My research of Sherman’s campaigns and his impact on the Civil War is in fulfillment of the History 451 Proseminar led by Dr. Nelson. I chose General Sherman’s March to the Sea as my topic because of its controversial nature and the abundant resources accessible from Lied Library. With a project as extensive as this, a mature sense of research is required. My topic specifically required an enormous number of primary sources. I could not explain the psychological effects of Sherman without the personal accounts of soldiers and civilians. The database “The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries” was critical in supporting my thesis. I am also thankful for “America’s Historical Newspapers.” This periodical database was easy to use and allowed me to show Northern and Southern sentiment during Sherman’s three campaigns in 1864-1865. JSTOR was also a great asset aiding me in historical journals and other secondary sources to support my primary documents.

I owe a great many thanks to the wide selection of Civil War material in the UNLV book stacks. The Third Floor especially kept me busy for hours searching through secondary sources. I believe altogether I checked out eighteen books on Sherman alone. Secondary sources were imperative in providing me support for my Civil War accounts and leading me in new directions and other important facts needing discussion. Many new and important sources were found simply by trying different key words in my searches. “Why the Confederacy Lost” edited by Gabor S. Boritt specifically gave me confidence and inspiration that my main topics and evidence were of sound judgment.

I managed my project by completing one step at a time. It is almost like the scientific method, the first step was gathering resources. I loaded myself with books, newspaper articles, diaries and letters, historical journals both printed and through JSTOR, and dissertations and M.A. theses. By gathering a substantial amount of sources, I knew I would have no trouble
supporting my argument in a paper of this magnitude. The next step was creating an outline. Other than writing, this was the hardest goal to obtain. I needed enough information to support my thesis, but not so much that I couldn’t be specific enough within the guidelines. After guidance from Military History instructor Mr. Carlton, and Proseminar instructor Dr. Nelson, I completed the outline and began the rigorous research and note-taking. I learned to keep all note cards and citations whether they were used or not. During the revision process, scanning over my unused notes allowed me to show further support where needed. After ten long weeks of research and writing I completed my goals. A schedule of work and goals, and most notably time in the library allowed me to complete a thesis paper of substantial length.

I learned a great deal from the research process and thesis paper itself. I could not support every sentiment I felt about Sherman’s importance. Some topics had to be left out and replaced by others. Some topics were found not important and others more. My project changed over the course of the research and writing. The final draft is proof of adapting and completing the struggle and trials of a major thesis paper.

The Lied Library collections and electronic databases were essential in constructing a capstone project worthy of a Bachelor’s degree in History. I am also appreciative of the aid and direction received by Mr. Carlton, Dr. Nelson, and the entire staff at the Information and Research Desk in the Lied Library. I had never accomplished such an extensive project before, but the amount of resources, aid, and accessibility made Sherman’s impact on the Civil War interesting, educational, and above all manageable.