

15 March 2015

English Honors Program  
The City College of New York  
160 Convent Ave  
New York, NY 10031

Dear English Honors Committee:

I grew up in a small, tight-knit, highly religious community in Missouri. Extremist Christian ideas of sin and hell were central to my upbringing. Despite the efforts of my parents to shelter me and instill deeply principles of fear and absolute faith, I began to secretly question the legitimacy of that culture from at early age. When I was a young teen, I discovered that the Bible was originally written in another language -- something I was never told in many years of Sunday school -- and at that moment it became clear to me how far the church leaders were from a real understanding of the text which they nevertheless pointed to as absolute, unquestionable law. When I moved to New York City and began studying at the City College in 2011, I quickly found my place in the English Department, under the auspices of which I could explore theoretical questions of language and textual interpretation.

During my sophomore year, I started learning Ancient Greek, hoping to decipher the tongue of both Plato and the New Testament. But what I began to decipher was in fact the heart of Western civilization, since, as Herder famously argued, a people's language is a system of signs that reveals the organization of its consciousness. It was in that same year that I began working independently with professors and pursuing my own research questions in comparative literature. I recommenced my study of German that I had begun in high school and became infatuated with German Enlightenment and Romanticism. I saw them as two beautiful, complex ways of looking at the world, that although occurring one after the other, seem in so many ways to be polar opposites. The key to this puzzle seemed to me to be Goethe and the great aesthetic project in Weimar. By the end of my sophomore year, I had so many questions, that I decided to spend my junior year abroad in Germany, perfecting my knowledge of the language and researching on my own.

In Germany, at the University of Osnabrück, I began to study Latin intensively and then immersed myself in French and Italian as well, and by the time it was time to come back to the United States, I tested into the highest level of classes in Latin, French, and Italian at CCNY, and decided to take on minors in the two latter modern languages.

This year I am a senior and my research has really picked up. In independent study with Professor Oppenheimer, I am currently reading Schiller's aesthetic letters in the original German. With Professor Bonaparte, I am studying ancient and modern language theory and reading English and German novels from the Enlightenment and Romanticism in order to help me better interpret Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, the novel which has now become the cynosure of my comparative research.

After graduation I want to pursue a PhD in comparative literature, and thereafter to teach at a public university where I can help students from all backgrounds to develop a critical skillset for interpreting carefully the world around them. Teaching is my calling, and I can think of no better life work than to replicate for other students the kind of incredible intellectual transformation that I have personally experienced as the result of the wonderful teaching and mentorship I have received at the City College.

To be admitted to English Honors would allow me to take part in honors seminars in which I could open up my mind to further ideas and benefit from the diverse intellectual approaches of my professors and fellow students. Additionally, the chance to work on my own research in the official context of a thesis class would give me time to polish my writing sample before presenting myself to PhD programs. In short, acceptance into English Honors would be a personal honor which would help me to develop in pursuit of my academic goals.

Many thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,