

I must admit that I was a bit intimidated when Dr. Spang first explained to our class that we would be required to submit a lengthy research paper at the end of her *French Revolution and Napoleon* course. While I had written some short research papers for other history courses, I had never before been asked to craft an entirely original research topic and compose a paper over ten pages in length. With significant guidance from Dr. Spang and through the use of our library's extensive resources, I was able to conduct stimulating research and produce a quality paper.

It took some time to decide on a topic—I was eventually able to narrow my focus from the broader category of women's voices in the French Revolution to the thoughts and impact of a single controversial French playwright, Olympe de Gouges. Then came the challenge of conducting my research. I knew that I would need to find at least one general biography of the writer, some articles analyzing her works, and some pieces that could help me situate de Gouges in the context of her time and place (books and articles analyzing other women of the French Revolution and other feminist and anti-slavery voices of the time, for instance). I would also need to find translations of her works from the original French into English so that I could perform my own analysis of her writings.

Once I had narrowed my topic and determined the sources I would need to consult, I used JSTOR to search for relevant articles. I read several of these articles and took extensive notes on their main arguments. Next, I used IUCAT to find books on Olympe de Gouges and related subjects. I came across some great books at the Wells Library that analyzed women's voices in the French Revolution and I read the chapters considering de Gouges and several of her contemporaries. I also found a book that dealt specifically with the issue of slavery in late 18th century France, which I skimmed for relevant information. I was fortunate enough to come upon a biography of de Gouges that had been translated into English—it also contained excerpts of her work that had been translated into English. This biography supplemented a few other translations of her work that I found online.

Next came the task of deciding which information was relevant for my paper and constructing a focused thesis. I reviewed my notes and considered both the contradictions inherent in de Gouges writing and the varied interpretations and critiques of her work. I used a few pamphlets provided by the Writing Tutorials Services for help generating my thesis and outlining my paper. With a solid thesis and outline in place, I got to work tackling segments of the paper. I consulted the Chicago Style Guide I found on the WTS website for help formatting my footnotes and bibliography as I wrote.

The search tools, books and online resources I accessed through the IU Libraries and the IU Libraries website were critical to the success of my paper. Through the process of research, reading, and writing, I gained skills in searching for information, evaluating sources, analyzing primary and secondary sources, organizing my arguments, constructing a strong thesis and outline, creating footnotes and a bibliography, and editing my paper. I now feel more confident when I'm approached with a substantial writing assignment, and I know that I can find virtually any resource I need to compose an excellent paper using the resources available through the IU Libraries.