

Alumni Spotlight: Daniel Cobourn

B.A. in English (2018)



Why did you choose UofL English?

I switched from Physics to English in my sophomore year after taking Introduction to Creative Writing with Professor Ian Stansel.

Please share a little bit about a favorite class or project you developed in English about which you are particularly proud.

As part of the English honors program, I completed and defended a creative thesis, supervised by Professor Stansel. The thesis was comprised of three short stories which employed different narrative techniques and were linked thematically by moral dilemmas and struggles for dignity.

Share your best memory of being an English student.

As part of my studies, I served as the undergraduate fiction editor on *Miracle Monocle*. In addition to connecting me with fantastic authors and their works, the experience helped me develop professional skills that I have continued to use.

What is the most important thing you learned while you were an English student?

Being an English student (one who focused on fiction, particularly) taught me to keep my audience at the forefront of my attention when writing. When I write to persuade, I always consider who I am writing for and how that audience should inform my choices. From my literature courses, I learned that the best way to develop my understanding of any topic is to write about it. Writing forces you to

organize information cumulatively. In doing so you make connections and generate insights you otherwise wouldn't.

Describe your career path. How did your English education prepare you for what you are doing today?

After graduating from UofL, I spent a year writing and applying for MFA programs before ultimately deciding that it wasn't the right path for me. I then reflected on the skills that I had developed as a writer and a literature student. I realized that there was a substantial overlap between those skills and the day-to-day job of an attorney, which led me to apply to law school.

What is one of your favorite professional accomplishments and/or most fascinating aspects of your job?

Although I have not begun my career as an attorney yet, I did get the chance to represent a asylum applicant in a federal hearing before an immigration judge this summer as part of my future firm's pro bono service. It was an incredibly rewarding experience that confirmed my interest in litigation, and why being an advocate is the right path for me.

What advice would you give current students or recent graduates interested in pursuing a career in your professional field?

Although I didn't graduate from an Ivy League school like many of my law school classmates, I felt I had a significant comparative advantage in my legal studies because my experiences in the UofL English Department. Reading comprehension and writing skills are invaluable and—at least thus far—they haven't been totally replaced by ChatGPT.

What advice do you have for current students who want to make the most out of their experience in the Department of English?

Take classes that interest you. Before doing that, I wasn't sure that school was right for me. I struggled to apply myself. It was only after taking courses that motivated me that I discovered my own aptitudes and learned to appreciate academic challenges.