Iman Hassen

Library Award for Undergraduate Research

Early on in the semester, my professor asked our class to think about a topic that was an ongoing major conflict in today's society. For the first part of the assignment, we would have to examine our selected topic and look at two sides of the argument surrounding the conflict. In order to ensure that the conflict we chose was debatable, my professor told us to ponder the question, "are people protesting and marching because of this conflict?" Secondly, because this was going to be a long process, we had to pick a topic that we were interested in and passionate about. Those were the two things I kept in mind when trying to decide on an issue. After some preliminary research, which consisted of skimming in the library and watching the news, I chose to focus my research on immigration in the United States. After settling on my topic; I still had to make other decisions. What time period do I want to focus on? Did I want to limit my search to a certain type of immigration? Finally, upon much deliberation, I decided I wanted to specifically research the President Trump's immigration policies as they related to the Mexican border.

I retrieved a large amount of my sources from EBSCOhost, one of the UMD library resources. I separated my thesis into three parts: the social conflict surrounding immigration, the economic, and the political. From there, I was able to filter out my searches with keywords. For my subtopic on the social conflict, my searches looked something like "society; Trump; pro-immigration" or "society; Trump; anti-immigration". For my second subtopic, I searched something along the lines of "economy; immigration; beneficial" or "economy; immigration; harmful". Lastly, I would search "politics, immigration, liberals" or "politics, immigration,

conservatives". This method really helped me focus my research and find great sources. I also used Opposing Viewpoints, another library resource, in order to keep a balance of sources from both sides of the immigration debate.

I met with my professor multiple times, and he helped a lot with both the research and writing process. When I was having trouble locating good sources, he showed me how to access EBSCOhost, which I ended up using a lot. Another extremely important aspect my professor helped me with was organization. He required us to have around 20-25 sources that consisted of academic, popular, and primary sources. I selected sources that added depth to the opposing sides of the argument. I wanted to have about an equal number of academic and popular sources. The academic sources provided historical context, and the popular sources added more personal and current experiences. Furthermore, the primary sources provided statistics to frame the different arguments. When researching and reading through many documents it's very easy to forget what each source said, so he told us to annotate and number each source we read through. From there, I created an outline and organized the numbered sources by where I would put them in my paper. This method really helped me keep all my research organized and also made it so I didn't have to do much rereading. It was also my professor who helped me with deciding and narrowing down my topic to begin with. Originally, I was going to focus on President Trump's immigration policy solely in relation to his Executive Order 13769, also known as the "Muslim Ban". But upon embarking on my research, I realized because that issue was too contemporary; there weren't sufficient academic sources for it. But I knew I still wanted to research President Trump and his immigration policies. Together, my professor and I, decided to shift gears a little

and concentrate on another conflict, the dispute surrounding immigration with a focus on Mexican immigrants.

From this experience, I really learned how important organization was in the research process. I consulted various sources with complementing and sometimes contradicting narratives. Outlining everything before actually writing it not only made the writing process easier, it reduced the stress and pressure of writing a research paper. I had all the information I needed in front of me and in order, so it was just a matter of coherently constructing each argument. As a journalism major, I will be writing a lot in coming years and in my professional career. And I will definitely adopt this method of researching for all my future projects. This method has helped me evaluate and choose sound sources and produce a well-rounded final product.

If I were to repeat this process, I would definitely have used more print sources. The UMD library was a great resource for me. One problem I had as an off-campus student was researching from home, where I sometimes had trouble accessing the library resources. Another thing I would love, but may not be possible, would be to have optional library sessions with different ENGL101 classes, so we could exchange drafts and give each other feedback. Overall, this was a great experience. I produced a paper I'm very proud of, familiarized myself with our library's resources, and learned new skills.