



COLLEGE of
CHARLESTON

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

HSS Scholar

Nicholas Lavergne

MAJOR: RELIGIOUS STUDIES

MINOR: INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Educational Highlights: From my very first semester at the College of Charleston, specifically in one of Professor Bjerken's classes, I knew I finally found an area of study I would come to love. Religious studies has helped to foster in me an awareness and appreciation of the diversity of people. Using skills I have learned in my classes, such as "bracketing"—the ability to put aside my own biases and beliefs to better understand someone else's—I was better prepared to serve as a WINGS for Kids leader in North Charleston from 2014 to 2015.

Through WINGS, an after-school program aimed at helping underprivileged youth learn social and emotional skills, I gained hands-on experience working with people of different ages and belief systems. I realized that working at the intersection of religion and mental health was something I wanted to further pursue.

Research Focus or Project: Professor Zeff Bjerken guided me to Woodenfish Foundation, a summer program that offered me the opportunity to live in and among other students and monastics in three different Buddhist monasteries in Mainland China. During my time abroad, I worked with Professor Elijah Siegler on an independent study examining the role of Buddhist monastic art in China today. I have taught two classes in Professor Siegler's course, Religions of China and Japan, where I presented on the Woodenfish Foundation, Heart Sutra, and research from my independent study. Aside from those projects, a paper I wrote in Professor John Huddleston's course, which examined the sentience and inherent power within Buddhist and Islamic relics, was presented at a regional conference in Georgia.

Future Plans: After I graduate, I hope to utilize the rigorous research skills, empathy-training, and analytical "tool box" I have obtained through my classes in religious studies to pursue a PhD in psychology. I hope to work with religious and at-risk youth in school systems in a counseling role. While the future remains to be seen, the experiences I have gained teaching in WINGS for Kids and through classroom presentations give me an image of myself in the role of a religious studies professor. I hope to apply to Georgia State University's two year graduate program in the coming fall.



This award presented by Jerold L. Hale, dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Department of Religious Studies at the College of Charleston on the 6th day of May, 2016.