Research Plan (An Informal Outline)

1. Find a topic and decide on your position so that you know what side you will be arguing.

2. Freewrite about this topic: this paper should come from you, not your sources. So write about why you feel the way you do. Get your ideas down on paper so that you can refer to them as you are writing your essay. Let your sources support what you are saying; don’t let sources control what you are saying.

3. Find sources to support and to oppose
   a. Library databases (timeliness, credibility)
   b. Books
   c. Internet (look for credible sites)
   d. Primary source (personal interview)
   e. Questionnaires

4. Start a Working Bibliography (handout)
   a. Index cards
   b. Notebook
   c. Computer document

5. Take notes from your sources
   a. Read critically
   b. Quotes – use sparingly
   c. Paraphrase, summarize
   d. Evidence: examples, anecdotes, statistics, details

6. Create an informal outline

   Once you have skimmed through your sources, create an outline of the points you will make in this essay:
   1. Thesis paragraph
   2. First point and support
   3. Second point and support
   4. Third point and support
   5. Opposition and refute
   6. Conclusion

You are now ready to write your first draft. Return to your thesis and follow it. Keep referring back to it. List your key points and start to fill in your opinions and the sources you have gathered to support these opinions. This will help you see what is missing. What evidence do you still need? Where can you find it? This draft will keep evolving as you find more sources.