

# Developing a Critical Information Literacy Rubric for a New General Education Curriculum



**Bonnie L. Fong, Catherine Baird,  
Drew Wallace, Michelle Echols**

# Montclair General Education/SEEDS Curriculum

## Learning Outcomes

Effective Writing I & II	Literary and Artistic Analysis
Interactive Communication	Analyzing Cultures and Societies
Quantitative Reasoning	Ethical Inquiry
Political and Civic Life	Historical Thinking
World Language and Intercultural Competency	Scientific Reasoning
	Creative Expression

## Values

Social Justice and Equity

Educated Citizenry/Critical Information Literacy

Engagement, Agency, and Leadership

Diversity and Intercultural Competency

Self-Discovery and Self-Care

# History and Context - University Wide

**2019-20** University-wide General Education Taskforce (librarian member)

**2020-21** Second University-wide General Education Taskforce (no library representation)

**Fall 2021** Library pitch to taskforce to integrate information literacy; faculty sub-committees developed rubrics for learning outcomes (librarian member on 2)

**2022** Information literacy included in General Education (renamed to Educated Citizenry/Critical Information Literacy as branding of Gen Ed became SEEDS)

**2023** SEEDS Advisory Board and course certification process (librarian member)

**2024** Student Success Librarian named to SEEDS Advisory Board

# History of Rubric Development and SEEDS Curriculum

- Learning Outcome rubrics for SEEDS were developed by faculty sub-committees.
- Librarian served on two of these groups.
- Designed to help with certification and assessment processes.

Rubrics for Student Learning Outcomes can be found on the [SEEDS website](#).

# Partner Activity

Discuss with the person next to you the successes and failures you/your institution has experienced with integrating information literacy into the curriculum (e.g. at the course level, program level, etc.)

# Consultant Guided Discussions and Collaborative Development

- Weekly intensive sessions among librarians with small and large group discussions about Educated Citizenry and the information literacy (IL) program at Montclair, guided by the consultant
- Focused on:
  - Educated Citizenry, including definition and IL program goals, to inform future work and deliverables
  - Criteria/critical information literacy (CIL) skills needed by Educated Citizens
  - Educated Citizenry [Rubric](#) development

# A New (to Montclair) Librarian's Experience

- Cataloging Librarian with no former liaison experience and limited teaching experience
  - All tenured and tenure-track Librarians at Montclair are liaisons
- First two days on the job (mid-September), our Information Literacy Consultant sessions were held in-person from 9am-3pm
  - Followed by weekly 2-hour sessions through mid-November
  - 33 hours total of synchronous meetings, with additional work performed outside meetings
- 17 total participants
  - 13 liaisons
  - Adjuncts & 10-month librarians were asked to prioritize teaching, but attended as able, and 1 staff member with an MLS was also invited to attend

# Decreasing Silos in the Library (Teaching/Cataloguing)

- Mandatory, discussion-intensive meetings
  - Promoted cross-department collaboration
  - Centered on a shared goal/sense of purpose
- Groups changed throughout the session
  - Increased exposure to various colleagues and perspectives
- As discussions progressed, participants could choose group

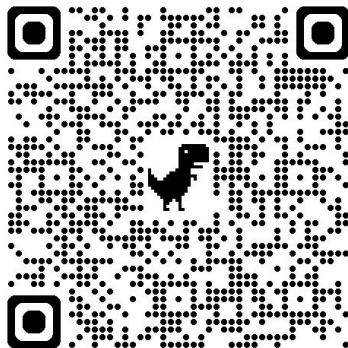


# Rubric & Application

# Educated Citizenry / Critical Information Literacy Rubric

## Educated Citizenry / Critical Information Literacy Rubric

Educated Citizenry / Critical Information Literacy Definition: An educated citizen accesses, analyzes, evaluates, synthesizes, and communicates information to make reasoned judgements, engage in and with community, and acknowledge, while critically questioning, the power structures that underlie all informational contexts in order to advance a civil society.



Outcome	Criteria	No Evidence	Introductory	Developing	Exemplary
O1. Access, analyze, and evaluate information from a variety of sources.	Locating Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not show evidence of utilizing search strategies to find information.</li> </ul>	Utilizes a limited range of search strategies and resources to find information.	Utilizes multiple search strategies and access points to find information.	Identifies and effectively utilizes search strategies to find relevant information within and beyond the library.
	Evaluation of Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not show evidence of evaluating information sources.</li> </ul>	Provides a superficial evaluation of an information source, neither analyzing supporting evidence nor identifying strengths/weaknesses/limitations of the information source.	Provides an evaluation of an information source, but does not both analyze supporting evidence and identify strengths/weaknesses/limitations of the information source.	Provides detailed and accurate evaluation of an information source, including analyzing supporting evidence provided and identifying strengths/weaknesses/limitations of the information source.
	Source Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not show evidence of using a variety of sources.</li> </ul>	Utilizes limited sources that represent a single perspective.	Utilizes a variety of sources, regardless of format, covering multiple perspectives, but does not articulate why the sources were chosen.	Utilizes a wide variety of sources, regardless of format, covering multiple perspectives, and articulates the reason behind why the sources were chosen.
Outcome	Criteria	No Evidence	Introductory	Developing	Exemplary
O2. Articulate and critically question perspectives, biases, and uses/misuses of information in the context of structures of power (e.g. social, political, economic, and cultural contexts).	Recognize Bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not show evidence of recognizing bias.</li> </ul>	Identifies limited, explicit biases within information sources.	Identifies explicit and implicit biases within information sources and articulates how explicit and implicit biases are present in the creation and use of information.	Identifies explicit and implicit biases within information sources and their creation and can identify and articulate how their own perspective may be influenced by biases, including their choices of topic/information sources.
	Evaluation of Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not show evidence of articulating strengths and weaknesses of methodology.</li> </ul>	Articulates the strengths and/or weaknesses of a single methodology.	Articulates the strengths and/or weaknesses of various methodologies in detail.	Critiques their own and others' methodologies, clearly articulating strengths and/or weaknesses, and uses that information to select methodologies relevant for a particular purpose.
	*Power Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not show evidence of recognizing power structures.</li> </ul>	Identifies systems of power that may have an impact on the creation, distribution, and reception of information.	Articulates a critical perspective of power structures that have impacted information.	Describes the power structures that contribute to information creation, rationalizes choices within these contexts, and identifies opportunities to challenge these structures of power.
Outcome	Criteria	No Evidence	Introductory	Developing	Exemplary
O3. Synthesize relevant information from a variety of sources to make reasoned judgements, and create and communicate ideas.	Synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not show evidence of synthesizing multiple sources.</li> </ul>	Articulates the value and key findings from a single source.	Utilizes multiple sources and treats each independently, articulating what each source contributes without integrating ideas across sources.	Synthesizes ideas from multiple sources with own ideas to make reasoned judgements.
	Attribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not show evidence of recognizing or following attribution practices.</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstrates effort to attribute sources and includes some key elements of a selected citation style in a bibliography, but may make major errors in formatting.</p> <p>Articulates a beginning understanding of why to cite and what citation looks like.</p>	<p>Creates a bibliography of sources for evidence and attempts to connect them with claims using in-text citations, but may have minor errors in formatting.</p> <p>Can explain why attribution is important, but may look different in different contexts.</p>	<p>Creates a bibliography of sources for evidence and accurately connects them with claims using in-text citations following the appropriate style.</p> <p>Critiques the strengths and limitations of citation practices and can articulate the importance of citational justice.</p>
	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not show evidence of effective communication.</li> </ul>	Communicates ideas in a semi-organized manner.	Communicates ideas in an organized manner.	Communicates ideas highly effectively, in a clear, precise, and well-organized manner.

# Definition

## Educated Citizenry / Critical Information Literacy Definition:

An educated citizen accesses, analyzes, evaluates, synthesizes, and communicates information to make reasoned judgements, engage in and with community, and acknowledge, while critically questioning, the power structures that underlie all informational contexts in order to advance a civil society.

# Outcome One: Access, analyze, and evaluate information from a variety of sources.

Criteria	No Evidence	Introductory	Developing	Exemplary
Locating Information	Does not show evidence of utilizing search strategies to find information.	Utilizes a limited range of search strategies and resources to find information.	Utilizes multiple search strategies and access points to find information.	Identifies and effectively utilizes search strategies to find relevant information within and beyond the library.
Evaluation of Information	Does not show evidence of evaluating information sources.	Provides a superficial evaluation of an information source, neither analyzing supporting evidence nor identifying strengths/weaknesses/limitations of the information source.	Provides an evaluation of an information source, but does not both analyze supporting evidence and identify strengths/weaknesses/limitations of the information source.	Provides detailed and accurate evaluation of an information source, including analyzing supporting evidence provided and identifying strengths/weaknesses/limitations of the information source.
Source Diversity	Does not show evidence of using a variety of sources.	Utilizes limited sources that represent a single perspective.	Utilizes a variety of sources, regardless of format, covering multiple perspectives, but does not articulate why the sources were chosen.	Utilizes a wide variety of sources, regardless of format, covering multiple perspectives, and articulates the reason behind why the sources were chosen.

# Possible Activity for Outcome One

## All the Sources: [for the Source Diversity criteria]

- Given a specific topic, have students first work in small groups to generate a list for the types of sources someone might use to learn about the topic. Encourage students to think about sources someone might use in or outside of academia.
- Have the small groups share their ideas with the entire class, noting each unique idea on a numbered list. This crowdsourced list could be a shared online document and instructors can add additional ideas at the bottom.
- Next, have students identify the (a) strengths and (b) limitations of the sources, as well as (c) when/how they might use them. This could be done as a "Pass It On" activity where students are each assigned a different starting point on the list and given a specified amount of time (90 seconds?) to contribute their answers, before moving on to the next item on the list.

{Best as a synchronous activity; can be done in-person or online.}

## Outcome Two: Articulate and critically question perspectives, biases, and uses/misuses of information in the context of structures of power

Criteria	No Evidence	Introductory	Developing	Exemplary
Recognize Bias	Does not show evidence of recognizing bias.	Identifies limited, explicit biases within information sources.	Identifies explicit and implicit biases within information sources and articulates how explicit and implicit biases are present in the creation and use of information.	Identifies explicit and implicit biases within information sources and their creation and can identify and articulate how their own perspective may be influenced by biases, including their choices of topic/information sources.
Evaluation of Methodology	Does not show evidence of articulating strengths and weaknesses of methodology.	Articulates the strengths and/or weaknesses of a single methodology.	Articulates the strengths and/or weaknesses of various methodologies in detail.	Critiques their own and others' methodologies, clearly articulating strengths and/or weaknesses, and uses that information to select methodologies relevant for a particular purpose.
Power Structures	Does not show evidence of recognizing power structures.	Identifies systems of power that may have an impact on the creation, distribution, and reception of information.	Articulates a critical perspective of power structures that have impacted information.	Describes the power structures that contribute to information creation, rationalizes choices within these contexts, and identifies opportunities to challenge these structures of power.

# Possible Activity for Outcome Two

## Fun with Epistemic Injustice: [for the Power Structures criteria]

- Engage in a collaborative brainstorming exercise to identify research areas in which members of a marginalized or minoritized social group are not (or have not been historically) sufficiently included or consulted within the process of knowledge production for research concerning their social group.
- Next, split up into small groups and assign one research area identified in the previous step to each. Allow 5-10 minutes for groups to discuss and record their ideas regarding (a) why they think social group members were excluded from the research process, particularly in relation to power structures, (b) how the exclusion of social group members impacted research findings and the broader body of knowledge around the corresponding topic, and (c) potential strategies for promoting more inclusive research in this area.
- Finally, have each group share their findings with the rest of the class. Identify and discuss similarities and differences between the various research areas. Zoom out and discuss more broadly how power structures influence and shape the process of knowledge production.

# Outcome Three: Synthesize relevant information from a variety of sources to make reasoned judgments, and create and communicate ideas.

Criteria	No Evidence	Introductory	Developing	Exemplary
Synthesis	Does not show evidence of synthesizing multiple sources.	Articulates the value and key findings from a single source.	Utilizes multiple sources and treats each independently, articulating what each source contributes without integrating ideas across sources.	Utilizes multiple sources and treats each independently, articulating what each source contributes without integrating ideas across sources. Synthesizes ideas from multiple sources with own ideas to make reasoned judgements.
Attribution	Does not show evidence of recognizing or following attribution practices.	Demonstrates effort to attribute sources and includes some key elements of a selected citation style in a bibliography, but may make major errors in formatting.  Articulates a beginning understanding of why to cite and what citation looks like.	Creates a bibliography of sources for evidence and attempts to connect them with claims using in-text citations, but may have minor errors in formatting.  Can explain why attribution is important, but may look different in different contexts.	Creates a bibliography of sources for evidence and accurately connects them with claims using in-text citations following the appropriate style.  Critiques the strengths and limitations of citation practices and can articulate the importance of citational justice.
Communication	Does not show evidence of effective communication.	Communicates ideas in a semi-organized manner.	Communicates ideas in an organized manner.	Communicates ideas highly effectively, in a clear, precise, and well-organized manner.

# Possible Activity for Outcome Three

## Ice Cream Social: [for the Synthesis criteria]

- Share a blank Padlet with the class and create a collaborative “literature” about ice cream (or any light, accessible topic of your choosing). Ask each student to submit a claim about ice cream to the Padlet board, using their last name and birth year (or n.d.) for the citation.
- Next, ask the class to identify a common theme shared among two or more of the ice cream claims. Create a Padlet note as a column header and move all of the claims relating to this theme into the corresponding column. Repeat this process until all claims have been sorted. Some claims may fit under multiple themes, so use the “copy” feature to duplicate claims as needed.
- Finally, engage in a group discussion to identify the contribution of each claim and possible strategies for synthesizing multiple claims under a given theme to produce a rudimentary literature review.

# Next Steps Following Rubric Development

- **Spring 2025:** Shared Rubric with SEEDS Advisory Board co-directors
- **Spring 2025:** Facilitated Educated Citizenry/CIL workshop for faculty
- **Spring 2025:** Developed Educated Citizenry (Critical Information Literacy) guide geared towards faculty:  
<https://montclair.libguides.com/EducatedCitizenry>
- **Fall 2025:** Developed Educated Citizenry page for students
- **2025-2026:** Co-sponsor Educated Citizenry/CIL faculty workshops & discussions with SEEDS Advisory Board
- **2025-2026:** Libraries exploring approaches to assessing Educated Citizenry SEEDS Value, with faculty input

# Educated Citizenry / CIL guide

—

## Got Ideas?

### Educated Citizenry (Critical Information Literacy)

This guide was developed for faculty teaching Educated Citizenry / Critical Information Literacy in SEEDS courses.

#### Home

Introduction

Workshops

Reach out to a Librarian

Acknowledgements

#### CIL resources for faculty

CIL activities

CIL assessment

CIL resources for students

Educated Citizenry (for students)

Other relevant Montclair guides

Head for Research &

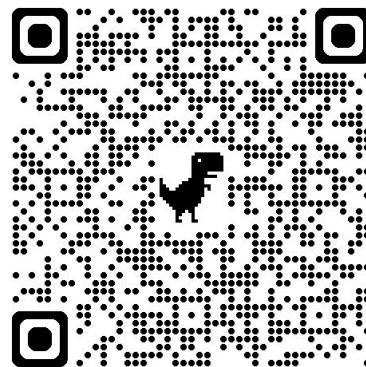
#### Introduction

Educated Citizenry / Critical Information Literacy (CIL) is one of the SEEDS Values in the Montclair State University SEEDS Curriculum.

- This guide is intended for faculty teaching Educated Citizenry / Critical Information Literacy in SEEDS courses. It contains information about CIL, a CIL rubric developed by Montclair librarians (see the link below), as well as activities and assessments related to CIL that instructors may find helpful.
- An Educated Citizenry page geared towards undergraduate students has already been integrated into a number of the Libraries' subject guides and can also be found under the SIL resources for students section of this guide.

If there is any additional content you would like to see on this guide, including specific resources you or your students found helpful as it concerns the Educated Citizenry / CIL, please let **Bonnie Fong** (Head for Research & Reference Services) know. *Thank you for your patience as we continue to update this guide.*

- [Rubric](#)  
Educated Citizenry (Critical Information Literacy) rubric developed by Montclair librarians
- [Slides from October 2025 Faculty Workshop & Discussion](#)



[Share your ideas](#) for  
critical information  
literacy (CIL) activities  
or assessments on this  
crowdsourced doc

# EC/CIL Faculty Workshops & Discussions

- Open to all instructors
- Offered 2 in-person during free periods; offered 1 online Friday morning
- Registration ranged from 3 to 13; attendance ranged from 2 to 4
- Agenda
  - Discuss definitions: Information Literacy, Critical Information Literacy, & Educated Citizenry
  - Look over Rubric & seek feedback from faculty
  - Share (ideas for) activities & assessments
  - Highlight EC/CIL guide & remind faculty to collaborate with librarians/Libraries
- Slides available on <https://montclair.libguides.com/EducatedCitizenry>

# Challenges

Student Success Librarian took another position; hope to repost this role shortly.

Change in library and university leadership.

Shortened terms (moved to a 3-term system for course scheduling).

Faculty/instructor buy-in (e.g., low attendance at Educated Citizenry workshops.)

Faculty resistance to moving beyond skills-based teaching and taking additional time to teach this in class.

Liaison Librarians/areas are under resourced.

Lack of collective/community librarian time.

# Q & A

## Contact us:

Bonnie L. Fong - [fongb@montclair.edu](mailto:fongb@montclair.edu)

Catherine Baird - [bairdc@montclair.edu](mailto:bairdc@montclair.edu)

Drew Wallace - [wallaced@montclair.edu](mailto:wallaced@montclair.edu)

Michelle Echols - [echolsm@montclair.edu](mailto:echolsm@montclair.edu)