Hello! My name is and I am currently a senior social work and history major at Eastern. In the fall of 2015, I completed my history senior seminar with Dr. Caitlin Carenen in a course called “Seminar in the History of Terrorism in America”. The title of my research paper that I am submitting for the undergraduate student research award is, “Five Feet of Feminine Anarchy: Press Depictions of Emma Goldman from 1892-1901.”

The first portion of our seminar class was structured so that we had a background in American terrorism from the 16th century – late 20th century. Little library research was necessary for this portion because we had a textbook that provided us with historical background. The second portion of our course, however, required extensive research to create our own unique thesis related to American terrorism.

When solidifying a research topic, I knew I wanted to do something out of the box. My first thought was to focus on a violent female that I could relate to terrorism. In class, all of the terrorists we discussed were men so I thought approaching my thesis from this angle would prove interesting. I described my interest to Dr. Carenen who recommended I research Emma Goldman, a radical, feminist, and anarchist from the early twentieth century. To begin my research endeavor, I began by visiting Consuls, and entered terms like “female anarchist”, “Emma Goldman” and “Emma Goldman, anarchist”. I soon found myself wedged between the stacks of library books on the third floor for hours on end.

In my preliminary research, I discovered that Emma Goldman was an anarchist from the early 20th century who preached ideologies often viewed as amoral or radical at the time. Some of her preaching’s included the idea of homosexuality, free love, abandonment of religion, and expansion of gender roles in society. In addition, she was an anarchist who radically opposed the United States government. The combination of her radical social ideals with her political views
deemed her a societal outcast, and framed her as a potential threat or danger to society though she did not participate in any violent acts.

Through this initial research, I discovered that Goldman was an interesting public figure to use for my thesis. In order to make such a sweeping connection between a radical feminist and terrorism, though, I needed an aspect of her character on which to focus my research. Dr. Carenen scheduled an information session with Tara Hurt who re-introduced me to the online database system. With the help of the information session, I was able to use EBSCO, Project Muse, and JSTOR to search previous author’s conclusions on Goldman which helped me gain a more comprehensive understanding of her political beliefs and early life. However, to formulate my own unique take on Goldman, it was imminent that I used these secondary sources simply as supporting evidence to my thesis. I was not permitted to directly incorporate them into my own argument.

When compiling evidence for my argument, I needed primary sources. I spent hours wedged in between the library shelves evaluating sources and reading, all the while seeking a striking topic or argument that would make my paper unique. It was after discovering the online newspaper databases including National Newspapers Premiere, The New York Times, and the Historical Hartford Courant, that I decided I would trace negative press depictions of Goldman. These databases exposed me to many articles that were published about Goldman’s radical rhetoric, imprisonment, and even deportation. Many articles were short, some only three sentences, others, just mentioned her name but failed to extensively talk about her role in society. In order to equate Goldman to a terrorist, I had to prove she was anti-government, violent, had a psychological impact on the American people, and planned public spectacle events. To prove these attributes, I knew I needed more substantial evidence to use as a primary source and
unfortunately, though I found many articles, their short, rather sparse content made me feel as though I had reached a dead end in my research process. However, I was glad I stumbled upon these databases because I was able incorporate some of the initial newspaper articles in my final paper, annotated bibliography, and many helped shape my preliminary understandings of how Goldman was portrayed by the press.

As I continued in my research, I familiarized myself with the interlibrary loan system (ILL), and stumbled upon a documentary history - a type of book I had never seen before, that I planned to loan. A documentary history is when an author/authors compile documents written about a certain person or event. The documentary history I found was dedicated to the life of Goldman. I rifled through the one thousand-plus page book, and noticed a theme: the authors incorporated numerous press articles, letter correspondences, and court cases about Emma Goldman. Better yet – they were long! Reading through the press articles, I noticed that many depicted her as a violent, anti-government, attention seeking, and notorious character that negatively impacted the lives of all her onlookers. I spent the remaining parts of the semester arguing that Goldman was depicted as a terrorist by the press, thanks to Consuls (for background information), my use of databases (for some examples of press articles), and the interlibrary loan system (introduced me to the documentary history that I used for a majority of my primary sources).

The result of my research was academically challenging and personally rewarding. Through my research I acquired the patience necessary to pursue any research endeavor that I encounter in my postgraduate experience. I learned about the plethora of books, databases, newspaper articles etc. available to me at Eastern, how to access them, and where to look when I seemingly hit a dead end. Many of the primary resources I found, both online in databases, and
in books, allowed me to connect my life experiences to people of the past. For example, I became entirely enthralled with the idea that Goldman advocated for basic rights I, as a female, often take for granted. These included the right to vote, the right to marry (or not), and the ability to explore more than one relationship — societal norms in the present day. However at the time, Goldman was deemed a societal outcast and rebel as a result of these views. Ultimately, library research became enthralling for me, an eye opening experience and chance to see how far we’ve come in the span of human history.

Perhaps my biggest frustration in the process was my inability to find abundant primary sources initially. Secondary sources were easy to find, and easy to take out of the library. Primary sources, however, were difficult to come by and few were able to be taken out unless they were found online in the databases. I learned that some primary sources, however, are nestled within books written by modern day authors, not the original authors themselves, which makes it more feasible to take them out of the library (like my documentary history).

The most helpful strategy I used to locate my secondary sources was by far the databases which allowed me to research a plethora of topics related to Goldman and print them. I prefer a tangible resource; I am not a fan of reading on screen so this flexibility helped me bring sources home and read in my room, not solely in the library on a computer. Another helpful strategy I used to locate relevant articles to my research was searching by subject in the online databases. Lastly, I discovered that borrowing books through interlibrary loan (ILL) exposes me to a variety of resources that I may not have known if I only searched Eastern’s options. If there is one skill I could expand on it would be gaining the patience necessary to scroll through microfilm. It is a tedious task that I did not have the time to pursue while at Eastern but I think it could be immensely eye opening to read press articles as they were originally written.
Overall, my research experience at Eastern has evolved over my four years as an undergraduate student. My exposure to a variety of reading materials with the help of Consuls, and databases, helped shape my near and dear relationship to the third floor of the library. It is my hope that I am able to find a similar comfort and research experience in my post-graduate experience at Columbia University.

Thank you for your consideration.