

Reflective Essay

This submission is the final project for Dr. Amir Hussain's class, Islam in America. Students were required to construct their own research topic with two focal points in mind: Islam and America. Towards the end of the course we had talked about the stigma surrounding Muslims and the Islamic faith since the September 11th attack. This sparked my interest to start research not only looking into effects Muslim individuals have dealt with, but also what the actual stigma was and has become. I ended up called my project: The Misconception of Jihad in America. I hoped to grab all readers' attentions and shed even more light on the subject, especially since Jihad is such a powerful, stigmatized word.

I began my research at the William H. Hannon library. I knew going into this project, I would have to have specific criteria. First, the work needed to be scholarly in order for my paper to be credible and taken seriously. This is why I began with library resources. First, I looked at the library catalog, using the strategy of imputing key words, buzzwords, and adjusting the "and" or "or" subject matter locating boxes. Then, I looked through the social sciences and religious databases. Next and arguably the most important criterion, I was looking for objective sources. As predicted, many sources had a hidden bias against my topic; therefore I had to do a lot vetting to fulfill this criterion. When I narrowed down my findings a bit, I began gather critical information that I could use. Unfortunately, I began to notice that I was not finding the answers I wanted, so I went back to my research. The next step I took was to look through sources sited in my initial research and review those works that further appealed to my topic. Through this I found books linked to major organizations and educational institutes that supported the cause. I found these organizations online and did further research on them themselves to determine their credibility. Once deemed

legitimate and credible, I was able to use the information and research done by these institutions to aid my personal research project. Once my independent research was complete and I had developed an outline, I asked Dr. Hussain for his professional input. He reflected and agreed upon the validity of the websites, and recommended further sources and organizations for me to look into as well. Finally, once my paper was written, I consulted online library resources to perfect my bibliography at the end of my project.

This research process really opened my eyes to the idea that even though articles may be considered scholarly, does not mean that they are objective. The biggest obstacle to overcome was the lack of concrete data to support my paper in my preliminary research. I supplemented that research by looking back at sources cited in work I did find. Research was so important to the topic as well, because those who do identify with an ill-perception of Islamic ideas need facts to truly prove the misconceptions wrong.