

Mind the Gap: Teaching Research as a Fluid, Ever-Present Concept in the First-Year Legal Research and Writing Classroom

By Julie Spanbauer. 66 Mercer L. Rev. 651 (2015).

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Reviewer's Summary:

Spanbauer shares her experience as a legal research and writing professor and explains how it has helped her rethink how she teaches millennial (or “digital native”) law students. She explains that typical first-year law students have interacted with technology since childhood and how they currently interact with it, particularly in the law school classroom. She argues that millennial law students have a “fluid” relationship with information that affects how they conduct research, process information, and organize information. As a result, Spanbauer advocates that professors exercise flexibility in their legal research teaching methods and work to engage the students while being cognizant of the cultural gaps that make an inflexible approach unsuccessful. Spanbauer ends by discussing closed-memo assignments and how they can be utilized to help students better understand legal research and analyze the law. She provides several suggestions for substantive law issues that could be used for such assignments.

Summarized by: Clanitra Stewart Nejdli, NIU College of Law, in 2019.