

Wisconsin 101: Our History in Objects

The goal of *Wisconsin 101 (WI 101)* is for you to do high quality original historical research for possible publication on a website. Your work will be a contribution to a site that is a statewide effort involving the UW System, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Wisconsin Public Radio, as well as town, regional, and tribal museums. Your research has the potential of being a scholarly contribution to an on-going project that explores Wisconsin history through objects.

The majority of the research required for *WI 101* will not take place during class time. Expect to do some digging in the archives, visiting regional museums, talking to people, reading beyond class assignments, and working outside of what you consider to be the norm for most 300-level classes. I have scheduled some class periods for research and writing, but you will need to set aside additional time specifically for *WI 101*.

This assignment is worth 220 points (42% of the class grade), but it is divided into a number of parts with due dates and point totals that are spread across the semester. Therefore, you will be expected to research, write, and revise **all semester long**. Welcome to the real world of a scholar!

The first thing you need to do is select an object.

What is an Object?

An object is something that you can touch. Museum curators put a number of different considerations into how they define an object. The *WI 101* website covers this in detail (www.wi101.org), and also provides a list of “objects seeking stories,” so read carefully, think, and follow their guidelines.

Object Selection

Choose an object that interests you!

The object does not have to be as important as it is interesting because it is the object’s histories – how it was used, the people or person who used it, the need it served, its connection to a specific location – that you will be researching. The object is your portal into Wisconsin history. **Pick your object thoughtfully and carefully. Do not underestimate the importance of this!** A good object is one that interests you, is visually inviting, and has stories to tell that are worthy of research. Rarely if ever is it the first object thought of. (Again, refer to wi101.org for more on this point.)

You do *not* need to have the object in your possession – it can be too large or too valuable for example. You must, however, have access to multiple images. They will be needed for close consideration of the object and are a required part of both the bibliography and final project.

Consider using the La Crosse Historical Society (<http://www.lchshistory.org/>), the Preservation Alliance of La Crosse, called PAL (<http://www.preservation-alliance.org/>), or Recollection Wisconsin (<http://www.recollectionwisconsin.org>) for object ideas. Does your hometown have a history museum? Contact them!

Warning! We may love our Wisconsin sports teams and breweries, but any object that doesn't make you think deeply or leads you directly to a team or company website is not right for this project. *WI 101* is designed to reveal the history of an object in interesting and instructive ways. It hopes to uncover stories, not retell already storied pasts. This does not mean that beer or sports are forbidden, just less interesting than they may appear at first blush. Please consider other options, and see me if you are thinking about doing a sports or alcohol-related object.

The Wisconsin Ducks are forbidden. NO DUCKS.

Sources

I will expect research from a range of sources. At **minimum** there must be one scholarly work (monograph), numerous journal articles, and one tertiary reading. Web sources are fine, but keep in mind that this is a scholarly endeavor, so company or team websites – even if they have a history link – are suspect and should be used similarly to Wikipedia . . . sparingly.

You are welcome to use reading assignments from the syllabus as sources. Consider them *additional* sources.

Primary sources: The Area Research Center (ARC) and La Crosse Public Library Archives (LPLA) are great places to find primary sources. The ARC can get collections from around the state delivered to La Crosse, but not everything can be transported, and it takes time to get materials here. The LPLA (<http://archives.lacrosselibrary.org>) is a great source for information about La Crosse-related objects, and it also has access to newspapers from around the area. Keep time restraints in mind, and remember that history museums and archives have limited hours.

Odd but true: Primary sources (manuscript collections) may not be necessary to tell your object's story. We'll talk about this more in class, but keep in mind that your job is to set the scene (time and place) in which your object existed, explain its use, tell about the people who used it, and in the process uncover Wisconsin's past. Newspapers, diaries, and other primary sources may be valuable, but not in every case.

Secondary sources: I will go over in class some basic ways to get scholarly secondary sources, but you will be in charge of making it happen. You will want to

be comfortable using databases and finding books. Here is where reference librarians can be very helpful!

Tertiary sources: The library's reference section is filled with encyclopedic, or tertiary sources. *Wisconsin's Past and Present* is a great tertiary source!

WI 101: Project Parts

Annotated Bibliography: An annotated bibliography is due week #6. Its purpose is to demonstrate your preliminary research and developing understanding of your object and its histories. All sources must be cited using Chicago. Murphy Library has the *Chicago Manual of Style* online. The History department's website has a helpful guide to Chicago under "Student resources." Another source is Purdue's, OWL. Click on "Research and Citation," then Chicago. Check them out and find the one that works best for you.

An annotated bibliography requires that each source have a full citation with a short paragraph synopsis underneath. These paragraphs must be in your own words and explain the information gained from the source (or in the case of currently unread sources, the information that you hope to get from the source). Think about answering these questions as you write your annotation: How does the information found in the reading relate to your object? How do you anticipate using the information learned? If the source is currently unread, say what you hope to learn. You may *not* merely reword an abstract or provide a summary.

Bibliographies are listed in alphabetical order based on author's last name.

Object Description: The object description needs to do three things: describe the object (shape, size, color, material, etc.), explain its purpose, and link it to a time, locale, region, or person (people) in Wisconsin. Although you must have a picture of the object, write this section as though there isn't one. Illustrate with words!

Histories: The next two sections tell the stories – histories – of the object. Here is where your research can go in many different directions. For example, one story might focus on the object's link to a town, park, or river. A story may investigate the object's creator or user(s). Your research could be devoted to the object's function within a culture or time period, or provide an explanation as to why the object existed in the first place. You might research how the object changed over time, or if it created change. (See Wi101.org. for examples.)

Each story will have its own title.

Bibliography: The last part of *WI 101* will be the final draft of the annotated bibliography.

WI 101: Drafts

Each part of WI 101 (annotated bibliography, object description, object stories) will be submitted in draft form. Post all assignments onto D2L and have a hardcopy ready to hand in at class. You must hand in a paper copy and have all work posted on D2L to receive a grade. Late and/or incomplete work will be penalized.

Titles: The annotated bibliography's title should be, "Bibliography." The object description will be the name of the object (ex: CCC Pillow). The title of each story will depend on the story being told. Each title must be in bold font centered.

WI 101: Final Submission

The final project is due **Friday, April 27**, and will consist of four parts: an object description, two histories, and the final annotated bibliography.

The final assignment must be 5-7 double-spaced pages – not including photographs, endnotes, or annotated bibliography.

One of the biggest challenges of *WI 101* is the page limit. After a semester of research you will have become an expert on your object, however the website has strict word counts. This assignment does not have word counts, but the page limit will require close editing, clean writing, and thoughtful revisions.

All drafts (object description, object stories, and annotated bibliography) will be handed in along with the final draft. I will provide clips for attaching the drafts to the final *WI 101* submission. The final version must be handed into D2L, but I will collect a paper copy at the beginning of class. You must hand in a paper copy and have all work posted on D2L to receive a grade. Late and/or incomplete work will be penalized.

Format

All drafts and the final submission will follow the same format.

Please put your name in the upper right corner of the paper. Underneath and single spaced write "*WI 101* Story 1 Draft," or "*WI 101* Annotated Bibliography Draft" depending on the work being handed in. No additional information is needed.

Double space then center the title in bold font.

The body of the paper must be double spaced

Number and staple pages.

Use standard margins and font (size 12).

All grading rubrics are posted on D2L.

Due Dates

WI 101 has class periods dedicated to research, and a number of due dates. Below are a list of important dates.

F 2/9	Research Day
W 2/14	Object proposals due (20 points)
F 2/16	Object proposal peer review due (10 in-class points)
W 2/28	Research Day
W 3/2	Annotated bibliography and object description drafts (50 points)
M 3/26	Research and Writing Day
F 3/30	Draft part (story) I or II due (20 points)
F 4/13	Draft part (story) I or II due (20 points)
F 4/27	Final draft <i>WI 101</i> due – handed in with all drafts (100 points)

Again, all *WI 101* assignments must be handed in through D2L although I will also be collecting a paper copy in class.