

# The Playful Path to Information Literacy

Empowering ELL Students  
through Interactive  
Instruction

CCLI 2024



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What song was  
that?



# Who are we?



**Bryan J. Sajecki**

Social Sciences, Student Support, & Instruction Librarian



**Keith T. Nichols**

STEM Librarian

# Who are you?

- First-year undergraduates enrolled in a writing and rhetoric course with a one-credit research lab built for English Language Learners (ELLs) called EL105.
- Pursuing your degree at the University at Buffalo in Western New York



# Learning Objectives

Attendees will be able to:

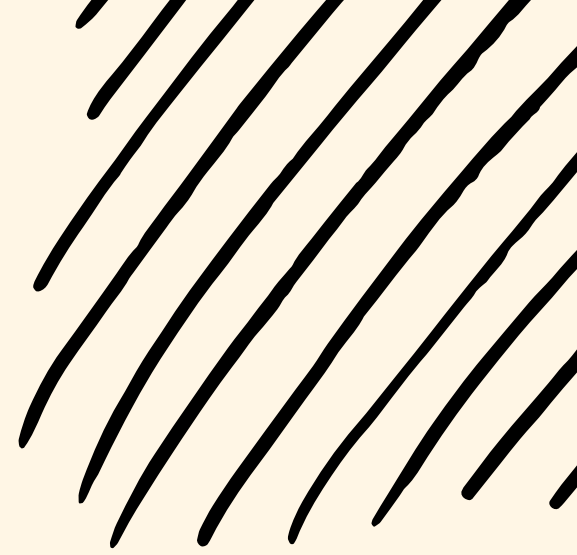
integrate interactive learning activities to reinvigorate IL classes and foster playfulness

identify current instruction methods and improve upon them with the goal of tapping into natural curiosity and inquiry

conceptualize the framework for a multi-week information literacy course



# Activity 1: Are you hungry?



# The "Research Recipe"



## Your Directions

1. In your group, look at the different ingredients placed in front of you.
2. Using those ingredients, construct a salad that you would want to eat. You can include or exclude any of the ingredients.
3. Afterward, we will discuss what your salads look like.

You have five minutes.

## Let's Discuss!

Q: What ingredients did you put in your salad?

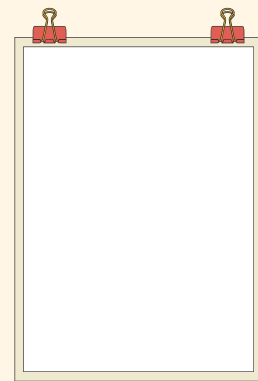
Q: Why did you exclude certain ingredients?

Q: Did you turn your ingredient cards over? If so, what did you find? Were you curious?



# What does our "salad" make?

An Infographic based on a  
research topic



+



What ingredients go into it and  
why?





# Why do we start here?

Salads are a cross-cultural dish and easy to understand.

"Building a salad" is easier to comprehend than "building a research project."

It makes students talk to each other about something "ridiculous" in the context of research.



...and it's fun!



# Playfulness in the Literature

## (All) Age Appropriate

"Playful learning has been shown above to be a pedagogical approach that [works] for all ages, even though it tends to be seen as one that is typically taken with young children" (Walsh, 2020).

## Progress of Person

"In developmental psychology, play (the actual behavior) and playfulness (the personality trait) have been acknowledged as important contributors to developmental processes" (Proyer & Tandler, 2019).

## Versatility

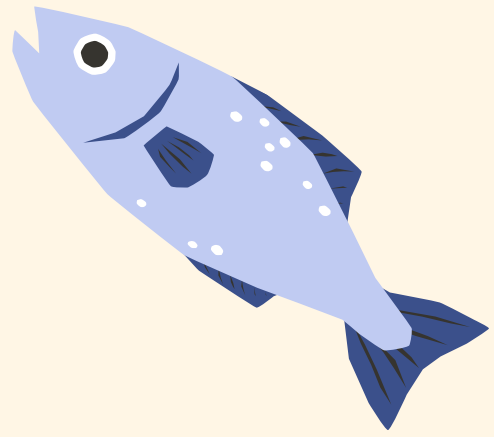
"The active learning environment requires flexibility, adaptability, and a willingness to take risks" (Campbell et al., 2015).

## Cue the Laugh Track

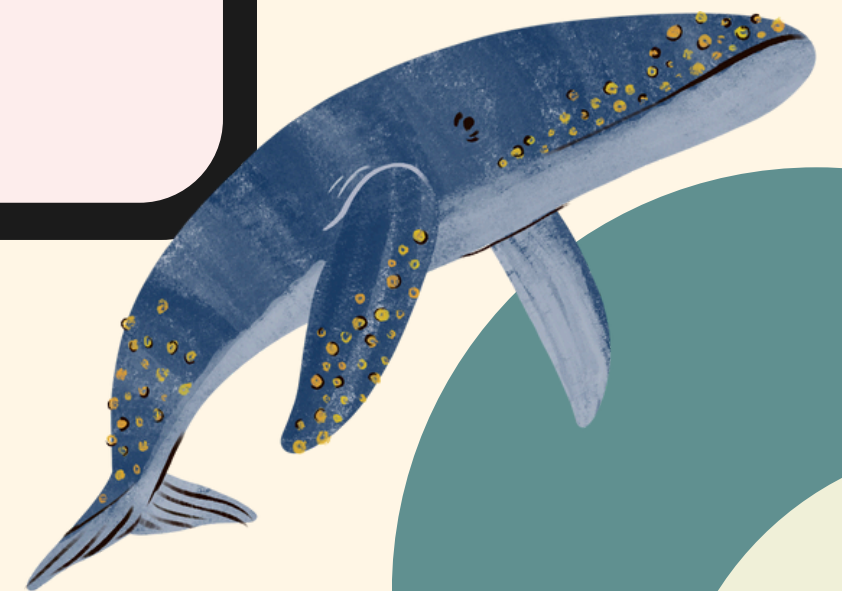
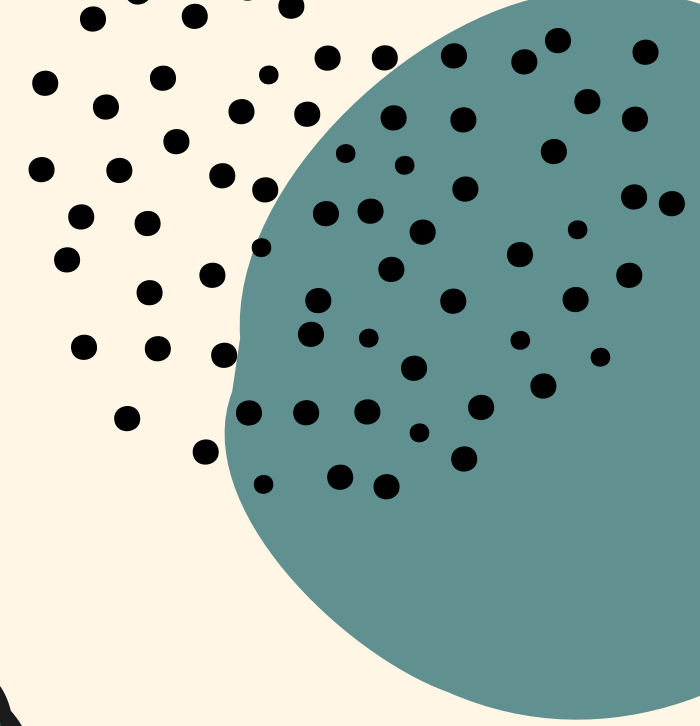
"Librarians in all stages of their careers and at all types of libraries use humor in their instruction. Reasons for using humor include making learners more likely to listen, creating a connection with the librarian, and fostering a relaxed learning environment" (Perret, 2016).

## Best Practice

"...a thoughtful and scholarly approach to skillful teaching requires that faculty become knowledgeable about the many ways strategies promoting active learning have been successfully used across the disciplines. Further, each faculty member should engage in self-reflection, exploring his or her personal willingness to experiment with alternative approaches to instruction" (Bonwell & Eison, 1991).



## Activity 2: The Depth of Information







"Go Fish"

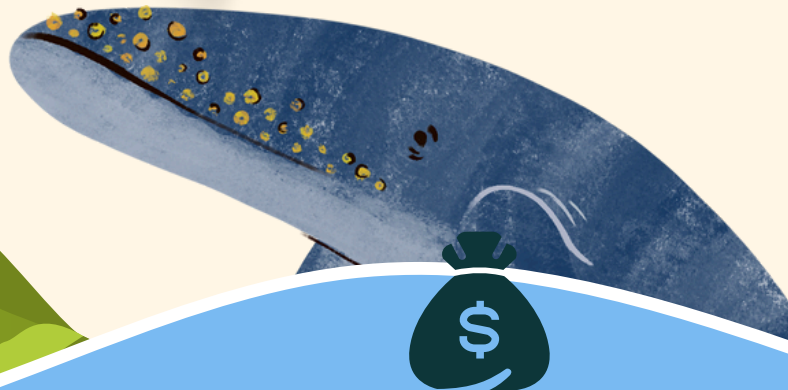
## How This Works

When doing research, you can scoop across the surface of the water with your net and get lots of "stuff." But if you cast a fishing pole deeper into the water, you will get different, bigger fish. Or, you could scuba dive along the bottom of the water, put on all the heavy and expensive equipment, and get quality fish that you can eat. You get a more in-depth conversation as you go deeper.





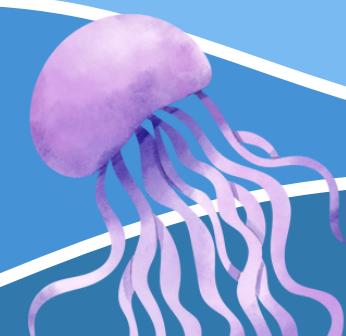
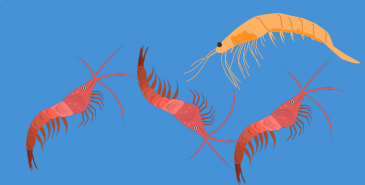
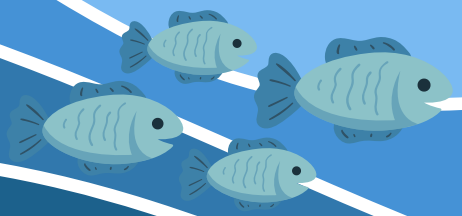
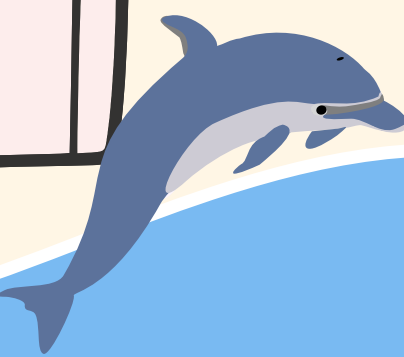
Yo, sup?!



✕ □ -

## Directions

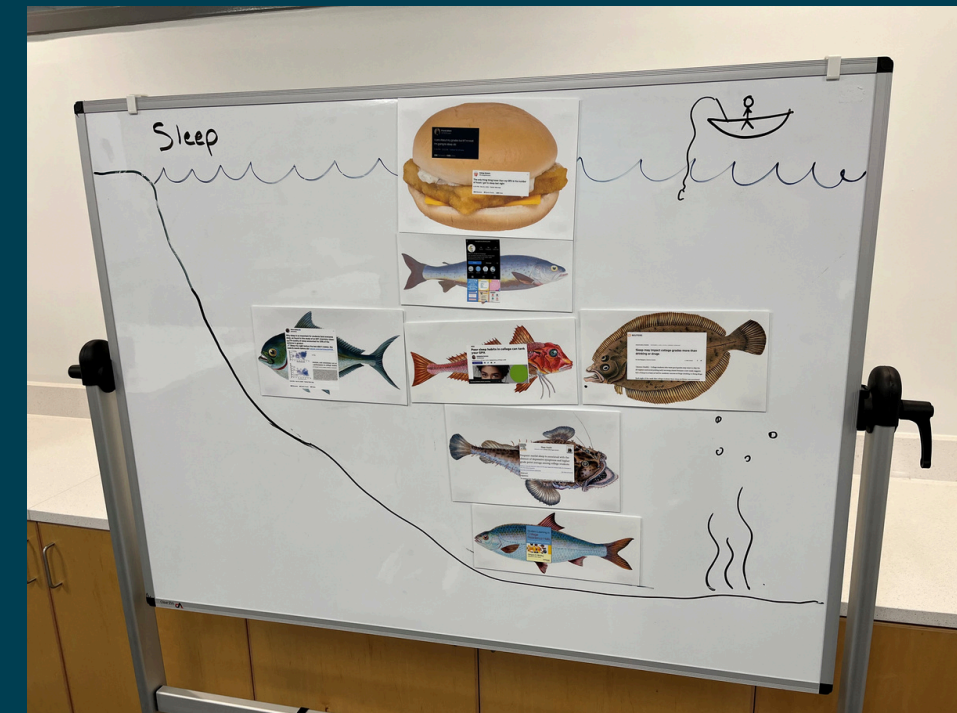
- Working in groups, students place fish/information source where they think it belongs in the "sea of information."
- They must be able to determine the following about each fish:
  - the source of information
  - the type (article, tweet, book, etc.)
  - the level of authority
  - who the intended audience is (a layperson or a scholar?)
  - Is there a paywall to access it?



# Why do this next?

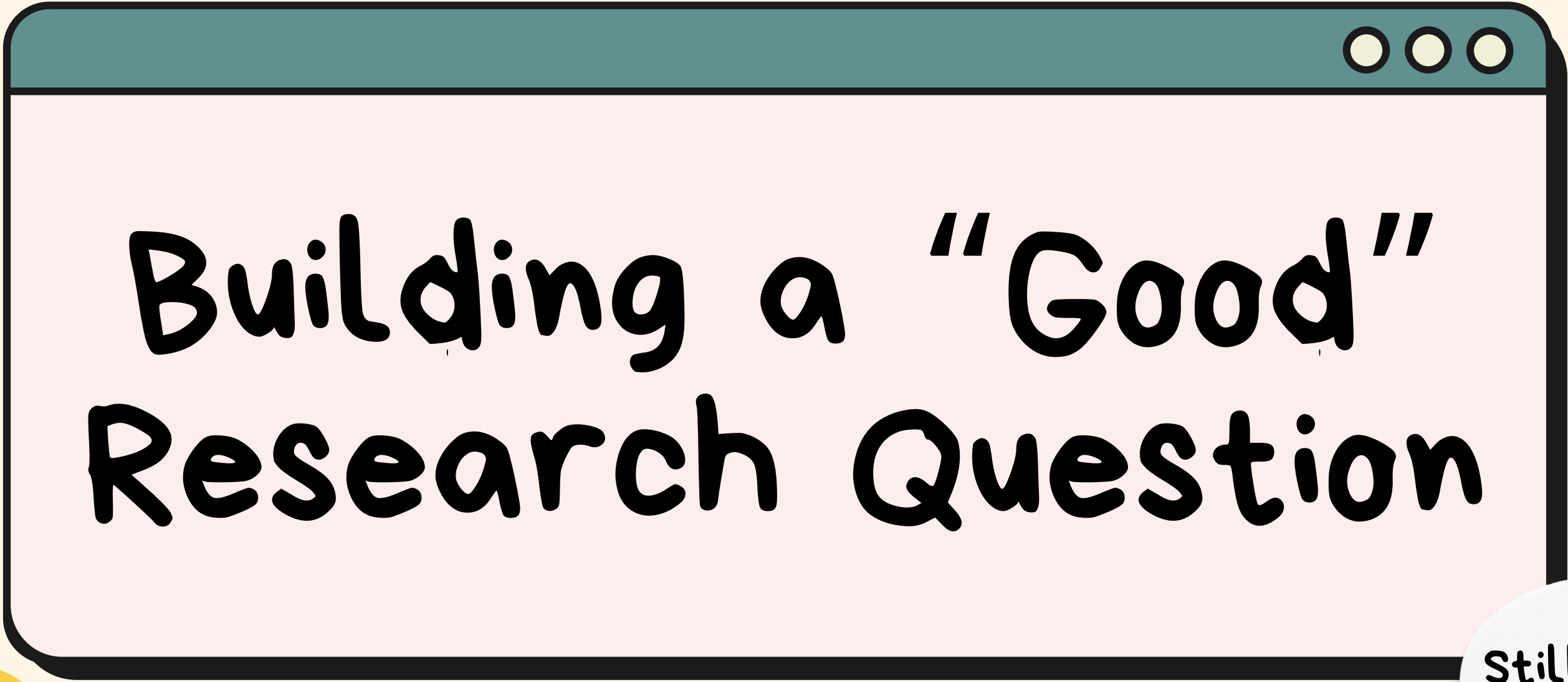


It is important to highlight that research usually begins with popular sources, and that's okay! But, a complete research project will include differing perspectives from sources that vary in scholarship, authority, and findability. As they begin their research, knowing what to expect and how to navigate accordingly is paramount to their future success.






Activity 3: How do you say it?



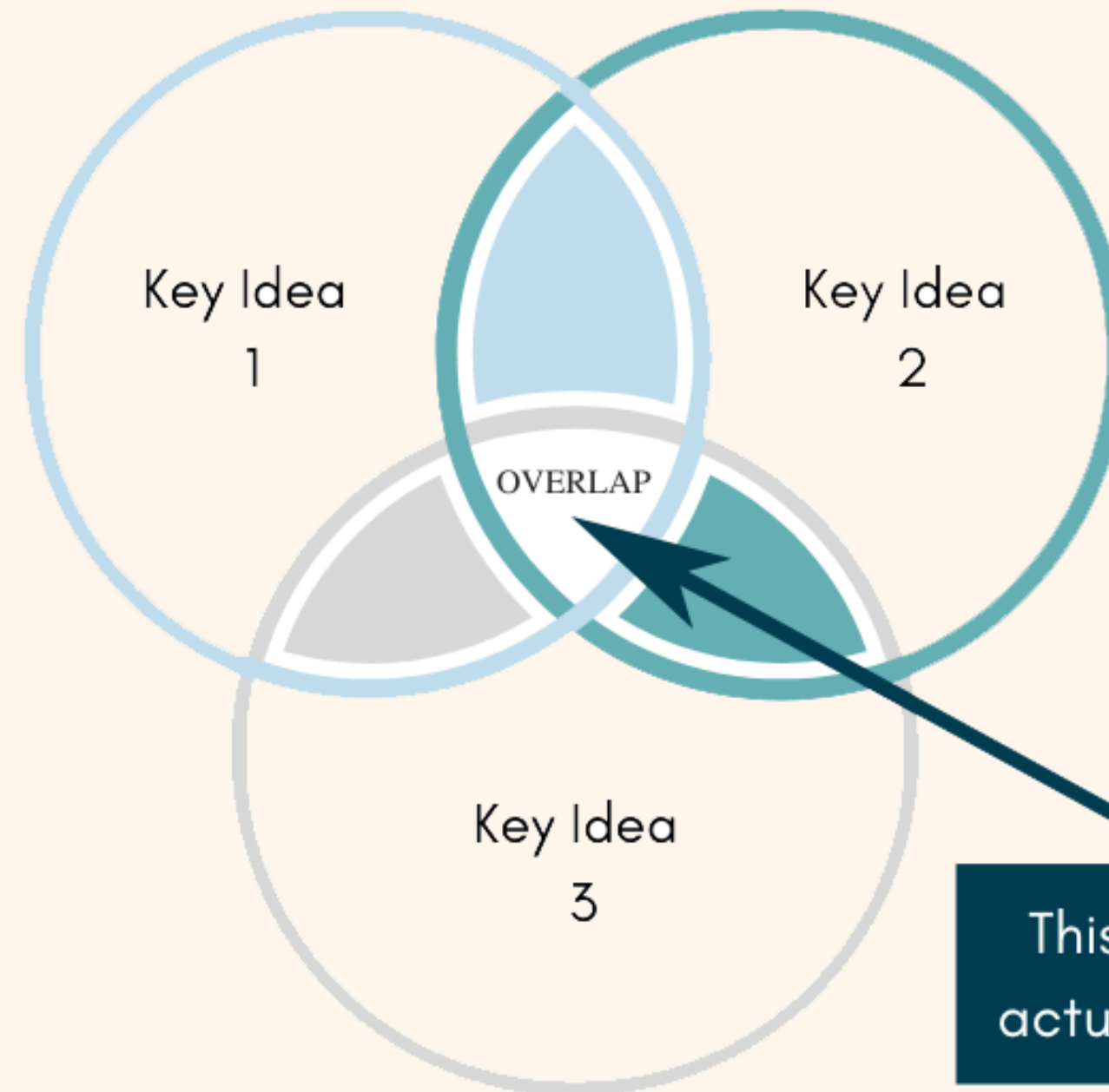
Building a "Good"  
Research Question



Still here,  
guys...



# VENN DIAGRAM OF RESEARCH



This is what you're  
actually researching!



# Keyword Chaos



## Your Directions

1. Each student receives a different colored slip of paper with a keyword or topic on it.
2. Students must form a group of three using keywords that make a "good" research question.
3. After completing their trio, students will write their first pass at a research question on a whiteboard (piece of paper).

You have five minutes.

# Why do this next?

●○○

Students tend to struggle with the basic concepts of building an effective research question.

●○○

It encourages students to interact with a common goal in mind.

●○○

It reinforces that research is all about the relationship between different ideas.





Wrapping Up the  
Rest of the Course



# Searching Throughout



## Practice, Practice, Practice

- Throughout the course, students have assignments that challenge them to find new information.
- This gives them chances to refine their search strategies.
- It also creates a pool of possible sources for our class and/or the research paper for their ELI seminar.





# Skimming/Finding Evidence



## tl;dr

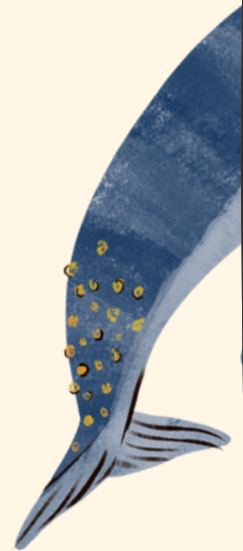
- Students are taught how to read and approach scholarly articles.
- Most articles follow a rough pattern of:
  - Abstract
  - Introduction
  - Methods
  - Results
  - Discussion/Conclusion
- Avoiding the game of telephone and double citing.
- Easily jump to the meat of articles.
- Avoiding taking information just out of the abstract.



# Finding Images/Using Canva

## Ethical By Design

- Students are taught to use Openverse to find ethically usable images.
  - Creative Commons Licenses
- Within the infographic, they will incorporate the three-point attribution.
  - Just like an in-text citation
- Each poster will be made in Canva using a free template and incorporate at least two ethically sourced images.



relation or from an  
point of view.  
**Ethics** [eth'iks] n.  
moral choices to  
value of human c  
principles that o  
for what is thoug





# Assessing Student Learning

- Pre/Post Model, 10 MCQ from a 20 MCQ Pool
- Built based on Lesson Learning objectives
- What did we find? (Spring 21 - Spring 24)
  - Pre: 63.1
  - Post: 77.09
  - Growth: 13.99
  - Classes/Students: 41 and Approx. 820





# Playfulness Practiced Throughout:

- Using music as a primer
- Storytelling and humor
- Using props to stimulate engagement
- Consistent, cross-cultural examples



# Pedagogies Practiced Throughout:

- Social Constructivism
- Critical Information Literacy (CIL)
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Compassionate Librarianship





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You!

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