

Fort Hays State University

FHSU Scholars Repository

2024 Lynn Haggard Undergraduate Library
Research Award

Lynn Haggard Undergraduate Library Research
Award

2024

Winning Reflective Essay: 2024 LHULRA Winner Chelsea Kiefer

Chelsea Kiefer

Fort Hays State University, c_kiefer@mail.fhsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.fhsu.edu/lhulra_2024

Recommended Citation

Kiefer, Chelsea, "Winning Reflective Essay: 2024 LHULRA Winner Chelsea Kiefer" (2024). *2024 Lynn Haggard Undergraduate Library Research Award*. 2.

https://scholars.fhsu.edu/lhulra_2024/2

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Lynn Haggard Undergraduate Library Research Award at FHSU Scholars Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2024 Lynn Haggard Undergraduate Library Research Award by an authorized administrator of FHSU Scholars Repository. For more information, please contact ScholarsRepository@fhsu.edu.

During the Summer 2023 semester, I took HIST 651: Women in American History with Ms. Hollie Marquess. As a budding women's historian, I cannot explain the excitement I had at the opportunity to take this course. However, the challenge of doing research over a shortened summer semester was daunting, and I would be lying if I did not admit that I was extremely nervous contemplating my final project. However, I did have some experience researching with Forsyth Library in the past, so I knew doing so in an expedited class would be a great test of my usage of the skills the library staff, including Brian Gribben, have taught me.

During week two of class, we had to turn in a list of potential topics and guiding research questions we felt our project could answer. The best way to do this is to first read some secondary sources on a topic and try to find out where a research project can answer gaps. The slogan "anywhere, any time, any device" really helps students like myself who work and need to find those resources during odd hours of the night or on weekends. As an online student, the fact that Forsyth Library has such an extensive number of resources with the full text available online, including scholarly journal articles and ebooks, is invaluable to my work. In order to find those digitized sources, one lesson from the library staff that has stuck with me throughout my educational career is the use of keywords, and especially for history, adjusting those keywords towards the language of the era in which I am searching. For this project, I started with the term "childfree," as that is the phrasing used in current times. However, I had to adjust to using words such as "childless" or "without children" to find sources that spoke about the first half of the 20th century. When I felt like I hit a wall, I was able to email a question to the library with the "Ask a Librarian" feature, and Brian Gribben promptly replied with a few new key words and avenues to search. In his reply, he reminded me to source mine – to look at the bibliography of all of my secondary sources to find more resources, which is one of the best tips for research. When I first

landed on the “Ask a Librarian” page, before emailing for help, I saw that they had uploaded FAQs, which allow students to access answers instantly without the need to wait to hear back from staff. On this page, I gathered the information to obtain a free student New York Times account. The membership gave me access to the New York Times archives, enabling me to research newspaper articles from 1900-1950 that mentioned women without children, a substantial part of my work that shows the public response to this community.

Forsyth Library also has tools to assist students in the writing process, which I have become obsessively familiar with during my undergrad career here at Fort Hays. Many of these can be found under the “Library Tutorials” section of the Forsyth website. The resource here that I use the most is the “Writing and Citations” subsection. In a previous class, I learned how to complete an annotated bibliography and do citations in different styles with these guides. For this course, I came here to check my Chicago citations. The Chicago quick guide allowed me to access a refresher to ensure my citations were correct for my project. As I was using sources I had not cited before, such as postcard images, I also needed some additional instruction. Luckily for me, Forsyth allows all students to have online access to the entire Chicago Manual of Style book. Not only is this free, which is great compared to the physical book, but being online, it is simple and quick to use the search feature to find the type of source I was trying to cite for my project. I did not only use the writing guides for citations, however. The Writing Center, a service provided by Forsyth Library, also has a magnitude of online resources. It does have additional help for Chicago citations, but it also has guides on topics such as passive voice, which is one I frequently visit and has helped me to really master the concept.

In addition to writing guides, I was able to access course guides from the Forsyth website, including one curated for the Women in American History course. Under this section, I

was able to sort by sub-topic and locate a number of various digital archives for primary sources. As our class had to turn in a few potential topic ideas, the course guide helped me to find sources I could browse that piqued my interest in topics. This guide also links back to the writing sources, as well as to JSTOR – a research database commonly used in the humanities- which Forsyth grants access to for all Fort Hays students.

When a class involves a large final research project, students should be thinking about it and working on it throughout the class. When ill-prepared, this can make the task a dark cloud over the entire semester, as anxiety over success can make the assignment feel like a hidden monster waiting to jump out and ruin their GPA. However, with the support of the Forsyth Library staff and the guiding digital resources that I can access at any time, I felt more confident in my ability to complete my research project in under eight weeks. Forsyth Library allowed me to focus on the creativity aspect of my video, as well as on my excitement in learning about a topic that held a personal connection to my life. I am grateful that the Forsyth resources enabled me to lift the burden of doubt over my research abilities and apply that energy to achieving an excellent grade on my final project.