

1086-M5-716      **Ksenija Simic-Muller\*** ([simicmka@plu.edu](mailto:simicmka@plu.edu)), Pacific Lutheran University Math Department,  
1010 122nd St S, Tacoma, WA 98447. *An open-ended project for a liberal arts mathematics course.*

This paper describes the final project assigned in a liberal arts mathematics course taught during an intensive four-week January term. Most students enrolled in the class majored in the arts or humanities and expressed a strong disliking for mathematics. The focus of the class was quantitative literacy, in particular as it pertains to social justice issues. For the final project, the students were allowed to pick any topic they were interested in (a list of suggested topics was also provided) to investigate using mathematics. Once they picked a topic, students submitted an outline of the project a week before it was due, and a draft a day before it was due. The instructor offered ample feedback to both. Instructions given for the project were deliberately minimal, to allow the students to be creative and gain a better understanding of how mathematical arguments are created. Though initially uncomfortable with the lack of strict guidelines, almost all students produced strong papers and gave engaging presentations. They showed ownership of the the material, especially in the cases when they picked topics they felt passionate about, like the war on drugs or appropriation of American Indian lands. The project also helped improve the students' attitude toward mathematics. (Received September 11, 2012)