

Dr. CJ Scruton, MA English Language & Literature, 2017

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“Look around at the opportunities on your campus and in your department and take advantage of as many of them as possible. And perhaps more importantly, follow what interests and excites you.”



Dr. CJ Scruton was out with friends during their graduation from Western Kentucky University. When one friend reminded them it was time, they had their own celebration of sorts. Scruton received their MA in English Language and Literature and received both Outstanding MA Student in English from Potter College and the Wood Award from the English department. Scruton feels their greatest accomplishment came when defending their thesis and the feeling of validation of being told all their stress and hard work had been a worthwhile project.

In their current position at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Scruton notes the similarities of their time as a teaching assistant at WKU. They teach two undergraduate sections a semester, often freshman English composition, but occasionally they have the opportunity to teach a literature course. Although Scruton uses their degree in English on a daily basis, they did want undergraduate English majors to remember that there are a multitude of ways English degrees can be used in the world today, not just in the teaching field. “My undergraduate degree has certainly been useful, but a lot of the opportunities I’ve received have been related to side interests or clubs as well. College is about discovering what you want to do with your life, and I doubt you’ll ever regret exploring your options while you have the option to do so.”

Scruton felt fortunate to be able to obtain their MA from WKU, noting the size of the program allowed them to receive the teaching experience they needed and a level of direct instruction they do not feel they may have received in other programs.

When asked about any professors they felt had made a significant impression on their academic career, Scruton had high praise for Dr. Hughes. “She was the first person to push me to submit to conferences and scholarly journals. Dr. Hughes has provided me a

lot of professional opportunities in addition to being simply one of the best teachers and mentors I've ever had." Dr. Hughes also had high accolades for her former student, and she offered the observation that "CJ was never afraid to tackle texts that were off the beaten path like Melville's *Pierre*. They did a good job disseminating their research through conferences and publications, and they were Sophia Pawthorne's favorite dog sitter ever!"

