Brooke Clark

Statement of Research Methods

During my first semester at Rice, I took Professor Nicole Waligora-Davis’s course on Blackness in African-American Literature. This seminar’s readings, especially those by James Baldwin, provoked me to question my own theoretical investments in queer theory. To begin my research, I went to the stacks in Fondren Library and found the section which held works by and about James Baldwin. I read through book collections of Baldwin’s interviews and essays and discovered that Baldwin’s insights spoke to theories of Afro-Pessimism and Queer Negativity. Fondren Library’s careful organization and thorough compilation of Baldwin’s writing helped me locate Baldwin’s works, which served as the catalyst for my research project.

With Baldwin’s words in hand and mind, I continued to delve into the stacks for critical work on Baldwin, Afro-Pessimism, and Queer Negativity. I often used the Book List function made available through my Fondren Library online account to catalogue my book findings when I was not on campus. Thus, when I was on campus, I effectively located all the print resources related to my topic through my personalized Book Lists. With Fondren stacks’ comprehensive availability of fiction, non-fiction, and criticism and their useful online tools, I navigated the stacks efficiently and enjoyed my time spent searching for and finding each book on my lists.

From this, I went to Fondren’s online catalogues of databases and researched my subject matter through Academic Search Premier, JSTOR, Project Muse, and EEBO. To narrow my online research results, I used the MLA International Bibliography to explore works by specific journals. Fondren Library’s online search system, access to numerous databases, and option to search for particular journals were all crucial tools for my research project. I also frequently took advantage of the Interlibrary Loan system. While many books were available in Fondren’s stacks, I came across several recently-published monographs referenced in journal articles from *PMLA, Cultural Critique, October*, and other academic journals. Through the Interlibrary Loan system, I requested works and received them in a quick manner and greatly appreciated their prompt email notifications.

Once I gathered all my print and online materials from Fondren’s multiple and efficient resources, I used the desktops on the first floor of Fondren to record my initial thoughts and outline my entire paper. The open and quiet atmosphere of the first floor allowed me to concentrate on my work, while in the company of my fellow graduate students as well as other students. After I wrote my first full draft, I moved between my study carrel on Fondren’s fourth floor and the Humanities Graduate Student Lounge on Fondren’s fifth floor. In these spaces, I expanded and revised my draft. My writing incredibly benefited from Fondren Library’s open, public spaces and small, private areas, as I found changing locations to be intellectually stimulating and relaxing. Altogether, Fondren Library’s print and online resources, databases, Interlibrary Loan system, and study areas gave me the tools and the space to produce a critical project, which I will continue to develop in the future.