

Calvert Awards Reflective Essay
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My research focuses on using postmodern feminism as a framework in analyzing the relations between the conceptualization of rape, its weaponization, and conflict. This is a serious project with important implications in understanding warfare and women security issues. Due to this, the sources were derived from notable databases such as JSTOR, Project Muse, Sage Journals, and more. UNLV libraries successfully provided access to these articles via ACE Account, school Wi-Fi, and the library website. I further utilized the website by searching for other databases that can provide me with robust empirical evidence such as PAIS International. To strengthen the paper, the articles are relevant to the scope of the thesis, which specifically focuses on the weaponization and use of wartime rape. These articles provided both context and evidence for my literature review as these sources studied women, military institutions, conflict-related-sexual violence, the strategic use, and prevalence of rape in conflict. These authors came from various fields and expertise outside of postmodern feminism such as philosophy, psychoanalysis, anthropology and more. Their works aided in developing and strengthening postmodern feminism as a framework.

My research strategy in finding relevant articles and books is through the library's website. The search bar has the advance search options and a check-list on the side to further refine the types of sources I am looking for. This function helped me in inputting my keywords, and aided me in finding frequently cited authors in my readings. I also used the *AND*, *OR*, *NOT* functions to make my search easier. Another method I used is checking the articles' works cited section, and found them through the library website. This allowed me to narrow the focus of my paper and sources.

The challenge in finding my sources was not only refining the scope of my articles, but also being able to find works containing empirical evidence. For my case-studies, I needed reports, data, interviews, and historical contexts of the conflicts. It is difficult to narrow down my research when the United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other international organizations have a broad scope with huge amounts of data. It was intimidating. To tackle this issue, I sought the advice of UNLV librarians Brittani Sterling and Susie Skarl who have aided me in my research efforts. I met up multiple times with Susie Skarl in the early part of my project. She truly helped me in finding sources, taught me search techniques, how to effectively use the library, and showed me amazing tools such as RefWorks.

This paper provides additional interpretation in women security for international relations. As feminists argue, the mainstream conceptualization and theories of war are fundamentally based from the perspective of men. There is an absence of women in the formulation and understanding of such complex events. As such, this paper seeks to contribute to feminist studies by analyzing wartime rape through a postmodern feminist lens. Through postmodern feminism, this paper deconstructs the phallogentric language, meaning male-centered, to the conceptualization of rape and how it effectively transforms it into a detrimental weapon of war that deliberately targets women. This paper is important as it challenges mainstream international relations, and prioritizes the focus on the victims of war instead of state-actors. It is necessary to evaluate wartime rape, and to find the possible reasons why it is prevalent from the times of the Ancient Greeks until the present. With the deconstruction of phallogentric language, this paper highly suggests the *actual* voices of women to be present in the formulation and understanding of war.

The findings of my paper did not contradict my hypothesis; however, it changed the way I perceived myself. I am a woman, yet this paper made me question my own identity. It made me understand through existential, psychoanalytic, and postmodern feminist theory that being a woman is, itself, socially constructed. The creation of this woman is by and for the patriarchal social structures that govern and dictate her sexuality. In this context, I understood that if women do not have the autonomy over their own identity and existence, their suffering against the patriarchy is amplified. In these cases, women have their worth dictated by their virginity as daughters, and their purity as wives and mothers. The patriarchal structure that forms rape into a universal language of masculine dominance, subjugates and oppresses these women to a heightened degree. It thoroughly denies her victimhood and pain. Because of this paper, I have understood the power in defining myself as a woman in my own terms.