

Jacob Boisclair

RESL 1500

March 29 2024

My Research Journey

I began my undergraduate journey at Thompson Rivers University in 2018, initially planning for a Law degree, and shifting into a political science and philosophy focus as I moved through my coursework. I am currently preparing to graduate with my undergraduate degree with a double major in English and Philosophy. Research as a Humanities and English literature student looks different in comparison to science and social science students. In the Humanities and English, research is compulsory to complete classwork. However, since I have engaged in self-directed research projects, the research I have conducted in my degree exceeds the compulsory nature of regular coursework. Throughout my time at TRU, I have been involved in a plethora of extracurricular opportunities. In 2020 I served on the TRU Generator Advisory Board, helping arts graduates leverage their experiences into non-traditional business pathways. In 2021 I was an Arts Ambassador, working as part of a team to build community amongst students in the Arts faculty. In 2023 I worked as a Teaching Assistant, working alongside Dr. Wesley Furlotte in a first year intro to Philosophy course. I have also won several awards including the Thompson Rivers University Student Union Campus Life Award in 2023, the Undergraduate Research Ambassador Award in 2023-2024, and this past year I was the Co-Chair for the Philosophy, History and Politics Conference Committee. I am currently completing an Undergraduate Research Experience Award Program project, mentored by Dr. Jenna Woodrow. Now, I'm in my last semester of an Undergraduate degree that has taken me 6 years to complete. In my first two years of study, I was not involved in anything extracurricular- if it wasn't an

assignment you would not find me doing it. At this point, I realized that if I wanted to go into graduate studies, I'd need to start taking my education journey a little more seriously. With a background in Poli Sci, and pursuing a double major in English and Philosophy, Angela Sangha at Arts Advising thought I'd be a great candidate for the Arts Ambassador program. And with that, I embarked into the realms of extracurriculars and campus life. My involvement with extracurriculars at TRU is pertinent to the discussion of my research journey, as it is directly because of my involvement in extracurriculars that I was led to research, as well as the encouragement from some supportive professors. Dr. Robin Tapley was the first professor to encourage me to pursue the dissemination of my work at TRU's PHP Conference. At this point, my research was mostly focussed on metaphysics, particularly modern applications of the Aristotelian Substance Model in reference to abstract concepts. It was at this conference that I presented my work on the Integrated Whole of Women's Literature. And then, it was Dr. Wesley Furlotte who provided me with an opportunity to present my research at a conference in the states. At the 25th Annual Pacific University Undergraduate Conference, I presented my work on Kant's "Unsociable Sociability" and his notion of a teleological history whose purpose is the maturation of reason in the human species. From here, my interest and confidence in research really took off. I became a Co-Chair of the Philosophy, History, and Politics Conference here at TRU, and with the encouragement and support of Dr. Jenna Woodrow, succeeded in applying for the Undergraduate Research Experience Award Program, or UREAP, of which I am currently in the process of completing. Until I reached out to Dr. Woodrow about the UREAP, my journey into undergraduate student research had been entirely supported and initiated by the faculty and staff at TRU whom I've developed relationships with. These relationships were founded in positions of contact with faculty through my extracurricular involvement. Dr. Wesley Furlotte

served as the Faculty Advisor for the PHP Conference Committee while I was the Events and Fundraising Co-lead. Dr. Jenna Woodrow was the internal keynote speaker for the conference that same year. Similarly, Dr. Robin Tapely presented a guest lecture at one of the committee's fundraising events that year. I emphatically believe that establishing rapport with these professors, facilitated through my extracurricular involvement, led to their encouragement and support in my research.

In the first half of my degree, my research only consisted of articles distributed through class. However, over time my particular interests in philosophy would reveal themselves in the essays I wrote and the research I conducted. Themes of Indigeneity, metaphysics, and ontology began to pop up in essays at every opportunity I had to include them. While I certainly believe, and my professor's would definitely agree, that my academic writing has improved considerably since the beginning of my degree, I feel that most of the development I have undergone through my degree has been internal. Learning about theories and concepts in class, and then conducting research on those theories and concepts- usually as they relate to Indigenous epistemic systems- has resulted in a great shift in my perception of the world, and therefore my research. In my 4th year of study, largely due to Dr. Nina Johnson's ENGL 4770 class: Pathways to Hope and Resilience, I internalized the concept of *actionable research*. That is to say, I decided that I want the research I conduct to be active, engaging, invigorating; I want my research to inspire change in individuals. Not to disparage certain contexts of study, but I want my research to be dynamic, to escape the inert and static nature of theoretical abstraction. The work I have done on my UREAP has bulwarked this stance. The perspectives and concepts shared within the works of Indigenous authors that I have analyzed for my UREAP reflect, entrench, and embolden my desire to create actionable and embodied research. The research experiences I have had have

reshaped me to a great extent. Beyond preparing me for graduate studies, my research experiences have changed the way I walk in and see the world.