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Application of Fondren Library Resources in Crafting “Literary Landscapes”

The earliest advice I remember receiving from English professors included taking advantage of the resources existing at Fondren Library. As a stubbornly self-sufficient student, I did not heed their words until I found myself in mild panic semesters later, in Dr. Krista Comer’s course, *The American West and Its Others*. I approached the deadline of our final paper with only an overly ambitious thesis idea. I enjoyed the interdisciplinary nature of the course—the way the syllabus and discussions drew knowledge from a variety of mediums, knowledge, and schools of thought. Out of respect for this intellectual flexibility the class encouraged, I hoped to produce a paper that was interdisciplinary in nature as well. I sincerely credit Fondren’s carefully curated research databases and its breadth of accessible academic articles for the accomplishment of my final paper, “Literary Landscapes: A Future for Post-Frontier Regionalism in Literature of the American West.”

I envisioned a research paper ambitious in the ways it differed from traditional English papers I already experienced and felt comfortable producing. “Literary Landscapes” examines the legacy and future of the American West through three textual landscape portrayals. It merges social and cultural history of the American West with traditional elements of English research (e.g. close-reading, comparative analysis, and literary theory), and further explicated using feminist, regionalist, and settler colonial theory.

The resources at Fondren proved integral for me to conduct foundational research I needed to execute this project. Specifically, Fondren research databases served as powerful tools for conducting my preliminary research and offered access to archives that were conveniently aggregated and intuitively organized. In particular, due to my unfamiliarity with Indigenous studies, I found databases related to this discipline especially helpful. The “American Indian Histories and Cultures” database provided a breadth of background information that proved useful in informing an interpretation of Silko’s *Ceremony*, a text focused on the healing the Laguna protagonist slowly experiences through ritual and spiritual

practices. By surveying the database introduction and commentary on the archival process, I gained familiarity with some specialized terms and language evoked by Indigenous scholarship. The archive also practices care in specifying the names of tribes and nations, exercising a deliberate precision in naming that heightened my awareness of cultural nuance existing between Indigenous groups and made me wary of generalization in crafting my own paper.

Access to digital libraries like JSTOR also allowed me to quickly view and consider theoretical texts to incorporate into my paper. Additionally, the Fondren catalog provided me access to the central novels I built my paper on. Although going to the library to check out books is not a novel concept, I still valued viewing paper copies of these three texts without financial burden, and I checked out and renewed these books a few times over the semester. Finally, I appreciate the place that is Fondy as well—its location in the heart of campus, the knowledge and ambition it symbolizes, the late nights I spent surrounded by the familiar sound of AC and its ambient fluorescent glow.