

Thinking Sociologically Group Project: Producing and Evaluating Knowledge

Angela Adkins*

For this assignment, your group will participate in the production of, and the evaluation of, knowledge by crafting an article for Wikipedia.com, the online open-source encyclopedia. This is a two-part project, each part worth 15 points.

Part One:

Your group may choose to either:

- create an article for any topic which does not currently exist on Wikipedia (search the “requested articles” to find these)
- expand upon a topic article designated by Wikipedia as a “stub”

You may not select a topic article which has been designated for “clean-up. Note: I will go over these terms and the basic use of Wikipedia in class. The choice of topic is totally up to your group—you may choose a specific sociological concept such as institutional discrimination or social norms, or you may choose a different topic entirely, such as racecar driving or basket-weaving as long as the topic itself is real and not completely imaginary (e.g. you cannot simply invent a person, place, or thing for your topic). However, there is one important exception: I will not allow any Wikipedia article aimed at belittling, demeaning, harassing, harming, or otherwise attacking an individual or a group of people. If you are in doubt, please come discuss your topic with me **prior** to completing this project.

Your goal is to write a complete, understandable article about the topic you choose (at least two pages when printed). Your article should follow Wikipedia style for entries including a content submenu, topic subheadings, and citations to at least four external sources. As with most other assignments in this class, feel free to be creative. You may approach the article with the intention of writing a precise and informed explanation of a particular topic. Or you might elect to fabricate or exaggerate some or even all of your facts and sources—the choice is up to your group. Note that this is the only time in this course, or likely any other course, that it is acceptable to provide intentionally false information! Your article will later be critically evaluated (but not graded) by another group based on accuracy of information, and in turn your group will critically evaluate another group’s article.

Your group may choose to edit/add your article to Wikipedia directly—I encourage you to do this and become a contributor if you feel comfortable doing so. I recognize not every student may wish to do this, so alternately your group may opt to use the Wikipedia-esque template I will provide on Springboard. By the first due date, each

group will post either their Wikipedia article link or their completed document to the designated area in Springboard.

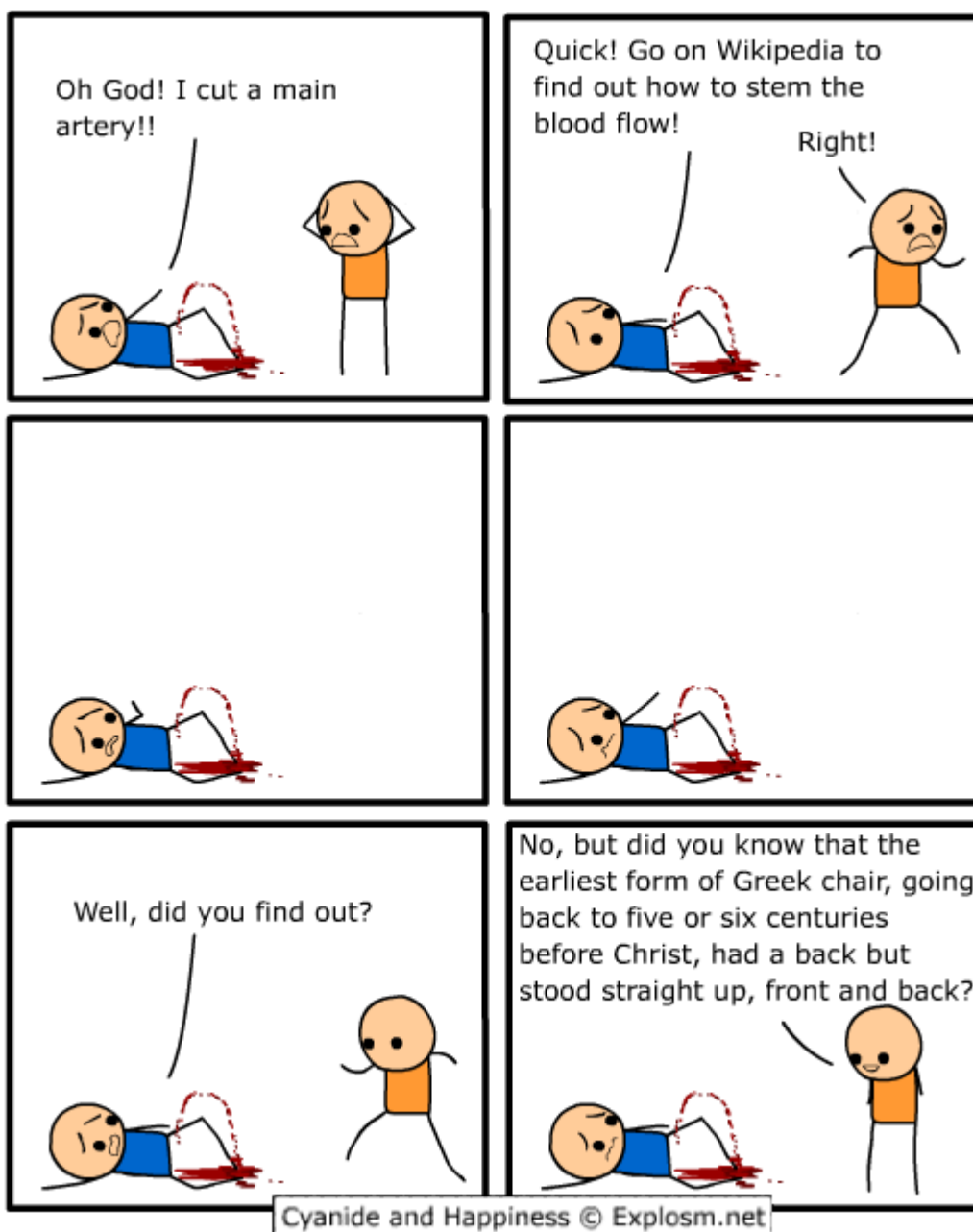
Part Two:

Each group will be assigned another group's Wikipedia article. Your goal is to critically evaluate the accuracy and usefulness of the article. By the second due date, you will turn in a short evaluation paper (one paper for the entire group) answering the questions below. Each group will also give a brief (5-10 minute) presentation of the article evaluation to the class. After all groups have presented, we will further discuss as a class the production of knowledge, the rights and responsibilities of those who produce and consume knowledge, and the process of critically evaluating information.

- Include the topic of the article you evaluated.
- What is the overall quality of this article?
- Without checking sources first, does the article seem to provide complete information? Does the article seem objective and free of bias? Why or why not?
- Is the information provided accurate? How do you know? Provide examples of any inaccuracies.
- Were several different sources of information given?
- Were the sources verifiable and the citations accurate?
- Would you use this article as a source in your own research? Why or why not?
- What might improve this article? What would you add, modify, or eliminate?

Each group member will also turn in an individual paper answering the following questions:

- What are the possible *social* benefits in contributing to sites like Wikipedia? The potential consequences?
- What is the most important thing you learned from this project?
- What letter grade would you assign to each of the members of your group, *including yourself*, taking into consideration each person's level of participation and contribution to the group as a whole?
- Feel free to include any additional comments or suggestions about improving or expanding this project.



* If you use or adapt this project for your class, please give full credit to the originator of the assignment, Angela Adkins.