

My interest in English here at Williams has been completely unexpected. I initially became interested in the English major after taking *Borrowing and Stealing* my freshman spring and since then my interests have remained largely focused on the topics that course covered. As such, I am most interested in modern literature and critical theory. As my time at Williams (and WEPO) proceeds, I hope to further explore these interests, particularly that of literary theory. I have taken several classes thus far on modern literature and have loved all of them, but would like, in the next two years, to further explore the development of literary theory. Although I have mainly explored literary theory in modern times - possibly due to the fact that defining and categorizing literary genres and movements seems to be a more recent focus - I am also more generally interested in people's perceptions of what defines literature and the critical response to literature throughout time.

Of course, the distinctions between different literary genres have changed over time. As such, I hope to use my interest in the popular and critical response to questions concerning what constitutes literature and authorship as a way to explore different time periods of literature. I have not, to this point, pushed myself to study pre-1800 literature, but I hope to use my interest in critical theory as an entry point into this period of literature. In fact, I am even exploring taking a class on the critical reception of Shakespeare while at Oxford next year in order to engage with this material.

On a different note, recently I have also become interested in "cultures of mourning." Society's relationship to death and the different literary traditions surrounding such an emotional, yet inescapable occurrence and, specifically, the superstition surrounding death and cemeteries interests me. This topic combines literature, culture, and even philosophy in a way that seems very intriguing to me. Although this interest seems to be a bit of a sidetrack from my main interest in theory and modernism, I think it could also serve as a way to expand my study of English and help me engage with the more emotional and cultural sides of literature. As such, I hope to get a chance to explore this topic further either at Oxford or on my own.

Overall, I am excited to continue studying English and am looking forward to seeing how my various interests develop. I hope, in the end, that my English major develops into a cohesive study of literary and critical theory throughout time with an additional focus on how English literature in different geographic areas deals with philosophical problems, such as death.