies of student motivations report high student assessments, particularly in the graduate setting (ex. Callis et al. 2009, Banaji 2010, Chen and Reber 2011, Wright 2012);
- students learn the difference between essay-like and fact-based, analytical, encyclopedic writing style. Encyclopedic style, similar to that of term papers, thesis, dissertations and real-world research reports, is useful in developing critical thinking and improving the comprehension of course materials (Grauerholz 1999, Schulenburg, Davis and Klein 2011);
- as they have to review existing sources and search for new ones beyond Wikipedia, students strengthen their ability to search for reliable sources and evaluate them critically (Patch 2010);
- students gain insights into the creation process of texts on Wikipedia and the reliability of articles on it. This enables them to draw conclusions for which purposes Wikipedia can be used (and for which it should not be). Reilly (2011) notes that only by realizing that “anybody can edit Wikipedia”, reinforced through their own editing, students will be able to more critically analyze the text on the website in their future activities;
- students, interacting with other group members but also the worldwide Wikipedia community, learn how to work in a real-time, real-world collaborative community-of-practice environment;

an experience that teaches them the value of objectivity and the collaborative process of negotiating over the content (Bruns and Humphrey 2005, Schulenburg, Davis and Klein 2011) note that ). Reilly (2011) stresses the discourse aspect that occurs on Wikipedia (between students and Wikipedia volunteers) as one of the more important pedagogical aspects of Wikipedia;

- For most students, this is the first time they are asked to work on a collaborative assignment using software that was developed for that very purpose (the wiki). Thus students improve their new media literacy and gain insights in the creation process of texts on wikis in general, an increasingly essential skill in a modern IT workplace (Tapscott and Williams 2010, Schulenburg, Davis and Klein 2011).

Why assigning Wikipedia articles as coursework is beneficial for the instructor? The educator gains various benefits from using Wikipedia as a platform for education, in particular:

- the instructor is assisted in the task of guiding/assessing students by other editors from the Wikipedia community. Volunteers from the [Wikipedia Ambassador project](#) can be seen as unofficial teaching assistants, more than willing to offer help to any Wikipedia-using course. Further, their help is free and requires very little if any bureaucratic paperwork;
- the instructor is assisted in various secondary tasks, for example Wikipedia volunteers employ dedicated tools making them very efficient at quickly spotting plagiarism/copyright violations that might pass unnoticed in the traditional assignments;
- In fall 2011, Wikimedia Foundation begun developing an “Education Program MediaWiki Extension”, which will give all instructors an extra set of tools not needed by regular Wikipedia editors. Those tools should include course- and student- management tools, logging of all



special education events, such as enrollment and courses association, and other functionalities

As of spring 2012, the tool<sup>1</sup> has entered beta-testing;

- wikis were developed with the goal of group collaboration facilitation. Thus unsurprisingly, reviewing group participation and individual activity is very easy with the wiki “history of contributions” and “user contributions” functions. This makes Wikipedia (and wikis in general) an excellent tool for monitoring the individual activity in group assignments;
- all of the content developed by the WMF and Wikipedia volunteers, and most of the content developed by other instructors using Wikipedia is available under free licenses, as part of the Open Educational Resources. It means that 1) it can be use reused for free and 2) without even having to for permission.

Finally, assigning Wikipedia articles as coursework is beneficial for the Wikipedia community, as:

- more content is created, enhancing the site's usefulness;
- the content created is often in a more specialized, academic topics that attract little attention from regular Wikipedia volunteers;
- the content created is reviewed by experts (course instructors);
- more people gain skills in editing Wikipedia and can become potential long-term contributors;

Lastly, the benefits even go beyond the Wikipedia and classroom communities, as Wikipedia content is freely available to the entire world, and widely used. As such, students work translates into aiding all those who use Wikipedia - which, as recent studies indicates, means most Internet users (Zickuhr and

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<sup>1</sup> The education MediaWiki extension development page can be found here: [http://education.wmflabs.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://education.wmflabs.org/wiki/Main_Page)

Rainie 2011).

However, while the consensus that Wikipedia can be a useful educational tool is emerging, there are preciously few guidelines or tutorials on how, exactly, Wikipedia should be used in teaching, nor reviews on how it has been used for that purpose. The rest of this paper is intended to address this gap.

### How to build a good Wikipedia assignment and tailor it for your course

Adapting one's course to incorporate Wikipedia assignments is not an overly complex procedure; the course is not required to meet in a computer lab, the instructors can retain their favored readings, and so on. What is likely to change is that a portion of course assignments will require students to edit Wikipedia, and it is highly recommended that a segment of at least one lecture or recitation involves introducing student to that assignment and monitoring their progress (Reilly 2011). Presuming that the Wikipedia assignment would be taking place of another assignment with would have occupied similar portions of the teaching time, teaching with Wikipedia can be relatively easily adapted to courses from any fields without requiring any changes to the underlying teaching material.

The process of adapting (or designing) one's course to use Wikipedia it greatly facilitated if the instructor is familiar with Wikipedia. An instructor who does not have experience in editing Wikipedia will be much less likely to efficiently and effectively teach with this tool; I'd go as far as to say that an instructor who teaches with Wikipedia without knowing how to edit it is doing as good of a job as an instructor who is teaching using a book they have read only a synopsis of. The instructor, unfamiliar with Wikipedia, will be unable to answer many a student's query and will find it hard to offer them

useful advice. They will likely find it difficult or outright give up on using wiki tools such as customizing their course wiki-syllabi<sup>2</sup> or using the [user contribution tool](#) to check up on students' activity on Wikipedia. Detached from the Wikipedia community, and unfamiliar with places one can request assistance, they will be unable to receive helpful input from editors, such as feedback on students' plagiarism or warnings about impending deletion of students' work that fails to meet the Wikipedia's requirements.

This does not mean that the instructor has to dedicate countless hours to become an experienced Wikipedia editor first. Several hours – about as much as it takes to read a book – can suffice to gain a basic understanding. As a rule of thumb, being able to do all the things required of students should be sufficient. If you want your students to contribute a new article to Wikipedia, write one yourself first, and make sure it meets the community standards (a good way to learn if it does is to submit it for a [Wikipedia's Did You Know](#) candidates review<sup>3</sup>). If you want your students to learn which articles are reliable and which are not, and how an article should be referenced, make sure to read up [Wikipedia's policies on referencing](#), and verify, review and reference an article or two yourself. If you want your students to learn how to write good content for Wikipedia, try writing [a Good Article](#) by yourself. It is also highly recommended that you know how to use Wikipedia's discussion (talk) pages,<sup>4</sup> which are the primary means for editors to communicate.

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2 A version of this tool developed by me is available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:School\\_and\\_university\\_projects/Piotrus\\_course\\_intro\\_boilerplate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:School_and_university_projects/Piotrus_course_intro_boilerplate); another version developed by the Wikimedia Foundation is at [https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Education/The\\_Syllabus](https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Education/The_Syllabus);

3 The page for such submissions is at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template\\_talk:Did\\_you\\_know](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template_talk:Did_you_know) ; a guide on how to submit one's work is linked at the top of that page. A good hand out is available at [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ee/Classroom\\_handout\\_-\\_Submitting\\_an\\_article\\_to\\_the\\_Did\\_You\\_Know\\_process.pdf](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ee/Classroom_handout_-_Submitting_an_article_to_the_Did_You_Know_process.pdf)

4 On Wikipedia, all articles have “discussion pages” accessible through the discussion tab. They are also known as “talk pages”. You can read more about the discussion (talk) pages at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Talk\\_page\\_guidelines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Talk_page_guidelines) and there is also a video tutorial at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Talkpages.ogg>

You do not have to navigate the mysteries of Wikipedia alone; there is help available – and I do not mean just Wikipedia's generic help pages. There is actually a large number of resources designed for educators. Since 2007 there is a dedicated [WikiProject Classroom Coordination](#), whose members specialize in assisting instructors and professors. As of July 2012 the project had 50 members, including 4 non-anonymous faculty members. Asking for their assistance is as easy as posting a message to the project's discussion space. More recently, in 2010 Wikipedia has introduced a [Campus and Online Ambassadors program](#)<sup>5</sup> that provides trained volunteers, willing to assist instructors with their teaching on Wikipedia. Again, asking for their help is quite easy – just post a request for assistance on the project's discussion page, or contact one of the ambassador's directly through their talk page. There is the [Education Portal](#), which contains several guides and other resources. There is a specialized [Education Noticeboard](#) for answering questions from educators and students, and also a more generic project-wide [Help Desk](#).

Learning the basics of Wikipedia is not a time consuming process; it is a breeze compared to learning the basics of a statistical or qualitative analysis package. A few hours of practice should be sufficient to write one's first article, and if anybody has doubts about it, please consider the fact that students in “teaching with Wikipedia courses” consistently acquire the needed skills to do just that in such a timeframe. This will not only net one the skills needed for teaching, but will also allow one to contribute to the project oneself, heeding the call of those who argue that contributing to Wikipedia should be seen as academic's responsibility. (Callis et al. 2009, Corbyn 2011, Wright 2011, 2012). And, least we forget – it can be simply “fun”, a word we do not usually associate with either an educational activity nor with learning new software (Oded 2007).

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5 A list of ambassadors with can be found at [http://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Education/Get\\_Support](http://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Education/Get_Support)

## Wikipedia's alternatives

One of the first and most important questions facing the instructor who is considering the use of Wikipedia in their teaching is, simply: “Is Wikipedia a good place for my project?”

As noted earlier, Wikipedia can greatly enrich a course, and provide a set of useful assignments. It cannot, however, replace all assignments – contributing to an online encyclopedia offers many educational opportunities, but is, in the end, limited primarily to contributing or enhancing encyclopedic content. Through there are interesting and innovative way this can be utilized (students can review content, discuss reliability of sources used, search for, verify and add references, create encyclopedic graphs or videos, translate articles, and so on), there are also several key limitations, most notably – contributions to Wikipedia cannot contain original research, and have to be encyclopedic in style (no essays allowed). Also, Wikipedia is no sandbox – it is a major public space on the Internet, and your students will be interacting with the “real world” online community.

On that note, there are several other projects related to Wikipedia (all operated by the same, non-profit Wikimedia Foundation) that may be of use to some courses, where Wikipedia is less than optimal:

- [Wikibooks](#) – a project geared towards collaborative book writing. It allows non-encyclopedic style, original research, and focuses on creating books. The project has been used for several educational assignments in which students were contributing to creating a freely licensed textbook related to their course subject.<sup>6</sup>
- [Wikinews](#) – a project geared towards news reporting, could be of interest to courses in the field

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<sup>6</sup> For more on educational opportunities at Wikibooks, see [http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Wikibooks:Guidelines\\_for\\_class\\_projects](http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Wikibooks:Guidelines_for_class_projects)

of media and journalism studies.<sup>7</sup>

- [Wikimedia Commons](#) – a project that serves as a repository of freely licensed digital media. Students can participate by contributing new media, but also by improving the existing ones. This could involve media restoration, digital image improvement, or simply identification of unidentified or poorly categorized media, and improvement and/or translation of media descriptions.<sup>8</sup>
- [Wikiversity](#) – a project with a very open format, geared towards supporting educational projects in general. A good place of any educational project that does not fit encyclopedic, journalistic or book formats.<sup>9</sup>

How important should the Wikipedia assignment be for your project?

Once you have decided that Wikipedia is, indeed, the right venue for your teaching assignment, we should consider the assignment's importance for the course. What percentage of a grade will it consist of? If it is a course you have taught before, what traditional assignments will it replace? What is the goal of this teaching assignment?

Writing or creating articles on Wikipedia lends itself most easily as a replacement for a final paper. Academic writing style is relatively close to the encyclopedic writing one. A key difference to note is that Wikipedia does not permit essays or original research. Students should be asked to present their

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7 For more on educational opportunities at Wikinews, see [http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Wikinews:Guidelines\\_for\\_class\\_projects](http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Wikinews:Guidelines_for_class_projects)

8 For more on educational opportunities at Wikimedia Commons, see [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Guidelines\\_for\\_class\\_projects](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Guidelines_for_class_projects)

9 For more on educational opportunities at Wikiversity, see <http://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Help:Guides>

new-founded knowledge, but not their own opinions or findings. In other words, Wikipedia is a great place for the students to describe a theory, an animal, a book, or other well-established concepts they have learned about in the course; they should however not present their opinions of them, or results of their own surveys, interviews or such.

Although most teaching with Wikipedia activities seem to be centered on the undergraduate level, this approach has significant potential on the graduate level as well. Graduate classes can offer much more enriching discussions on the nature of knowledge creation, Wikipedia's biases and similar issues. Students can also adapt their experiences as a presentation piece or a peer-reviewed paper; for example, students of a graduate seminar on plant–animal interactions presented their experiences in a paper published in *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* (Callis et al. 2009).

What will the students do? Course focus.

Next, we need to consider what it is that the students will do. As Reilly (2011) notes, “the greatest hurdle students often need to overcome in order to contribute to Wikipedia relates to topic selection”.

It is most common to have students work on improving encyclopedic content related to the course; for example students of an Introduction to Sociology course would work on improving various sociology-related articles. There are, however, other possibilities.<sup>10</sup> The assignment could focus on teaching article writing skills with focus not on what an article is about but rather on language and grammar; such approach could be favored by a course teaching writing skills. A class in Research Methods could have

<sup>10</sup> A number of short case studies focusing on different student activities is available at: [http://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Education/Case\\_Studies](http://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Education/Case_Studies)

the goal of teaching research skills, primarily concentrating on determining whether articles are reliably referenced, adding references, improving them (replacing unreliable ones), verifying them, and posting reviews on the talk pages. Several courses from various fields have focused on the process of creating and negotiating Wikipedia articles themselves, to demonstrate “the contested nature of knowledge production” and similar concepts. In such courses, students could compare textbook information with Wikipedia to see what's missing from Wikipedia – and from their own educational materials. A similar line of inquiry can be in analyzing what Wikipedia is choosing not to include, and what kind of articles get deleted, and why. Finally, with the growing popularity of the site, it is likely we will be increasingly seeing courses about Wikipedia itself, or at least including segments dedicated to the understanding the site.

Assuming that you do want your students to work on a specific set of articles, you may either create a closed list of subjects that the students can choose from or tell them to think of a subject that is relevant to the course and not covered on Wikipedia that you'll review and approve. I usually do both – give them a list, but I also allow them to propose their own suggestions. In either case, Wikipedia has a set of helpful tools that assist you with creating such a list (or to which you can direct your students to).

Articles on Wikipedia are in various stages of development. It is usually easiest to have students start writing on a subject that is not covered on Wikipedia, or develop one of the poorly written articles (those are known on Wikipedia as stub or start classes<sup>11</sup>). You can look at lists of poor quality or missing articles related to your discipline. While a simple search through Google or Wikipedia's own search will eventually allow one to create such a list, there is a number of tools developed by Wikipedia editors that can be easily adapted towards generation of such a list:

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11 Terms like stub and start are defined here: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:ASSESSMENT>



- for existing poor quality articles, as recommended by Schulenburg, Davis and Klein (2011), see if there is a WikiProject (master list is at [Wikipedia:WikiProject](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject)) related to your field (for example, as I am a sociologist, I would go to [Wikipedia:WikiProject\\_Sociology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Sociology)) Then look for [the assessment table](#) (it will be a colorful table with a heading similar to “Sociology articles by quality and importance” - see Image 1). The articles assessed as stub and start are usually good enough for a class project to develop. Note that while Wikipedia has many articles (at the time I am writing this article, over three and a half millions), most of them are poor quality stub and start articles; for example Sociology WikiProject has assessed about 3,200 articles, and out of those, 1,600 are stub and start classes, so chances are high you'll find more than enough articles to quickly create a list suitable for your course.

## Wikipedia:Version 1.0 Editorial Team/Sociology articles by quality statistics

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia  
 < [Wikipedia:Version 1.0 Editorial Team](#)

Sociology articles by quality and importance							
Quality	Importance						Total
	Top	High	Mid	Low	NA	???	
<a href="#">★ FA</a>		<a href="#">1</a>					<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">⊕ GA</a>	<a href="#">3</a>	<a href="#">3</a>	<a href="#">14</a>	<a href="#">15</a>		<a href="#">1</a>	<a href="#">36</a>
<a href="#">B</a>	<a href="#">12</a>	<a href="#">52</a>	<a href="#">83</a>	<a href="#">35</a>		<a href="#">19</a>	<a href="#">201</a>
<a href="#">C</a>	<a href="#">14</a>	<a href="#">69</a>	<a href="#">105</a>	<a href="#">72</a>		<a href="#">44</a>	<a href="#">304</a>
<a href="#">Start</a>	<a href="#">23</a>	<a href="#">157</a>	<a href="#">455</a>	<a href="#">281</a>		<a href="#">188</a>	<a href="#">1,099</a>
<a href="#">Stub</a>	<a href="#">10</a>	<a href="#">40</a>	<a href="#">185</a>	<a href="#">188</a>	<a href="#">1</a>	<a href="#">10</a>	<a href="#">533</a>
<a href="#">List</a>	<a href="#">2</a>	<a href="#">4</a>	<a href="#">6</a>	<a href="#">11</a>	<a href="#">4</a>	<a href="#">14</a>	<a href="#">41</a>
<a href="#">Book</a>					<a href="#">10</a>		<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Category</a>					<a href="#">143</a>		<a href="#">143</a>
<a href="#">Disambig</a>					<a href="#">4</a>		<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">File</a>					<a href="#">3</a>		<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Portal</a>	<a href="#">1</a>			<a href="#">1</a>	<a href="#">1</a>		<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Project</a>	<a href="#">1</a>				<a href="#">3</a>		<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Template</a>					<a href="#">35</a>		<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">NA</a>		<a href="#">1</a>			<a href="#">4</a>		<a href="#">5</a>
<b>Assessed</b>	<a href="#">66</a>	<a href="#">327</a>	<a href="#">848</a>	<a href="#">603</a>	<a href="#">208</a>	<a href="#">370</a>	<a href="#">2,422</a>
<b>Unassessed</b>		<a href="#">3</a>	<a href="#">4</a>	<a href="#">3</a>		<a href="#">733</a>	<a href="#">743</a>
<b>Total</b>	<a href="#">66</a>	<a href="#">330</a>	<a href="#">852</a>	<a href="#">606</a>	<a href="#">208</a>	<a href="#">1,103</a>	<a href="#">3,165</a>

Image 1: Sample WikiProject (in this case, WikiProject Sociology) table listing articles by quality. The circle highlights the links to two groups (Stub and Start) which contain poorly developed articles ripe for student to develop.

- If there is no project for your field, try finding a related stub category (available at [Wikipedia:WikiProject\\_Stub\\_sorting/List\\_of\\_stubs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Stub_sorting/List_of_stubs)). For example, for sociology, there is the socio-stub ([Template:Socio-stub](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Socio-stub)) with a corresponding category listing the relevant articles ([Category:Sociology\\_stubs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Sociology_stubs)). See Image 2 for details.
- If you cannot find a stub category related to your field, try finding the relevant category (categories are always listed at the bottom of each article). Usually the best way is to go to the primary article about your field and look how it is categorized on Wikipedia – for example, I'd go to the “Sociology” article and thus find [Category:Sociology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Sociology). Then, use the [CatScan tool](#)<sup>12</sup> to search through your category for stub class articles in that category. This tool is simple to use: just add the name of your field category to the “search in category” field, check the “For stubs” field, and click Scan. Keep in mind that this tool is slow, and it make take several minutes for the page with results to be generated. See Image 2 for details.

#### Pages in category "Sociology stubs"

The following 200 pages are in this category, out of 517 total. This list may not reflect recent changes ([learn more](#)) (previous 200) ([next 200](#))

- [Template:Socio-stub](#)
- A**
  - [Aadhya System](#)
  - [Abuse prevention program](#)
  - [Accident of birth](#)
  - [Acephalous society](#)
  - [Affective action](#)
  - [Affinity \(sociology\)](#)
  - [Age grade](#)
  - [Age segregation](#)
  - [Age stratification](#)
  - [Agency \(sociology\)](#)
  - [Air kiss](#)
  - [Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test](#)
  - [Ali \(character\)](#)
  - [Alloparenting](#)
  - [Allophilia](#)
  - [Amateur professionalism](#)
  - [Americanization \(foreign culture and media\)](#)
  - [Americentrism](#)
  - [Analytic frame](#)
  - [Analytic narrative](#)
  - [L'Année Sociologique](#)
  - [Anti-modernization](#)
  - [Anticipatory exclusion](#)
  - [Antinaturalism \(sociology\)](#)
  - [ASA style](#)
  - [Association for the Sociology of Religion](#)
  - [Associative mixing](#)
  - [Atomism \(social\)](#)
  - [The Australian Sociological Association](#)
  - [Austrophile](#)
  - [Authority \(sociology\)](#)
  - [Authority problem](#)
- B**

- C cont.**
  - [Chukri System](#)
  - [Church etiquette](#)
  - [Civic engagement](#)
  - [Civil discourse](#)
  - [Class analysis](#)
  - [Class in Arctic society](#)
  - [Closed community](#)
  - [Cocacola](#)
  - [Code enforcement](#)
  - [Code of silence](#)
  - [Coffeehouse \(event\)](#)
  - [Collective belief](#)
  - [Communitas](#)
  - [Community economic development](#)
  - [Community management](#)
  - [Community of interest](#)
  - [Community of place](#)
  - [Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software](#)
  - [Condition of England question](#)
  - [Condolences](#)
  - [Confianza](#)
  - [Conflict analysis](#)
  - [Conjugal family](#)
  - [Consanguine marriage](#)
  - [Constitutional patriotism](#)
  - [Consumer socialization](#)
  - [Consumption \(sociology\)](#)
  - [Contentious politics](#)
  - [Contested ideological terrain](#)
  - [Contexts](#)
  - [Convergent validity](#)
  - [Corporate behaviour](#)
  - [Corporate group \(sociology\)](#)
  - [Cost of raising a child](#)
  - [Council circle](#)

#### Stubs under sociology with less than 512 bytes or less than 4 links:

- Sociology timeline: [2010s in sociology](#) (410 bytes) (410 bytes) (6 links)
- Labour law: [A fair day's wage for a fair day's work](#) (445 bytes) (445 bytes) (3 links)
- Labor: [Absolute employment](#) (494 bytes) (494 bytes) (6 links)
- Law: [Actio](#) (475 bytes) (475 bytes) (7 links)
- Education: [Adventure learning](#) (1082 bytes) (1082 bytes) (3 links)
- Government: [Adventurism](#) (444 bytes) (444 bytes) (3 links)
- Management: [Adversarial purchasing philosophy](#) (1239 bytes) (1239 bytes) (2 links)
- Cultural anthropology: [Age-area hypothesis](#) (722 bytes) (722 bytes) (3 links)
- Organization stub: [Alliance Medical Ministry](#) (462 bytes) (462 bytes) (2 links)
- Cultural exchange: [Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange](#) (3894 bytes) (3894 bytes) (289 links)
- Poverty: [Allowance system](#) (431 bytes) (431 bytes) (52 links)
- Role theory: [Altercasting](#) (2820 bytes) (2820 bytes) (3 links)
- Cultural exchange: [Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation](#) (2357 bytes) (2357 bytes) (3 links)
- Cultural exchange: [American Film Program](#) (2798 bytes) (2798 bytes) (3 links)
- Sociology stub: [Analytic narrative](#) (506 bytes) (506 bytes) (4 links)
- Native American leaders: [Andrew Hendy](#) (980 bytes) (980 bytes) (1 link)
- Sociologist stub: [Andy Ruddock](#) (1088 bytes) (1088 bytes) (3 links)
- Women sociologists: [Anne Bargés](#) (1188 bytes) (1188 bytes) (2 links)
- Sociological terms: [Antinaturalism \(sociology\)](#) (367 bytes) (367 bytes) (3 links)
- Ethnicity stub: [Arbore people](#) (269 bytes) (269 bytes) (4 links)
- Organization stub: [Arista – National Honor Society](#) (1216 bytes) (1216 bytes) (2 links)
- Arts: [Art and Design Admissions Registry](#) (2626 bytes) (2626 bytes) (2 links)
- Organization stub: [Arte della Sella](#) (656 bytes) (656 bytes) (3 links)
- Organization stub: [Asociación de los Escritores en Lenguas Indígenas](#) (378 bytes) (378 bytes) (5 links)
- Cultural heritage: [Association for Heritage Interpretation](#) (1974 bytes) (1974 bytes) (3 links)
- Organization stub: [Association of Canadian Engineering Companies](#) (1148 bytes) (1148 bytes) (3 links)
- Government: [Attendance allowance \(political\)](#) (923 bytes) (923 bytes) (2 links)
- Race and intelligence controversy: [Audrey M. Shuey](#) (1144 bytes) (1144 bytes) (3 links)
- Sociologist stub: [Aviad Raz](#) (1751 bytes) (1751 bytes) (3 links)
- Ethnicity stub: [Avonaco](#) (262 bytes) (262 bytes) (4 links)
- Ethnicity stub: [Babai \(Pashtun tribe\)](#) (481 bytes) (481 bytes) (7 links)
- Cultural conventions, Ritual: [Babulang](#) (914 bytes) (914 bytes) (3 links)
- Ethnicity stub: [Baem](#) (438 bytes) (438 bytes) (105 links)
- Organization stub: [Balasangam](#) (866 bytes) (866 bytes) (3 links)
- Organization stub: [Bangladesh Mahila Parishad](#) (336 bytes) (336 bytes) (2 links)
- Labor: [Bargaining unit](#) (1073 bytes) (1073 bytes) (3 links)
- Sociologist stub: [Barry Hindess](#) (1447 bytes) (1447 bytes) (3 links)
- Clothing: [Bathing dress](#) (1687 bytes) (1687 bytes) (3 links)

Image 2: Listing of stub-like articles from the category view (left) and cat scan view (right).

For the categories mentioned above, the page numbers listed at the bottom of the “Biographies of New York City” article), you may want to limit the category depth parameter (“with depth” parameter is checked as 3 by default, reduce it two 2 or 1 is likely to help). In my case, limiting both to 2 resulted in a more manageable list of 638 articles.

- For articles that need to be created, see Wikipedia's Requested articles ([Wikipedia:Requested\\_articles](#)<sup>13</sup>) and find a section related to your class subject, or look at Outlines of knowledge categories ([Category:Outlines](#)) and try finding an article that covers the class subject. Mind you – those lists are not comprehensive.

Before you approve a student's project for a new article, a common problem that arises is that the subject may be covered on Wikipedia under a different name. I find that on average every fourth topic that the student group asks me for permission to work on already has a Wikipedia article, but under an alternative name the students have not thought to check. To ensure that your students are not creating a page that will be merged to an existing one, search on Wikipedia for synonyms, and review related articles to see if they do not link to a proposed topic under a different name.

### Student activities

Consider, next: will you ask your students to improve existing articles, or create new ones? Or perhaps you would like them to improve non-article content, for example by creating images such as graphs or maps? You may also want your students to focus on reviewing existing content, leaving suggestions for improvement of existing articles rather than editing them directly.<sup>14</sup>

Note that those choices are not exclusive – you can have different wiki assignments in the course. In case you decide on a larger assignment, such as writing an article (replacing a written paper

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<sup>13</sup> Available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Requested\\_articles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Requested_articles)

<sup>14</sup> Keep in mind that with regards to students reviewing articles their review the reviews tend to be too brief and general, and they will be biased toward giving only good reviews to their classmates.

assignment) do note that it is important to have students learn wiki editing skills before the last few days of the course; hence smaller graded wiki assignments or deadlines throughout the course are highly recommended. Those smaller assignments should have twofold goals: teaching students wiki literacy skills, as well as more general skills, such as proper referencing, checking for reliability in sources, and so on.

Wikipedia allows anonymous editing, which can be a problem, as some students will forget to log in before making their edits. Make sure that the students have created an account and make edits logged in, so you can confirm that specific individuals are carrying out their assignments.

On that note: both you and your students should have individual Wikipedia accounts. Group accounts are against Wikipedia “one person, one account” policy, and they nullify the ability to track what specific students are doing.

Some simple warming up exercises include:

First (test) edits:

1. Doing the [Wikipedia:Tutorial](#) which introduces students to the basics of Wikipedia editing. You may also require the students to make an edit to the Tutorial Sandbox, with which you can verify they completed this activity.
2. Creating [a user page](#), on which the students can share a little (if anonymous) information about themselves, their expectations of the course, this assignment, and such.

First discussions:

3. Making a discussion post on [an article's talk page](#), for example reviewing an article of their choice and suggesting ways to improve it, also suggested by Wadewitz, Geller and Beasley-Murray (2010). Make sure the students follow Wikipedia's “netiquette” by bottom-posting and signing with ~~~~ . That is covered by the tutorial, but it wouldn't hurt to demonstrate how commenting on the talk pages works in class. You may also direct the students to [Wikipedia:Peer Review](#) where editors specifically list articles they'd like to receive feedback on (this creates a higher chance of student-editor interaction). Reviewing suspected hoax articles ([Category:Wikipedia suspected hoax articles](#)) can provide some interesting insights into Wikipedia, too.
4. Interacting with a community. This is a good opportunity to show students that Wikipedia is more than just a static reference website. At [Wikipedia:Reference Desk](#), have students ask a question, provide answers to another one, and participate in discussions there for a little while. This is a great way to quickly get them familiar with the habit (and usefulness) of using wiki discussion spaces.
5. Advanced discussions. Students can participate in the article deletions discussions ([Category:AfD debates](#)) or requests for comment discussions ([Wikipedia:Requests\\_for\\_comment/All](#)).

Contents <span>[hide]</span>
<a href="#">1 Anarchist being led by Bakunin?</a>
<a href="#">2 Criticism</a>
<a href="#">3 Ancient Greek / Roman Law</a>
<a href="#">4 Strange phrasing in the Career -&gt; London subsection</a>
<a href="#">5 Informal request for comments on Commodity fetishism</a>
<a href="#">6 Edit request from Baucham, 21 December 2010</a>
<a href="#">7 Edit request from 81.105.241.67, 13 January 2011</a>
<a href="#">8 Pictures of Marx's Tomb</a>
<a href="#">9 Marx in film, 19 February 2011</a>
<a href="#">10 A rewrite of the introduction</a>
<a href="#">11 Inesistent information on Lenin and peasants</a>
<a href="#">12 Rewriting Marx's thought</a>
<a href="#">12.1 Unreferenced and/or irrelevant fragments</a>
<a href="#">13 Accusations of antisemitism</a>
<a href="#">14 B-class review request</a>
<a href="#">15 Biogated "see also" section</a>
<a href="#">16 GA Review</a>
<a href="#">16.1 Overall</a>
<a href="#">17 Marx was not a German</a>
<a href="#">18 Edit request from Woodshadow, 4 April 2011</a>
<a href="#">19 GA Review</a>
<a href="#">19.1 Criteria</a>
<a href="#">19.2 Inspirations section</a>
<a href="#">19.3 Progress</a>
<a href="#">20 Anti-Semitism section</a>
<a href="#">21 Karl's mother Henrietta was aunt to Frederik Philips</a>
<a href="#">22 List of influences</a>

## Anarchist being led by Bakunin?

I will ask not to write disinformation, mainly of the fact that somebody wrote that Karl Marx had a big struggle against the anarchist, who were LED by Michail Bakunin. It is true that Marx and Bakunin had different opinions on the Communist/Collectivist philosophy and that the Authority of Marx expelled the anarchists from the First International, but it is not true that the anarchists were led by Bakunin. His great degree in oratory and his god eloquence made him more influent, even maybe in some occasions authoritarian, but that doesn't makes him the LEADER of the rest of the Anarchist Communists. If somebody admire Michail Bakunin that is definitely not the reason of spreading disinformation. Besides, the main ideology of Anarchists is the anti - authoritarianism, which by default discards the paragraph in which it says that Michail Bakunin was the leader of the anarchists. I apply for it to be changed, as soon as possible. Thank you. —Preceding [unsign] comment added by 27.28.174.167 (talk) 1:16 pm, 18 November 2010, Monday (1 year, 7 months, 30 days ago) (UTC+1)

A fair point. I've Replaced 'led by Bakunin' with 'centered around Bakunin', which is probably more accurate, though Wikipedia isn't required to accept anarchist ideology (or any other) as being a [reliable source](#) over issues like this. —AndyTheGump (talk) 12:32 am, 17 November 2010, Wednesday (1 year, 7 months, 29 days ago) (UTC+1)

## Criticism

Can't we work the criticism of Marx into the article? I have always favoured that as opposed to a criticism section, some of the better articles fit criticism into the whole. —ValenShephard (talk) 1:10 am, 30 August 2010, Monday (1 year, 10 months, 16 days ago) (UTC+2)

I saw this at an article and its very appropriate here:

Q6: Why isn't there a criticisms/controversies section?[hide] A6: Because a section dedicated to criticisms and controversies is no more appropriate than a section dedicated solely to praise and is an indication of a poorly written article. Criticisms/controversies/praises should be worked into the existing prose of the article, per the Criticism essay.

That is how we should work at this article, based on this principle. —ValenShephard (talk) 1:16 am, 30 August 2010, Monday (1 year, 10 months, 16 days ago) (UTC+2)

Actually the criticism section seems to be composed mostly of criticism of [Marxism](#), not of Marx himself. I think writing it into the text is a great idea. —Maunus X 1:25 am, 30 August 2010, Monday (1 year, 10 months, 16 days ago) (UTC+2)

You are right on that. Any criticisms not to do with Marx himself should be removed (or if useful and appropriate, moved into the Marxism article) and the rest should be incorporated into the text as is standard and desirable. If some more support comes in, I'll start on this task soon. Thanks for your fast reply. —ValenShephard (talk) 1:28 am, 30 August 2010, Monday (1 year, 10 months, 16 days ago) (UTC+2)

And also, as has been mentioned before in this talk, I think we should remove some of the references to Marxism as an ideology outside of its own section (Marx's Thought) especially when its implications are outside of his control, such as what happened in the Soviet Union. What do we think? —ValenShephard (talk) 11:39 am, 3 September 2010, Friday (1 year, 10 months, 11 days ago) (UTC+2)

What do you mean criticisms of Marx himself. Are you saying that only personal criticisms of Marx should be included in this article or that criticism of people after Marx shouldn't be included? —Schwindtd (talk) 10:05 pm, 3 September 2010, Friday (1 year, 10 months, 11 days ago) (UTC+2)

*Image 3: Sample discussion page from one of several archives of past discussion in the article on Karl Marx. Note the table of contents at the top, and the proper discussion following it, with headings, indentations, signatures, and bottom-posting flow.*

## Article edits:

- Students can edit an existing article. There are many articles for students to chose from at [Category:Wikipedia cleanup categories](#) ; at this state it may be prudent to focus not on referencing, which is slightly more complex than most other tasks on Wikipedia, but on more simple edits.

For example:

- Students can fix grammar in the following categories: [“Wikipedia articles with incorrect tenses“](#), [“Rough translations“](#), [“Articles with a promotional tone“](#)
- Students can learn about linking by helping out with [“Orphaned articles“](#) and [“Dead-end](#)

[pages](#)”

- Students can learn about lead by writing or improving lead sections for “[Pages missing lead section](#)” and “[Wikipedia introduction cleanup](#)“
7. More ambitious activity is related to merging of articles, which may involve students reviewing two articles to determine whether merger is needed, and then merging them if they determine it is indeed advisable. Those articles are in the “[Articles to be merged](#)“ category.
  8. Once the students have mastered basic editing, they can learn how to reference articles. As Reilly (2011) notes, teaching with Wikipedia is a good way to “reinforce a favorite mantra of faculty, namely the importance of citing secondary sources “. Articles in need of references (or reference review and verification) can be found in the “[Wikipedia articles with sourcing issues](#)” category. See section “Advanced editing #1: Referencing” further in this article for more on how to learn this skill in the Wikipedia context.
  9. Reilly (2011) also suggests an activity in which in the second half of the class students look at their earlier edits, see if they were retained by the community and write a report. This can be enhanced with having the students try to talk to editors who might have disagreed with their edits, seek an understanding of their reasons, and try to improve those earlier edits, arriving at a better, consensus-driven version. Such an activity combines article and discussion page edits with significant community interaction and likely, policy understanding.

Again, you will most likely just select few of the above that appeal to you the most. Consider this example from [the Union University Fall 2009 class](#):

“The students have three categories of edits to work on. 1) Existing Wikipedia statements with citations – check the statement against its cited source for accuracy; if accurate, leave it alone; if not, change it. 2) Existing Wikipedia statements without citations – find corroborating evidence for these statements in your sources, and add citations. 3) New statements – find facts in your sources that are not yet included in the article, and add them, along with proper citations. The students are to make at least 50 discrete edits, divided roughly evenly among these three categories.”

#### Technicalities #1: number of articles and students

Another question to consider is: how many articles will you want the students to work on? Several approaches have been used:

- Group projects. The class focus is on improving several articles; the students usually work in groups, each group works on a different article. This is the most common approach.
- One class project. The entire class focuses on improving one article; the students may work individually or in groups, assigned to different sections of an article
- One student – one article. The class focus is on hundreds of articles; each student works on his or her own article. This is an approach for some intro courses, with relatively low focus on Wikipedia.

Several interesting approaches have been pioneered for classes where language is an issue (primarily, for language-teaching classes, and for classes where students have two or more different native



languages). For students writing in non-native languages, a buddy system with teams of two can be used, where one student specializes in translation, and another, in content creation. It has also been suggested that students learning English could contribute to the “[Simple English Wikipedia](#)”. (Waters 2011) Students proficient with more than one language can compare different language Wikipedias and translate articles between them.

A crucial item to consider is whether the students will work individually, in teams or in larger groups. While wikis were designed to be collaborative tools, and as such they lend themselves to larger group projects, some early “learn how to use a wiki” assignments are best suited for individual assignments.

A final technicality to consider is “where will the students work” with regards to the virtual location of their work on Wikipedia. Basically, the students have two options. They can work in Wikipedia's main article space (where the regular Wikipedia encyclopedic articles are) or in a [draft space](#). The draft space refers to a temporary, semi-private page that can be created by any editor in their userspace or on projectspace (so instead of “en.wikipedia.org/Article your students would be working on”, it would be at “en.wikipedia.org/User:X/Draft article”. Then, once the article is ready, they can move it to the mainspace. The advantage and disadvantage of working in a draft space is the same – the articles will not be seen by any regular users, and neither will they come to the attention of most regular Wikipedians. It means it will not risk being listed for deletion if the students first attempt is a mess, but it also means that the students interaction with the community will be vastly limited.

In my experience, if the students receive proper guidance prior to creating their first article (primarily by having some experience doing smaller edits, and by being told in the assignment what is expected of their first article), the deletion is a very unlikely occurrence. I agree with instructors who voiced the

following sentiment: “students should start immediately editing in main space (rather than first working on their articles in user-space, or off-site). This will allow them to absorb Wikipedia conventions from day one, and to profit from the guidance of other editors“ (Wikipedia 2008). Similar sentiments were echoed by Wadewitz, Geller and Beasley-Murray (2010).

When will the students work on Wikipedia? The importance of deadlines.

Learning how to edit a wiki takes a little time. Designing the course with that in mind is important, so that the students will have the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills before embarking on a larger assignment. If students will not be required to learn how to edit early on, many will likely not do it until the very deadline, when they realize that editing a wiki is a skill that takes more than five minutes to learn, leading to frustration and poor quality work.

Here is a simplified timetable<sup>15</sup> from one of my past course that is designed to start with warm-up exercises leading to a major group project:

- September 14: introduction to assignments, group assignment
- September 21: deadline for individual completing Wikipedia Tutorial, first edits
- October 5: deadline for selecting articles for the groups
- October 14: deadline for individual posting of outlines / “to do” lists on group article's talk pages

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<sup>15</sup> For a full timetable I used in Fall 2011, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:School\\_and\\_university\\_projects/User:Piotrus/Fall\\_2011#Stages\\_and\\_deadlines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:School_and_university_projects/User:Piotrus/Fall_2011#Stages_and_deadlines)

- November 2: deadline for having an early draft of the group article for reviews by other groups / instructors
- November 16: deadline for finishing the group article and its submission to a Good Article review process
- December 11: articles are graded (students are expected to monitor and address instructor and GA reviewer's comments till then)

### Creating a wiki syllabus is easy

It is helpful to have an online page describing the wiki assignment. While you can put such a page anywhere on the Internet, note that Wikipedia will gladly host it as well. You can list your course at the Wikipedia's School and Universities Page, and on a subpage add information about institution and faculty, target articles, aims, duration, instructions for students and whatever else you find useful. Hosting your course page on Wikipedia has several advantages: it is free; editing it will improve your wiki editing skills; it is much easier to update than most static pages; it is transparent to the Wikipedia community; and finally it will use Wikipedia style and thus limit the number of webpages and styles your students have to deal with.

To facilitate creation of such a page, I have developed the “wikisyllabus”, which contains sections on the timetable, grading, instructions and tips for students and a student list. It also contains a series of assignments, designed to teach student how to edit Wikipedia, starting with a series of “warm up” exercises and leading to a major group project in which students create or improve a Wikipedia article with the ultimate goal of achieving the "Good Article" community-awarded status. The wikisyllabus is

a designed in the form of a template that can be easily copied and adapted to a course in most fields.<sup>16</sup>

#### Week 1: Wikipedia essentials [edit]

##### In class

- Overview of the course
- Introduction to how Wikipedia will be used in the course
- Handout: [Welcome to Wikipedia](#) (available in print or online from the Wikimedia Foundation)

##### Assignment (due week 2)

- Read [Five pillars](#), an explanation of Wikipedia's basic rules and principles

#### Week 2: Editing basics [edit]

*It is important to get students editing Wikipedia right away so that they become familiar with the MediaWiki markup ("wikisyntax", "wikimarkup", or "wikicode"). As the instructor, you have several options to teach them this technical material. You can teach it yourself, invite Wikipedia's Campus Ambassadors and/or local Wikipedians to do so, or contact a teaching and technology center on your campus and ask for their assistance. We suggest that, however you choose to do this, you have the students learn the basics of editing, the anatomy of an article, and ways to select articles suitable for the assignment.*

##### In class

- Campus Ambassadors introduce:
  - Basics of editing
  - Anatomy of Wikipedia articles, what makes a good article, how to distinguish between good & bad articles
  - Tips on finding the best articles to work on for class assignments
- Handouts and videos: [Video on creating an account](#), [Talk pages tutorial video](#), [Evaluating Wikipedia article quality brochure](#), [Account and user page creation handout](#), [Wikimarkup cheatsheet](#)

##### Assignments (due week 3)

(See [this](#) and [this](#) for example assignments.)

- Create a Wikipedia account, create a user page, and sign up on the list of students on the course page.
- To practice editing and communicating on Wikipedia, introduce yourself to one of the class's Online Ambassadors (via talk page), and leave a message for a classmate on their user talk page.

##### Milestone

- All students have Wikipedia user accounts and are listed on the course page.

#### Week 3: Exploring the topic area [edit]

*It is crucial that lines of communication between instructors, students, and Wikipedians be established and firmed up early in the semester so that all groups can help each other out most efficiently as the projects progress. Ideally, Wikipedia Campus Ambassadors would come to your class and explain to the students how to find help should they run into trouble on Wikipedia (e.g. IRC), reinforcing their introduction to this topic from the previous week.*

*It is also critical for students to begin researching their Wikipedia topics early in the term. Finding topics with the right balance between lack of prior good Wikipedia coverage and available literature from which to build new Wikipedia coverage can be tricky. As an alternative to assigning students to propose Wikipedia topics to write about, you may wish to prepare a list of appropriate non-existent or underdeveloped articles ahead of time. This requires more preparation, but gets students to the point of researching and writing their articles sooner.*

##### In class

- Handout: [Advice for choosing articles](#)

##### Assignments (due week 4)

- Critically evaluate an existing Wikipedia article related to the class, and leave suggestions for improving it on the article's discussion page.
- Research and list 3–5 articles on your Wikipedia user page that you will consider working on as your main project. Ask your class's Online Ambassadors for comments.

*Image 4: Part of a sample wiki-syllabus (from*

*[https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Education/The\\_Syllabus](https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Education/The_Syllabus)), covering student activities for the first three weeks.*

## Technicalities #2: Tips and tricks

First tip: help is available for everyone – students and instructors alike. In addition to the volunteer assistants (campus and online ambassadors) mentioned previously, and interactive help pages on Wikipedia (such as the desks and noticeboards mentioned previously), there is a 24h, real life chatroom help available (in the form of the [#wikipedia-en-ambassadors IRC channel](#)), numerous handouts and video tutorials are available from the [Wikipedia Ambassador's Resource page](#).

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<sup>16</sup> For examples of “wikisyllabus”, see Footnote 2.

Second tip: students love to procrastinate. Design the course to fight that tendency. Regular graded wiki activities and graded deadlines on larger projects will keep them from putting everything off till the last few days.

Third tip: consider making your writing assignment a community reviewed project. As mentioned earlier, Wikipedia's community has several review procedures for an article ([DYK](#), [GAN](#), [PR](#), [GAN](#)). Involving students in those process will teach the students about quality, give them more precise information as to what is expected from them, and increase the level of community involvement with your project.

Currently this is not a common practice, found in less than 10% of all assignments. Where utilized, however, it results in above-average articles, and seeing their articles on Wikipedia's front page increases student satisfaction (as witnessed, for example, by comments from students in the first course to set and achieve a goal of writing [Good Articles](#) and [Featured Articles](#), the University of British Columbia (Spring 2008) class SPAN312 ("[Murder, Madness, and Mayhem: Latin American Literature in Translation](#)").

The two most effective procedures to incorporate into one's course are the Did You Know and Good Article reviews.

Did You Know requires that an article is relatively recent (created no more than a week before the nomination) or expanded (within the same time frame) five-fold. This article should be also larger than a stub (roughly, containing at least 1,500 characters of prose), properly formatted and with inline references at least for key claims. Such an article should be listed at the [Did You Know nominations](#).

[page](#), and will be reviewed by another editor. As some reviewers just leave their comments at that page, students should monitor it daily, till the review is passed, to address any issues raised. Upon the successful review, the article will be eligible for an appearance on Wikipedia's front page in the “Did you know...” section (the article will usually be featured for several hours, few days after a successful review is concluded). One of the handouts at the Wikipedia Ambassador's Resources page listed above provides a detailed outline for a “Did You Know” assignment.<sup>17</sup>

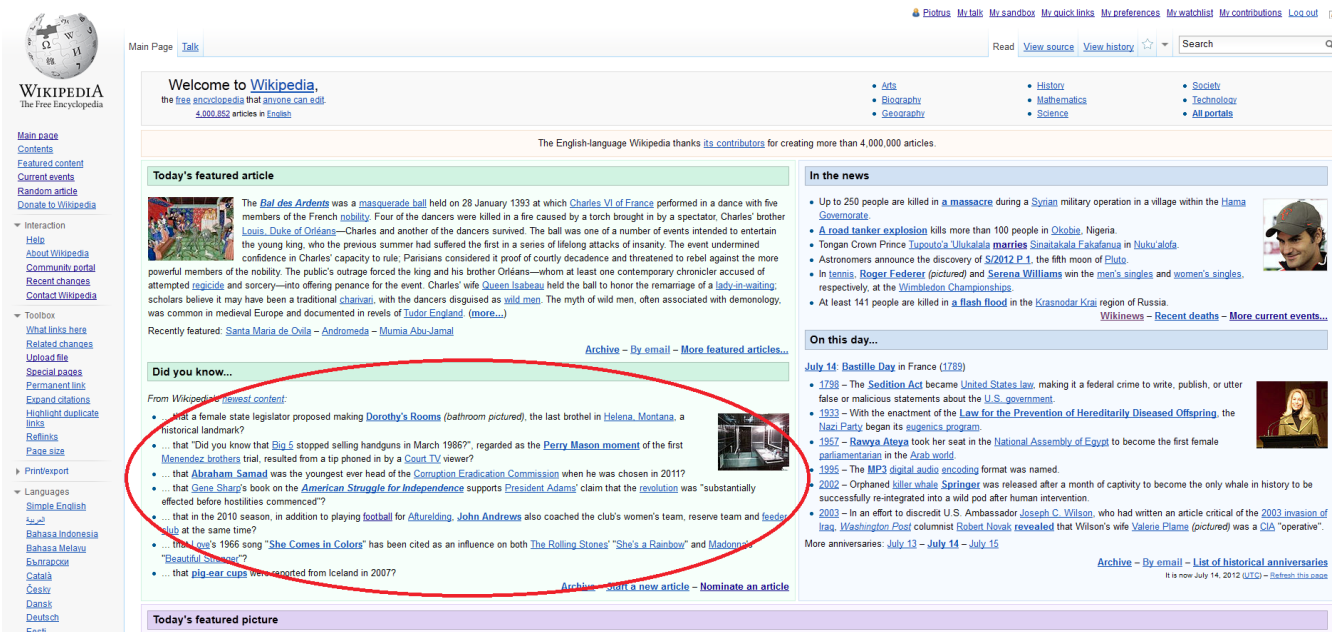


Image 5: *Did You Know* articles students write will be featured in the (highlighted) section of Wikipedia's Main Page for several hours, usually attracting several thousand readers.

A more challenging process is the Good Article reviews. Compared to Did You Knows, Good Articles are usually much longer, required to be a relatively comprehensive treatments of a given subject, and are subject to a much more detailed review of prose, comprehensive and reliable sourcing. Good Article reviewers will provide a much more detailed review, and will expect a much higher level of

<sup>17</sup> This particular handout is available here: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Classroom\\_handout\\_-\\_Submitting\\_an\\_article\\_to\\_the\\_Did\\_You\\_Know\\_process.pdf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Classroom_handout_-_Submitting_an_article_to_the_Did_You_Know_process.pdf)

interaction than the Did You Know reviewers. The procedure of nominating an article for a Good Article is relatively simple and covered on the [Good Article Nomination page](#).

In my experience, about half of the student groups in my courses are able to achieve a Good Article status on their articles, and the remaining half end up with the “almost Good Article” B-class status. Numerous other students or groups have achieved a Did You Know status, particularly with the help of the Campus and Online Ambassadors.<sup>18</sup>

Note that Good Articles often have a backlog of several weeks from nomination to review. This makes them problematic for assignment with tighter deadlines, but this can be easily rectified. On [the talk page of the Good Article Nominations page](#) one can ask for reviewers who would be willing to review your student articles ahead of schedule (due to class deadlines). In all cases I have asked for reviewers, volunteers agreed to review my class articles within few days (and kept good on that promise). It is not required, but in good form, for the instructor and his assistants to agree to review some other Good Articles nominees, to reduce the workload that the educational assignments put on Good Article reviewers.

You will also surely want to review the students articles yourself. Wikipedia offers a useful tool – the [Peer Reviewer](#)<sup>19</sup> – that will check for technical errors within the article (such as Wikipedia Manual of Style issues).

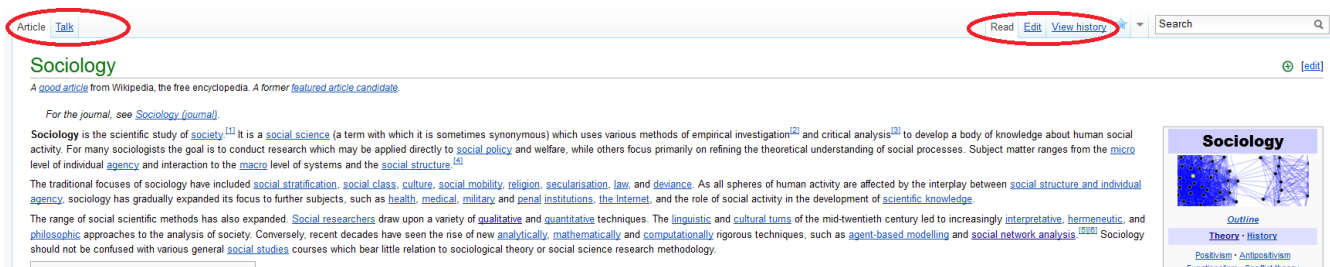
Fourth tip: Encourage the use of discussion (talk) pages. As Reilly (2011) notes, those interactions can

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18 Did You Know articles written by student can be found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Ambassadors/Courses/Trophy\\_case\\_2010](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Ambassadors/Courses/Trophy_case_2010) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Ambassadors/Courses/Trophy\\_case\\_2011](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Ambassadors/Courses/Trophy_case_2011)

19 The Peer Reviewer tool can be found at [http://toolserver.org/~dispenser/view/Peer\\_reviewer](http://toolserver.org/~dispenser/view/Peer_reviewer)

be one of the most constructive and motivating elements of the Wikipedia assignment. All Wikipedia's articles have discussion pages accessible through a tab in the top right corner of the article, labeled “discussion”. Those pages serve as primary communication venue on Wikipedia. When students edit an article, they should monitor its discussion page for comments from other editors. Also, each editor has their own public discussion (talk) page.



*Image 6: Top of a Wikipedia article, read mode. Note the talk tab to the left, and edit and view history tabs to the right.*

Wikipedia netiquette has evolved in such a way that it is expected that editors will conduct most of their public discussion through discussion (talk) pages, rather than through email. If students ignore those pages, they will likely fail to spot or respond to inquires, suggestions and reviews from other, more seasoned Wikipedia editors. This is highly problematic, as proper use of discussion pages can be very beneficial. As one of the educators who commented on it: “[Through discussion pages, students] also got to experience feedback in many forms from someone other than me. I think that may have been the greatest challenge and lesson they learned – not everyone will bend over backwards to spare their feelings, and they are unable to control what everyone says about their work. I also required that they take ALL feedback, good and bad, into account. This was tough for many, but it made them better writers.” (Brundage 2008)



This form of communication is however likely to be new to students, and getting used to it is perhaps one of the biggest challenges. To ensure that the students utilize the those pages, I employ three solutions in my courses:

- first, make discussion (talk) pages activity required and gradable (just like class discussions);
- second, some early warm-up activities should require students to use those pages (post review of an article, ask questions at the Reference Desk, post an outline and “to do” lists of their future work, and so on);
- third, the students (and you) can subscribe to RSS (email) alerts when the a page they are interested in (their own discussion pages and the assignment page, most likely) has been edited. This can be achieved through [RSS syndication](#);
- fourth, as of early 2011, Wikipedia has also introduced an option to receive email notifications whenever one's talkpage is changed (to be enabled in one's preferences).

It is highly recommended to monitor all student talk page activity, and interact with them on Wikipedia by posting comments/suggestions/reviews, answering their questions and asking your own about their progress.

Some potential problems with discussion pages include:

- students may not realize they need to bottompost (new comments, on Wikipedia, always go at the bottom of a page/under the last relevant comment) and sign their posts;
- students often tend to use discussion page to “declare” things, rather than interact with others. Stress that discussion pages are for discussion, not just announcements;
- also, give a “heads up” on article's discussion page, warning editors monitoring it about the

influx of newbies. This is likely to assure their good will ahead of time. To do so, see which editors have commented on a given article's discussion page before, and contact them through their user discussion pages, notifying them that the article they may be interested in will be a subject of an educational assignment they may want to help out with;

- rarely, a misguided editor will be uncivil to students and/or the instructor, telling them that Wikipedia is not a place for educational assignments, and/or that this project is damaging the article/ discussion page. Reminding them that educational assignments are an established part of Wikipedia and that Wikipedia has a “[do not bite the newcomers](#)” policy should usually suffice. In either case, students encountering unfriendly editors is reported to be a very rare occurrence, consistent with my own experiences (Ehmann, Large and Beheshti 2009; Reilly 2011);
- some discussion pages, particularly those of article's just created by students, will not be monitored by other editors. Thus student posts on them may not elicit any reply, potentially damaging student motivations. You may want to solicit comments, either through posting on relevant discussion pages, or inviting comments through the previously mentioned Wikipedia-wide “request for comment” discussions.

Fifth tip: think about student motivations. Explain to them that by doing assignments on Wikipedia they are learning valuable 21<sup>st</sup> century computer literacy skills, something to include on their resumes.

Further, it is worth stressing that they are learning about the reliability of the most popular source of information in the online world, and their work will become a digital artifact, helping others and that they can point to now and in the years to come.

On May 5, several students saw their handiwork appear on Wikipedia's main page, read by tens of

thousands of visitors around the world that day. As one of the students commented on their finished product: “Because I have worked so hard writing and re-writing it, I am extremely proud of the finished result. I almost can't believe I helped write it when I look back over it. Term papers I have handed back end up in a binder than eventually sits under my bed and files sit on my computer unopened ever again. This wikipedia page will be seen and likely used by others in the future. After all, I am quite confident that the references list is a comprehensive list of nearly everything published in English on the subject. Any student or person looking to read more about El Señor Presidente no longer has to look any further than our references list. Now that is something truly amazing!” (McNeil 2008)

Sixth tip: check [the preferences page](#) for many useful settings. Receiving email is disabled by default. If you do not have the habit of checking your talk page daily, enable email, and you may advise the students to do the same.

Seventh tip: as Reilly (2011) notes, it is a good idea to encourage student use of [the edit summary](#) tool while editing. When making edits, all editors are advised to add helpful summaries of what they have done, visible from the history and contribution tabs. This helps the instructor, but also the students, as it may force the student to spend more time rethinking and improving their edit, and increases the chances of their edits being positively received by others.

Eight tip: remember about copyrights: In addition to thinking about plagiarism, think about the copyright in general. Check who owns your students' course work. If the owner is your institution, check that you have permission to submit it. If it is your students (as is most common), ensure that you have their consent to require them to add material to Wikipedia (a note in the syllabus should be sufficient).

Ninth tip: consider this advice from Cory Doctorow (2007): "The assignment went very well... The key is to put every student's edits up for the whole class to see and discuss at each lecture." Whether you will want to dedicate lecture time to reviewing Wikipedia assignment is, of course, a significant issue to consider. Many successful courses have used Wikipedia without putting that much stress on this assignment, however Doctorow's insight is certainly worth considering.

Tenth tip: wikis make monitoring student activities easy. Make sure you are familiar with page history and editor contribution tools. [Article's history](#), accessible through "history" tab at the top of each article, will allow you to see who has edited a given article, when and how. [Editor contribution tool](#), accessible through article's history or user pages, allows you to see exactly what and when a given student has been doing.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> You can learn about those tools at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Page\\_history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Page_history) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:User\\_contributions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:User_contributions)

- [10:47, January 28, 2012 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+1) .. [Fairy Tail](#) ([↔Plot](#))
- [01:03, January 6, 2012 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (0) .. [Hafstrjod](#) ([↔The name](#))
- [11:52, December 24, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-1) .. [Hadlyme Ferry Historic District](#) (**top**) [[rollback](#)]
- [06:20, December 19, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+162) .. [User:Ldavis \(WMF\)/Karl blog post](#) ([↔Pitt undergrad learns the ways of Wikipedia](#))
- [12:26, December 15, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-1) .. [List of Tsubasa: Reservoir Chronicle characters](#) ([↔Mokona Modoki](#))
- [04:36, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+145) .. [Talk:Marriage in the United States/GA1](#) ([↔Further comments](#)) (**top**) [[rollback](#)]
- [04:31, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (0) .. [Marriage in the United States](#) ([↔History](#))
- [04:29, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-1) .. [Marriage in the United States](#) ([↔Demographics](#))
- [04:23, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-5) .. [Single parent](#) ([↔Children and divorce](#))
- [04:22, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (0) .. [Single parent](#) ([↔Father as the primary caregiver](#))
- [04:21, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+2) .. [Personal wedding website](#) ([↔Purpose](#))
- [04:20, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+8) .. [m Personal wedding website](#) ([↔Comparing and contrasting the price of wedding planner with price of website](#))
- [04:13, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+38) .. [Grounds for divorce \(United States\)](#) ([↔Separation](#))
- [04:12, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-13) .. [Grounds for divorce \(United States\)](#) ([↔Irretrievable breakdown](#))
- [04:08, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-2) .. [Grounds for divorce \(United States\)](#) ([↔State acceptance](#))
- [04:05, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+32) .. [Grounds for divorce \(United States\)](#) ([↔Adultery](#))
- [04:03, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-3) .. [Grounds for divorce \(United States\)](#) ([↔The accused was not at fault](#))
- [04:00, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-3) .. [Grounds for divorce \(United States\)](#) ([↔Possible reconciliation](#))
- [03:59, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-3) .. [Grounds for divorce \(United States\)](#) ([↔Shift of acceptance](#))
- [03:33, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+291) .. [Talk:Family in advertising](#)
- [03:31, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+340) .. [User talk:PumpkinSky](#)
- [02:49, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+65) .. [m Family in advertising](#) (*Reverted 5 edits by [Alimosser61](#) (talk) identified as [vandalism](#) to last revision by 71.61.179.17. (TW)*)
- [01:56, December 8, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+144) .. [User talk:Piotrus](#) ([↔Joint Custody: new section](#))
- [02:16, December 4, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+625) .. [User talk:Piotrus](#) ([↔Joint custody \(United States\) needs a kick in the pants](#))
- [20:46, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+189) .. [Talk:Joint custody \(United States\)/GA1](#) ([↔GA Review](#))
- [20:45, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-24) .. [Joint custody \(United States\)](#) ([↔Impact on families](#))
- [20:45, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+16) .. [Joint custody \(United States\)](#) ([↔Impact on families](#))
- [20:44, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+17) .. [Joint custody \(United States\)](#) ([↔Impact on families](#))
- [20:43, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+4) .. [Joint custody \(United States\)](#) ([↔Impact on families](#))
- [20:42, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+22) .. [Joint custody \(United States\)](#) ([↔Impact on families](#))
- [20:40, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+4) .. [Joint custody \(United States\)](#) ([↔Benefits and criticisms of joint physical custody](#))
- [20:38, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+811) .. [Talk:Joint custody \(United States\)/GA1](#) ([↔GA Review](#))
- [20:34, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (0) .. [Talk:Joint custody \(United States\)/GA1](#) ([↔GA Review](#))
- [20:34, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+422) .. [Talk:Joint custody \(United States\)/GA1](#) ([↔GA Review](#))
- [20:31, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-44) .. [Joint custody \(United States\)](#) ([↔Impact on families](#))
- [20:28, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-22) .. [Joint custody \(United States\)](#) ([↔Joint physical custody](#))
- [20:24, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-78) .. [Joint custody \(United States\)](#) ([↔Concept of joint custody](#))
- [20:19, November 28, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-25) .. [Joint custody \(United States\)](#)
- [00:02, November 23, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-4) .. [Joint custody \(United States\)](#) ([↔Joint physical custody](#))
- [10:06, November 21, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (-1) .. [List of Tsubasa: Reservoir Chronicle characters](#) ([↔Tsubasa \(Syaoran\)](#))
- [20:54, November 20, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+269) .. [User talk:Astrocog](#) ([↔Joint custody](#))
- [19:07, November 17, 2011 \(diff | hist\)](#) .. (+257) .. [Talk:Joint custody \(United States\)/GA1](#) ([↔GA Review](#))

Image 7: User contributions for a student, showing exactly when the student has been active, and on what article.

### Grounds for divorce (United States): Difference between revisions

<p><a href="#">Revision as of 04:03, December 8, 2011 (edit)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Kgw2 (talk   contribs)</a>  (<a href="#">↔The accused was not at fault</a>)  <a href="#">← Previous edit</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Revision as of 04:05, December 8, 2011 (edit) (undo)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Kgw2 (talk   contribs)</a>  (<a href="#">↔Adultery</a>)  <a href="#">Next edit →</a></p>
<p>Line 64:</p> <pre> === Adultery ===  Sexual activities with a person of the opposite sex as well as the same sex involving [[oral sex]] and other sexual behavior not necessarily including intercourse constitute [[adultery]]&lt;ref name="The complete guide to divorce law2"/&gt; In order to use adultery as grounds for a divorce, the filing party must present sufficient proof that the other party had sexual relations with <b>someone else</b>&lt;ref name="The complete guide to divorce law2"/&gt; Circumstantial as well as documented evidence, including videotapes of the spouse committing the [[sexual infidelity]], can be used as proof of adultery&lt;ref name="The complete guide to divorce law2"/&gt; <b>The</b> accusing partner must prove that the other partner had the opportunity and inclination to commit adultery&lt;ref name="Family law2"/&gt;  === Cruelty === </pre>	<p>Line 64:</p> <pre> === Adultery ===  Sexual activities with a person of the opposite sex as well as the same sex involving [[oral sex]] and other sexual behavior not necessarily including intercourse constitute [[adultery]]&lt;ref name="The complete guide to divorce law2"/&gt; In order to use adultery as grounds for a divorce, the filing party must present sufficient proof that the other party had sexual relations with <b>a third party</b>&lt;ref name="The complete guide to divorce law2"/&gt; Circumstantial as well as documented evidence, including videotapes of the spouse committing the [[sexual infidelity]], can be used as proof of adultery&lt;ref name="The complete guide to divorce law2"/&gt; <b>In addition to this evidence,</b> the accusing partner must prove that the other partner had the opportunity and inclination to commit adultery&lt;ref name="Family law2"/&gt;  === Cruelty === </pre>

Image 8: An in-depth view of a specific student contribution, showing exactly what the student has changed in an article.

## Advanced editing #1: Referencing

Referencing Wikipedia article is likely among the most useful tasks students can do, outside writing them (which involves referencing anyway). Acquiring referencing skills opens a very useful field for student activities: adding and verifying references. There is a plethora of articles to be fixed (see the “Wikipedia articles with sourcing issues” category). Those skills are great for teaching students about reliability of sources in general and the reliability of Wikipedia and its limits in particular.

Up till early 2011, referencing involved learning a little bit of code, making it rather more complex than most other edits. Recently, however, interface improvements made referencing a much more friendly task. In the editing mode, the editing toolbar (a line over the editing windows with buttons for bolding text, inserting links and such) now also has a “cite” button which generates pop up windows allowing editors to enter bibliographical data for book, journals, web articles or other types of data.

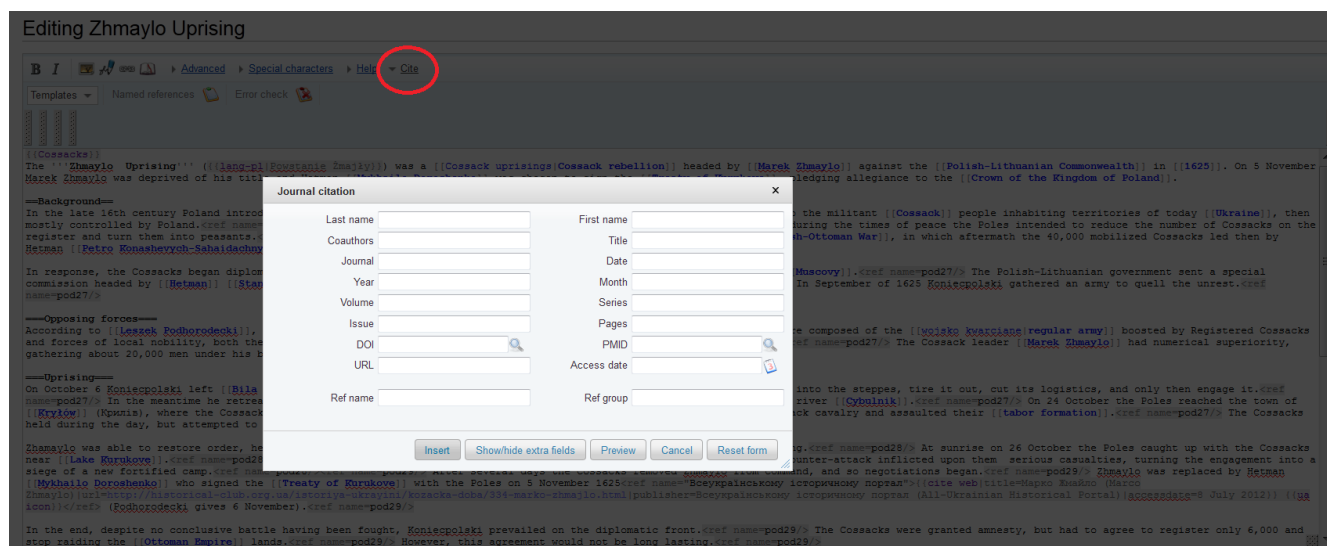


Image 9: The journal citation pop up, that once filled will generate the appropriate wiki code, and place it in the article where needed. It is accessed from the cite menu (highlighted), and selected from the pull-down “templates” menu (to the left of the highlight).

Note that after entering information in this pop-up box, it will generate and insert less friendly code into the article's editing window. There is no need for an editor to do anything to that code anymore, however, it will be visible. Some students may be confused or scared by this code, and as such, demonstrating how referencing works on Wikipedia, and a brief explanation and demystification of the `<ref></ref>` and `<ref name=></ref>` code in class is beneficial.<sup>21</sup> I would strongly suggest combining this with a short lecture segment on what a reliable source is (why books are better than blogs, avoiding “random websites”, avoiding course presentation slides, and such). Students often do not realize what makes a source reliable or not, and learning this constitutes a valuable skill certainly applicable outside just Wikipedia.

Finally, it is important to note that Wikipedia's referencing standards are usually higher than those of a regular term paper. In particular, students should reference most sentences – thus they will be less likely to get away with plagiarism, or using unreliable sources.

### Advanced editing #2: Images

Adding an image to article can be tricky, but rewarding, particularly if it is an image the students have taken or created themselves.

When uploading an image to Wikipedia, one needs to keep in mind this image has to be available under a free license, or be in a public domain. Many students are unfamiliar with the issues of copyright, and

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<sup>21</sup> In addition to the section on referencing in the Wikipedia Tutorial, a useful advice on referencing for beginners can be found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia\\_talk:School\\_and\\_university\\_projects/User:Piotrus/Fall\\_2009#Using\\_templates\\_and\\_.3Cref\\_name.3D.3E\\_makes\\_it\\_much\\_easier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_talk:School_and_university_projects/User:Piotrus/Fall_2009#Using_templates_and_.3Cref_name.3D.3E_makes_it_much_easier)

they need to learn that a “random image found on the web” is not acceptable on Wikipedia (or in most other places). This is a great learning opportunity to teach students about the increasingly important issues of free culture and copyrights (Lessig 2004).

When the students are ready to upload an image, they should do it through the [Upload Wizard](#) . The image will be uploaded to Wikimedia Commons, a repository of free media for Wikipedia and its sister projects; the wizard will provide a code that needs to be added to the article for the image to be visible there.

[Wikipedia:Finding images tutorial](#), [Wikipedia:Picture tutorial](#) and [Wikipedia:Graphics tutorial](#) cover, respectively, finding existing, freely available images on the web, placing them in the articles, and creating/improving images.

While the upload wizard prompts the editors to select a free license and describe the source of the image, in my experience, students often ignore that requirement, leading to their images being deleted as non-free copyright violations. If your students will be uploading images or other media, make sure to stress the importance of free licensing (and a demonstration of how to upload an image may be helpful).

### Advanced editing #3: Tables and infoboxes

Tables and infoboxes (specialized tables found at the beginning of many Wikipedia articles) are unfortunately still (as of early 2011) rather code-heavy. Therefore I do not require my students to use either, although if you think students in your class are relatively computer savvy, or that tables and/or



infoboxes would add something significant to your assignments, [Help:Table](#) and [Help:Infobox](#) pages will be useful.

However, even if you do not require students to use tables of infoboxes, at the very least, just like with referencing, students should realize that in the editing mode, when editing an article with tables or infoboxes, they can encounter blocks of code.<sup>22</sup> To demystify them, when demonstrating the basics of Wikipedia, after editing in a simple article without an infobox (such as “tradition”), show students an article with an infobox (most biographical articles will have them, for example “Karl Marx”) and note that they can edit the text in the infobox, as well as below it, just like anywhere else.

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<sup>22</sup> Wikimedia Foundation has been working on a “WYSIWIG” editor that would eliminate the need for editors to deal with code for several years. In spring 2012 a beta version was announced and is available for testing here: <http://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/VisualEditor>

## Editing Karl Marx

```

B I [Icons] Advanced Special characters Help Cite
Templates Named references Error check
[[pp-move-undef]]
[[Redirect|Marx]]
{{Use dmy dates|date=April 2011}}
{{Infobox philosopher
|region = [[Western Philosophy]], [[German philosophy]]
|era = [[19th-century philosophy]]
|color = #B0C4DE
|image = Karl Marx 001.jpg
|caption = Marx in 1875
|birth_name = Karl Heinrich Marx
|birth_date = 5 May 1818
|birth_place = [[Trier]], [[Kingdom of Prussia]]
|death_date = {{Death date and age|df=yes|1883|03|14|1818|05|05}}
|death_place = [[London]], [[United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland|United Kingdom]]
|residence = Germany, United Kingdom
|nationality = [[Germans|German]]
|religion = [[Protestantism]]; later, none ([[atheism|atheist]])
|school_tradition = [[Marxism]], [[Communism]], [[Socialism]], [[Materialism]]
|signature =Karl Marx Signature.svg
|main_interests = Politics, economics, [[philosophy]], [[sociology]], [[Labour relations|labour]], hist
|influences = [[Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel|Hegel]], [[Ludwig Feuerbach|Feuerbach]], [[Baruch Spinoza
|Voltaire]], [[David Ricardo|Ricardo]], [[Giambattista Vico|Vico]], [[Jean-Jacques Rousseau|Rousseau]], [[
Helvétius|Helvétius]], [[Baron d'Holbach|d'Holbach]]<ref>Mehring, Franz, "Karl Marx: The Story of His
Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology", "American Journal of Soc
Fourier|Fourier]], [[Robert Owen]], [[Nicolae Bălcescu|Bălcescu]], [[Moses Hess|Hess]], [[Victor d'Hu
|http://books.google.gr/books?id=L949AAAAIAAJdq "Marx's Critique of Political Economy: 1844 to 1860"
|influenced = [[Vladimir Lenin|Lenin]], [[Joseph Stalin|Stalin]], [[Leon Trotsky|Trotsky]], [[Mao Zedon
Guevara|Guevara]], [[Nicolae Ceausescu|Ceausescu]], [[Ho Chi Minh|Ho]], [[Jean-Paul Sartre|Sartre]], [[
Gramsci|Gramsci]], [[Karl Korsch|Korsch]], [[Peter Kropotkin|Kropotkin]], [[Mikhail Bakunin|Bakunin]], [
Marcuse|Marcuse]], [[Jean-François Lyotard|Lyotard]], [[Michel Foucault|Foucault]], [[Gilles Deleuze|De
Roy|Roy]], [[Ernesto Laclau|Laclau]], [[Pierre Bourdieu|Bourdieu]], [[Joseph Schumpeter|Schumpeter]], [
|notable_ideas = Co-founder of [[Marxism]] (with [[Friedrich Engels|Engels]]), [[surplus value]], contr
of the worker, ''[[The Communist Manifesto]]'', ''[[Das Kapital]]'', ''[[historical materialism|materiali

```

**Karl Marx**



Marx in 1875

<b>Born</b>	Karl Heinrich Marx 5 May 1818 <a href="#">Trier, Kingdom of Prussia</a>
<b>Died</b>	14 March 1883 (aged 64) <a href="#">London, United Kingdom</a>
<b>Residence</b>	Germany, United Kingdom
<b>Nationality</b>	<a href="#">German</a>
<b>Era</b>	<a href="#">19th-century philosophy</a>
<b>Region</b>	<a href="#">Western Philosophy</a> , <a href="#">German philosophy</a>
<b>School</b>	<a href="#">Marxism</a> , <a href="#">Communism</a> , <a href="#">Socialism</a> , <a href="#">Materialism</a>
<b>Main interests</b>	Politics, economics, <a href="#">philosophy</a> , <a href="#">sociology</a> , <a href="#">labour</a> , <a href="#">history</a> , <a href="#">class struggle</a> .

Image 10: An article's infobox (right) is usually code heavy (code pictured to the left). However, students can just ignore it, or ask experienced Wikipedians for help.

### Common problems with Wikipedia assignments

Over several years, I observed that common problems with teaching with Wikipedia can be classified into two categories:

- teacher not understanding what Wikipedia is (worse case: teachers asking students to vandalize Wikipedia to demonstrate its unreliability or similar concepts, or to create hoax articles,<sup>23</sup>)
- students not understanding what Wikipedia is (not enough explanation from the teacher)

<sup>23</sup> An example of such “teaching through vandalism” can be read about in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedia\\_Signpost/2010-06-14/In\\_the\\_news](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/2010-06-14/In_the_news)

Either way, this leads to deletion of articles due to either:

- original research;
- plagiarism

Having your students work disappear can be a serious blow to their enjoyment. Two courses illustrate that well, as half of the student created entries in them were deleted within days of creation, due to being plagiarized, unencyclopedic or merged upon identification of already-existing articles on the same subject.<sup>24</sup>

No original research policy means that articles on Wikipedia need to be written in encyclopedic style, cite reliable, secondary sources for all claims, and avoid essay-like personal opinions and first-hand findings. In my experience, once the structure and purpose of an encyclopedic article is explained to students, they find it rather easy to grasp this idea.

The problem of plagiarism is much better known throughout academia. In the past few years, I have found that close to a third of undergrads have a plagiarism-related “misunderstanding”. Fortunately, I also found a way to reduce those misunderstandings to from a third of my students to almost zero.

First, assume that the students do not really know much about plagiarism, and what they may know is likely incomplete. Explain to them what a plagiarism (and copyright violation) is. In particular, they need to realize that they should not only cite sources, but avoid long quotations or attributed copy-

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<sup>24</sup> For specific case studies, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Deletion\\_policy/Teletraffic\\_Engineering](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Deletion_policy/Teletraffic_Engineering) (11 out of 27 student created articles deleted) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Globecon/Global\\_Economics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Globecon/Global_Economics) (33 out of 70 articles deleted)

pastes (I lost count how often students copy and paste segments, attribute them, and think this is allowed). Others copy and paste text, intending to rewrite it later. This is certainly not allowed on Wikipedia, where even early drafts are public and must be free of plagiarism (know on Wikipedia as “copyvio”s). You may want to direct your students to helpful guides on Wikipedia: [Wikipedia:Copy-paste](#), [Wikipedia:Quotations#When\\_not\\_to\\_use\\_quotations](#) and [Wikipedia:Close\\_paraphrasing](#).

Second, after explaining to them what they should not do, it is time to strike some fear into them.

Mentioning the academic ethical guidelines and penalties helps. Follow it up by showing students how easy it is to find out whether they have committed a plagiarism. I usually begin by demonstrating for them how easy it is to check for plagiarism on Google, noting that it also indexes books (through Google Books), newspapers (through Google News) and journals (through Google Scholar). Next, Wikipedia offers an even greater stick: a proof that all plagiarized content will be caught, quickly and publicly. Show the students how vigilant Wikipedia “copyright police” is:

[Wikipedia:Suspected\\_copyright\\_violations](#) and [Wikipedia:Copyright\\_problems](#) are quite a sight – dozens, if not hundreds, of new plagiarized entries on Wikipedia are found and dealt with within hours of posting. Indeed, in my personal experience, Wikipedia volunteers have detected more than a half of copyvio/plagiarism problems with articles of my students before I did.

Lastly, here are some common questions my students keep asking me every course. It is a good idea to be able to answer them quickly:

- how do I add references? (show them how to use the reference button in the toolbar);
- how do I add image? (show them how to add an image to an article);
- image I uploaded got deleted (likely because the student just found an image “somewhere” on

the web and does not understand the concept of Wikipedia accepting only freely licensed images);

- content I added got deleted (it was either plagiarized, or unencyclopedic, such as a “to do” list or empty sections that belong on the talk page instead);
- where can I find some reliable sources? (it is a good idea to have a segment on finding reliable sources for any writing assignment).

### What students think about Wikipedia assignments?

Students are ambivalent about whether wikis are easy, but a lecture segment on how to edit vastly improves their perception of how easy it was to learn this tool. Augar, Raitman and Zhou already in 2005 found that 73% of their students considered wiki technology “easy to use”, and after incorporating a “how to edit Wikipedia” segment into my initial lectures (three one our segments in a computer lab), a similar portion of my students expressed the same sentiment.

Students are ambivalent about wiki assignments: some love them, some hate them, most are neutral; based on my observations, about as many appreciate the Wiki assignment as would prefer to have a different one. The students who disliked the assignment usually noted that it was more difficult than just writing a regular paper in a text editor would be; those who liked it commented that their project resulted in above-average group paper that would be seen and appreciated by others. At the same time, Chen and Reber (2011) reported that most students in their sample appreciated the Wikipedia assignment, as did Callis et al. (2009) and Wright (2012); I expect that the difference is due to my students being undergraduate, compared to the primarily graduate (and thus, more motivated) composition of the population of other studies.

Students did certainly appreciate that their work is seen and useful to the wider public, and that they are creating useful digital artifacts. This is consistent with previous findings in the literature (Weiger 1998, Hollis 2002, Forte and Bruckman, 2006, McNeil 2008, Brundage 2008), as students are known to be more motivated to participate in activities that they see as having a visible impact on the real world.

Students also show some appreciation for learning a new tool that they may find useful in the future work, although they may well not realize how likely it is that they will be using wikis in their future careers (Tapscott and Williams 2010). This should come as no surprise, considering most of them did not know what a wiki is before the beginning the course (Menchen-Trevino and Hargittai 2011).

### Conclusion

The Wikipedia assignment allows one to easily incorporate into teaching practice lessons on reliability, copyrights and free culture, as well as wikis and Wikipedia, which form an increasingly useful skillsets for the new, digital literacies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It does not entitle any costs beyond acquiring some basic wiki editing skills that one can utilize in heeding the call for academics to contribute to Wikipedia, and more selfishly, in collaborative work on various research projects. Free help from motivated Wikipedia volunteers (such as the Campus and Online Ambassadors) is often more substantial than assistance promised from for-profit groups. Finally, the assignment easily fits into most syllabi by replacing the traditional (“write-grade-shred-forget”) writing assignment with a contribution to a popular, public and non-profit project in the best tradition of the “service learning” paradigm.

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