Hey all! I wanted to give you guys a look-see into the research process and my thoughts on how that process can be the most helpful for you. Obviously, none of these ideas are written in stone but this is simply my way of working all this out; your mileage may vary. I’ll start by throwing out a few overall ways that research helps your paper and the different methods of introducing it into your own work. Remember! Your ideas are still most important. The research and sources you find should help to back up your ideas not the other way around. Moving on, I generally have three scenarios for using research when I am writing so we go:

1. **“I know what text I would like to talk about but I am not sure what I want to talk about specifically.”** Research is a great tool in this instance as it will open up doors for you that will allow tons of beautiful ideas to come in. You may read something that you agree with and riff off of that idea for your paper topic. You may also read something that you completely hate or disagree with. This may, in turn, create a spark for an idea as well (even if it is just to say that you are badmouthing some scholar). Starting a paper can be the hardest part so looking at what other people have written about your topic always helps to get the gears turning.
2. **“I know what my topic is and what specifics I am going to be working with. I just need some extra material to play around with.”** This is also a great place to work in some scholarly sources. They can either be used to support your claims or you can use a critic who you disagree with and argue against their claim. Just make sure you win this argument. The long and short of it is that your paper doesn’t need to start with research. You can look at it after you start writing to help fill in the blanks with your paper. Plus, it makes your paper sound awesome to have scholarly sources in it.
3. **“I have my paper practically done but I still need to put sources in.”** Hey now, don’t be so stuck up. Let some other voices into your work as it always helps to get more perspectives in research. I understand this one the best because I tend to just write and write and then I am left adding in sources after the fact. What you want to do is find some sources anyways and (like point #2) use them to support your own work. Who knows? You might read something that piques your interest and moves your paper in another direction in one way or another. Either way, the research is mandatory anyways so you should really use it to support your paper. There is no sense in shoehorning in random quotes just to do it.

Well, those are usually where I end up when writing any kind of researchy papery thingy. Hopefully, those scenarios and my explanations of how to use them to your advantage will help guide you. Before I depart I also wanted to briefly show you my actual research process using the school databases. These databases are pretty excellent as they are free for us to use and allow us access to like a bajillion gigabytes of information. To start with you just go here: <http://www.fitchburgstate.edu/academics/library/>

From there click on the big button that says **“Research Databases.”** This will open up the listing of databases. You can either choose by major or the main archive list. I usually use **“Academic Search Premier”** or **“JSTOR.”** From there you sign in with your name and student ID and you are on your way. These databases work very much like the Google machine does. You simply search for what you want to talk about (i.e. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*) and the database will do the work for you. When I searched for those keywords on JSTOR, for example, I was given 3,195 different articles. On JSTOR you can read the articles right on the page or download them as PDFs (this is also how most of Academic Search Premier works). This is really great because you can just save them to your hard drive afterwards and read them at your leisure. That is really all there is to it. You just read through some of these articles and look for things that interest you. Not everything is going to pertain to what your topic specifically is but you will find pertinent information. Just be patient and keep reading. Look for titles of articles that stand out to you much the same way that a movie or book title interests you from the get-go. If you pull up a 35 page article chances are you aren’t going to read the whole thing. In this case, you can skim for important information. Most cases will find you looking at 5-10 page articles and in those cases it always is best to read the entire piece. It will help contextualize the information you synthesize for your own paper.

Well, without boring you to death, that is how I look up stuff that the school gives me for free. Obviously, if you have any questions about anything please email me or Dr. Tracy and I’m sure one of us will be able to give you a hand. Take it easy guys and good luck!

Also, you can just go to the library and read books. Remember those things? Books? Yeah, there were pretty cool. If you need help with library stuff, you can ask the librarians…or me.