

RESEARCH PROJECT - Bifröst School of Business - Fall 2006

903.I.O.REPR, 2 ECTS credits

Course instructor: Ian Watson

The research paper is really an optional activity; you can choose to do it, or not, and if you're not excited about it, I would rather you not do it!

The topic for the research paper is open. Since you are in the midst of a journey of exploration to a foreign country, I strongly suggest that you explore something having to do with that foreign country -- Iceland.

But the only absolute requirement is that you find a topic that interests and challenges you, and that by writing about it you further your own goals and move forward in your studies, in a way that will help you after you have left Bifröst. Note that describing "my trip to Iceland" isn't research -- you have to ask and answer intellectual questions in the project.

If you would like to write a standard "paper," shoot for a length of about 2500 words. Any length between 2000 and 4000 words is reasonable. If you are interested in creating a web site, film, photographic project, or anything else, please discuss the size of the project with me. Another way of thinking about how much effort you should devote to the project is to say this: a term is 14 weeks long, containing 70 weekdays; a full-time course load is 30 ECTS credits; this is a 2 credit project; so you should devote $2/30 \times 70 = 4,5$ weekdays to your research project.

Here is the schedule for the research project:

As soon as you like and no later than **Monday, 25 September 2006:** Send me a brief note telling me what you are planning to do. I'll schedule time to meet with you individually on Tuesday, 26 September and Wednesday, 27 September to chat about your plans.

Late in October: If you would like, send me a draft of what you have got so far, and I can give you feedback either by e-mail or in person. But this isn't required.

Monday, 20 November 2006: This is the due date for the final project.

I encourage you to write with your own personal style and voice, to use the first person when appropriate, and to create a project which shows your own experience and interests.

I will do my best, within reasonable limits, to give you advice on any questions you have about how to find sources or arrange research visits. You are welcome to consult any other Bifröst faculty for help and advice with the paper. Just remember that they do so on a volunteer basis.

It is very nice (but not essential) if you can use this project as an excuse to "get out into Icelandic society" a little bit. That means meeting people and learning about businesses and social institutions, whether that is in Reykjavík, Borgarnes, the countryside around Bifröst, or simply other Bifröst students.

I'll grade your paper on the regular Bifröst scale of 0 to 10. I will NOT grade you on your ability to spell or use perfect English grammar and vocabulary. What matters is that you are able to express yourself, that you write in a clear and interesting way, and that you show you have gained knowledge and spent your time in an educationally or professionally valuable way.

If you're wondering "what does educationally valuable mean?" you might like to take a look at Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (<http://faculty.washington.edu/krumme/guides/bloom1.html>). It classifies learning into six types: acquisition, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation.

Most students like to do their projects in English, but under certain circumstances, it may make sense for projects to be in another language. Please check with me about this before proceeding.

Remember as you write: I am your first audience, and I probably know little about your topic. I look forward very much to reading your papers and learning from them!

SOME IDEAS TO START YOU THINKING ABOUT A PROJECT TOPIC

Remember that the paper is a chance for you to spend some time getting credit for doing something that you (as opposed to your teachers) care about.

POSSIBLE TOPICS

Perhaps you will think about what inspired you to come to Iceland, and find a topic that is connected to that. Here are some things about Iceland that I think are interesting, but by no means am I suggesting that you simply pick a topic from this list.

business: monopolies, consumer protection, labor law, labor relations ...

ecology: islands, environmental regulation, geography, settlement patterns ...

industries: agriculture, transport, metals, energy, finance, retail, education, tourism, fishing, candy, pharmaceuticals ...

culture: immigration, language, politics, family life, household consumption, gender roles ...

POSSIBLE RESEARCH METHODS

Possible research methods include: interviews, surveys, participant observation, visits to companies or institutions, collecting brochures, and taking photographs -- and, of course, research in the library and on the internet. Don't forget that you can use interlibrary loan as well as the resources of the National and University Library in Reykjavík (the catalog is at www.gegnir.is).

POSSIBLE FORMATS

a standard written paper; a paper with illustrations; a web site (HTML); a collection of photographs with captions; a video documentary; a radio-style report including interview quotations

SOME PREVIOUS STUDENTS' TOPICS

Supply and demand for skills on the labor market: a comparison of Iceland and Sweden

The German-Icelandic Business Council (Deutsch-Isländische Wirtschaftsvereinigung) and its role

Scandinavian stock exchange consolidation and the Icelandic stock exchange

Road construction between Borgarnes and Bifröst in 2005

The adventure tourism sector in Iceland

A comparison of German and Icelandic law on children and the family

Icelandic and Scandinavian furniture design and marketing

Borgarbyggð, an Icelandic municipality: administration, judiciary, culture and art

Energy habits and energy consumption in Iceland

An Icelandic-language presentation on the city of Augsburg, Germany

CITING YOUR SOURCES

Whichever kind of paper you write, it is important that you cite your sources. You need to choose a consistent way to list your sources. A good way to proceed is to find a book that you admire and to use its citation style.

Generally, it is not enough to refer just to a book or article; you need to give the author, title, date, publisher and place of publication, and most importantly, the page number.

Generally, it is not enough just to refer to a web site like www.bifrost.is; you need to give the full path of the web site, as well as the date (or at least the month) that you visited it.

If you include photographs or other images in your research project, you should list their source (even if that just means saying "Author's own photograph, January 2006").

If you interview someone for your project, you should list the interview of the source: "Interview with Jón Jónsson, Borgarnes, 31 January 2006").

Plagiarism is when you copy someone else's work or words and present it as your own, without giving the original author credit. It is fine to use other people's words every now and then, but you must put them in quotation marks or otherwise show that they come from someone else. And you must list the source of anything you use that comes from another person's work.