Reasons to Incorporate Research Into Introductory-level Writing Assignments

To teach students how to use and cite materials and avoid plagiarism.

Note: In a recent survey of incoming Middlebury students 52% reported difficulty or inexperience with when to document sources.

- Students need to know how to incorporate quotes from outside sources and properly cite them in their papers.
- Students need to know how to paraphrase materials from outside sources, use cues to alert readers they are using outside sources, and properly cite them in their papers.
- Students need to learn to consult research sources to substantiate claims made in their papers.
- In the internet age, students need to understand copyright and learn what is fair use and what isn’t. They need to know the proper way to use multimedia (text, images, video, sound) found on the internet.
- The first year seminar and introductory level writing courses are the opportune time for students to learn these research and citation skills in order to avoid unintentional cases of plagiarism and copyright violation in any writing assignment.

To help students transition from high school “report” writing to college-level writing where they develop arguments based on research into a thesis.

- Rather than summarizing a series of research articles, students develop a thesis that is supported by scholars’ arguments and counter arguments.

To begin the process of learning to write for a specific discipline.

- Using research from a discipline gives them a model for writing in that discipline. They begin to learn discipline specific vocabulary and writing style conventions.
- By the time seniors take capstone seminar courses or write a senior thesis, they should have practiced discipline-specific writing methodology. This skill develops in stages, which can begin their first year.

To teach them how to evaluate resources so they can become lifelong learners.

Note: In a recent survey of incoming Middlebury students 25% thought Time Magazine was a scholarly source.

- You won’t always be there to lead them to the best resources. They need to learn how to research issues and topics on their own.