

# Lesson Plan: The Scholarly Article Autopsy

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**Audience:** Students taking a research methods course in the major (SOC 323 and ANTH 305); could be adapted to any setting that requires in-depth examination of information creation processes, the construction of authority, and the contextual appropriateness of sources.

**Overview:** This lesson is intended as a single session within a major's research methods course. Rather than using a shorter "scholarly vs. non-scholarly" comparison worksheet, this activity asks students to work in groups to systematically examine a scholarly article in depth, identify and evaluate its various components visually and in writing, and then compare it to a non-scholarly article on the same topic. Groups then report back to the entire class. Discussion is guided so as to touch on the processes by which sources are created, what these methods say about their authority, and to consider contextually appropriate uses for them.

**Time duration:** Ideally at least 75 minutes; a shortened version can be fit into 50 minutes, but resulting student learning is more superficial

## Objectives:

- The student will be able to identify the standard elements of scholarly writing.
- The student will be able to distinguish scholarly from non-scholarly literature.
- The student will be able to select the appropriate type of source to use in various contexts.

## Materials:

- Instruction station with access to the internet
- An online guide with links to articles (pairs of one scholarly and one non-scholarly article each on the same topic: Ex: <http://wiu.libguides.com/c.php?g=295260&p=2629816>)
- Each pair/group needs a copy of the worksheet and a printed scholarly article, at least one computer with access to the internet, and a highlighter and a writing utensil

## Lesson Outline/Procedure:

Time	Activity
5 minutes	<u>Set up</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arrange room to encourage pairs or groups of three</li><li>• Distribute the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Each participant gets a copy of the worksheet.</li><li>○ Each pair/group gets a print copy of one of the scholarly articles to mark up. Try not to give adjacent groups the same article.</li><li>○ Each group gets a highlighter.</li></ul></li><li>• On the presenter screen, bring up the LibGuide for the session as well as a PDF of each sample article for the students to use when they are presenting</li></ul>
5 minutes	<u>Introduce the process</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guide students to the session LibGuide page with article links so they may bring up the PDF version of their assigned article.</li><li>• Review the worksheet together so that all understand what to do.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell them to assign a recorder and presenter(s).</li> </ul>
30-40 minutes	<p><u>Scholarly Autopsy Activity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow students to complete the worksheet, frequently checking in with each pair/group to judge progress. When the students reach questions 8-11 they may either work from a printed copy of the comparison article or an online PDF as linked from the LibGuide.</li> </ul>
20-30 minutes	<p><u>Report Back</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring group back together and have students present. Guide the discussion so as to frame each element from the scholarly articles in terms of the research process and to emphasize the contexts in which scholarly and non-scholarly sources may be appropriate. Possible discussion structure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bring up the PDF of article 1 up on screen. Ask all of the presenters with article 1 to come to the front and discuss questions 1-3, showing what they found on screen.</li> <li>○ Have presenters for article 2 come up, bring up the PDF, and talk about questions 4-5, citations. Make sure they show the link between a citation and its bibliography entry. Discuss how using sources is part of the research process and construction of authority. Talk about literature reviews and how they may or may not be explicitly named.</li> <li>○ Have presenters for article 3 talk about the research question. Display it on screen, talk about what a research question is and what role it plays in the creation of information.</li> <li>○ Have presenters for article 4 talk about methods used and their role in information creation and authority construction.</li> <li>○ Finally, have presenters for article 5 talk about the comparison to non-scholarly. Make sure they show the visible differences on-screen.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> The above process must be adapted to fit with the number of groups constituted and the example articles used.</p>

**Assessment:**

- The librarian and the teacher of record will evaluate students' learning about elements of scholarly articles, the differences between scholarly and non-scholarly sources, and the selection of contextually-appropriate sources based on the verbal reports of their groups as well as the resulting discussion between groups.
- Additional assessment will take place after the session by examining the written worksheets and marked-up articles.

**ACRL Information Literacy Framework:**

- Authority is Constructed and Contextual: Knowledge Practice 2
- Authority is Constructed and Contextual: Knowledge Practice 3
- Information Creation as a Process: Knowledge Practice 1
- Information Creation as a Process: Knowledge Practice 2
- Information Creation as a Process: Knowledge Practice 4
- Information Creation as a Process: Disposition 1
- Information Creation as a Process: Disposition 2

# Scholarly Article Autopsy

Group Members:

Recorder: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Article: \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION 1: QUICK CLUES

1. What kind of information can you find about the **author(s)** of the article?
  2. Find the **abstract** and quickly scan it. What is an abstract? Why is it included with the article?
  3. Are there any **graphics** included in the article? What kind? Why are they included?
  4. Identify **citations** within your article text. **Circle** below what style of citation your article uses:
    - a. Numbered endnotes
    - b. In-text citations
    - c. Numbered footnotes
  5. Find one citation in the article text and **highlight** it, then turn to the bibliography/notes at the end of the article. **Highlight** the entry that corresponds to your citation.
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## SECTION 2: CONTENT

6. Find the **research question** and **highlight it** (it may be more than one sentence). If it is not explicitly stated, please write the article's central idea in your own words below:

SECTION 2: CONTENT

7. Find the **methods** or **methodology** section of your article. How was the study conducted? How were subjects found? What tools were used to gather data? Summarize what was done.

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**After you have completed questions 1-7, come ask me for your comparison article.**

SECTION 3: COMPARISON

8. Look at the comparison article and find at least three major differences between your scholarly article and your comparison article:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
9. **When** could you use this kind of article?
10. Is it **better or worse** than a scholarly source?
11. **So, why** do scholarly articles exist? **Who** should use them and for what purposes?