

Alumni Spotlight: Rachel Salmon

B.A. in English



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

I loved "The Teaching of Writing" with Dr. Andrea Olinger! We were assigned a creative project that was supposed to describe or embody how we became the writer we are today. I built a house-shaped bookshelf (I designed the building plans myself, too), and filled its shelves with my favorite books from my childhood, teenage years, and college days. Instead of leaving them on display, I used a label maker and "retitled" each book with what it had taught me: writing styles, literary theories, storytelling strategies, and life lessons. *Fight Club* was retitled "The one that taught me how to hit rock bottom." We had a class gallery to display the projects, and I placed a potted house plant, with a hand painted a little sign that said "welcome home," next to my bookshelf. I was very proud of the work that I put into that project, and I thoroughly enjoyed the process of creating it and reflecting upon who I was as a writer.

Share your best memory of being an English student.

Making my professors mad by eating lox bagels in class!

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

I am currently a graduate student at Vanderbilt University Divinity School. I'm pursuing a Masters of Theological Studies with concentrations in Gender, Sexuality, and Religion and Spirituality and Social Activism. My plan is to stay in academia, as I hope to research, write, and publish about topics concerning justice, social ethics, and theology. My English education taught me how to read a text critically and contextually, and this has set me up really well to further study ancient texts such as the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint. The English department also taught me how to think about literature and its cultural implications, which is precisely what I'm doing in Divinity School. I feel like I really have an advantage, especially over my peers who do not have an education in the humanities.

What is one of your favorite professional accomplishments?

I was offered scholarships from all five graduate schools to which I applied. My mind was blown!

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

Consider how you want to contribute to this world. Find people who are doing what you want to do, and ask them how they got there. There are many paths to success and infinite ways to help people. Consider what you wish you had and figure out how to give that to people.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your time with UofL's English program?

It really did pay off - stick it out! You got this!