Educational Highlights: In early 2019, I submitted a research paper that I had written for my class on Asian religions in America, to SECSOR, the Southeast Commission for the Study of Religion. It is a religious conference where undergraduates, graduates, and professors can submit their work and present this research to an audience. I was fortunate enough to be selected and present my paper on Asian religion and American pop culture. I discussed the way Asian culture is presented in media such as film and television and how these representations originated from the first encounters Europeans had with Asian countries. The images about Asian culture that are so familiar, such as monk robes or Buddha statues, are all derived from the artifacts and materials Europeans had admired so much that they brought them home. Presenting this paper elevated my communication and research skills, and hearing various questions about my subject exposed me to different ideas. It was especially gratifying to listen to the presentations of other students. To see people who were as passionate about their work as I was.

Research Focus or Project: My research focus is on Asian religions, especially those practices in Japan and China. I’ve been fascinated by how diverse Eastern religions truly are but also how they are portrayed in other countries. Whether it is through writing or media, we typically gain some understanding of what a culture is through these mediums, so it’s easy to obtain misconceptions or stereotypes about Asian culture. My SECSOR paper explored this idea through American pop culture but I want to research this idea even further. I want to dismantle the ideas Americans have about Asian culture, that these cultures are not ancient or passive or dangerous. I want them to understand that these cultures are lived and broaden their understanding of the world.

Future Plans: I plan to spend time with my family during the summer and later travel to Japan and the United Kingdom. I studied Japanese for four years at the college but unfortunately never got to go to Japan. Eventually, I plan to attend graduate school and earn my master’s degree in Religious Studies.