Jennifer Smith ('16) honored with the 2016 UW's Dean's Medal!

Majors: History, Comparative History of Ideas and Minor: American Indian Studies

Current Research project: *Where the Wild Horses Roam: The Cross-Cultural Debate Over the Fate of Wild Horses on Yakama Tribal Lands*

Translate your work so that we can all understand its importance

My research is centered on the ongoing debate between representatives of the Yakama nation and specific non-Native animal advocacy groups in regard to the growing population of wild horses on Yakama tribal lands. As heavily polarized debates over the methods proposed to manage herd size have erupted in the public eye, I examine how the horse has become a terrain of struggle as non-Native groups use the horse symbolically as a representation of American nationalism. Further, this debate, born from feelings of imperialist nostalgia, engenders the use of repressive authenticity, and becomes grounded in the larger frontier narrative; which, in turn, allows non-Natives to imagine themselves the protagonists of the battle of the “Civilized” vs. the “Savage” Indian. Because the debate has morphed into something larger than the welfare of wild horses on Yakama lands, my research proposes that we take seriously the agency of the horse and how we relate to our non-human others.

What advice would you give a student who is considering getting involved in undergraduate research in your field?

Find something you’re passionate about, and then find a mentor who shares that passion. Also, don't be afraid to ask questions or ask for help. The Undergraduate Research Program is there to support you and help you succeed.

When, how, and why did you get involved in undergraduate research?

I became involved in undergraduate research as a participant in the 2014 Summer Institute of Arts and Humanities. I had seen the call for applications in several emails and around campus and the theme of Native modernities is something I am really passionate about. I applied, and much to my surprise was selected! It was an amazing experience, especially for an older student like myself who was
also new to the University of Washington, as it really made me feel like I belonged.

**What is the most exciting and/or rewarding aspect of your undergraduate research experience?**

Although I am a mother and full-time student, I have found my involvement in undergraduate research has ignited such a passion in me to further my work that I have become a pro at time management. When I first began, I lacked confidence in my own abilities and was concerned that with all my other obligations, I would not be able to manage my project. But with the aid of my faculty mentor, the Undergraduate Research Program, and the support of my family, I have learned that I am fully capable of more than I ever imagined. Undergraduate research has truly been one of the best things I have been involved in during my time at UW, and I would encourage everyone to check it out and get involved!

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