Some sample assignments that enrich "research literacy"
(adapted by the CNU OURCA from Grinnell College)

There are many ways for students to expand research literacy.

Abstract or Executive Summary of a scholarly article: Students are asked to read a scholarly article and write an abstract or executive summary of it, including the author's thesis, argument, evidence, and conclusions.

Anatomy of a Research Paper: Students conduct the research but do not actually write the paper (for your class):

- clearly define topic
- annotated bibliography of useful sources
- outline of paper
- thesis statement
- opening paragraph and summary
- present research findings to the class

Annotated Bibliography: A selected list with annotations describing and evaluating as well as explaining the relevance of these sources.

Biographical Sketch: Students present a brief sketch of the author of a significant work.

Briefing Paper: Students select a current problem and prepare a summary of the main issues involved and the proposed solutions, including the strengths and weaknesses of each solution. Students may argue for the solution they think is best.

Campaign Speech: Similar to the Briefing Paper, but students take a position and write a campaign speech to persuade voters to support that position.

Compare Reference Sources: To facilitate interdisciplinary understanding, students research one topic in specialized reference sources covering a number of academic perspectives: ex.: Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as discussed in the fields of economics, education, history, law and sociology, for example.

Contemporary Conditions: Students write a brief two- to three-page statement on the social, ethical and political conditions contemporary to the major work or issue under study. This assignment provides context for subsequent reading and study and integrates a limited number of both general and specialized reference tools.

Contemporary Reception: Students collect and summarize book reviews of an important work. This assignment requires students to use a specific research tool (book review indexes) for the time the original work was published.

Credibility of a Course Reading: Students write an evaluative essay drawing on book reviews, biographical information, discussion and their own analysis.

Cultural Context: Students in an international politics class first research another country and then watch the political news of the world through the eyes of someone in that country. Class projects are can be prepared as diaries, letters, editorials, speeches, posters, interviews or any other creative method.

Encyclopedia/Wikipedia Article: Students write or update an encyclopedia article, including a list of references OR students select a stub (placeholder for a topic) from Wikipedia and write an entry based on Wikipedia's guidelines.

Newspaper Article/ Letter to the Editor: Research a contemporary or historical event and then write an "objective" story OR students may choose to write a letter to the editor reacting to an event.

The Practical Assignment: In a course on animal behavior for biology and psychology majors, students were asked to design an experiment in the field of animal behavior nutrition that proposed a research question so meaningful that a government agency or research institute might provide funding. Students identified an appropriate funding agency, figured out the costs involved, and submitted a proposal describing the project with a supporting annotated bibliography. Groups of students acted as reviewers for the proposals.

Top Ten List: Develop a list of the most important, under-recognized or over-rated people, events or creations within a particular field of study and justify your selections.

Understand Primary Sources: Students compare primary and secondary sources on the same topic, list and annotate both types of materials.

Additional Assignments:

- Compare print and Web resources
- Create a handbook or research manual
- Follow research trends
- Maintain a research log
- Update a review article
- Write a book or film review
- Write field notes
- Write a literature review