Student Spotlight: Cody Patton

01/01/2017

Utah State University presents Cody Patton. President of the history honor society, Phi Alpha Theta, Cody is in his junior year at Utah State, getting a degree in history with a minor in economics. On top of his Phi Alpha Theta responsibilities, Cody is an Undergraduate Teaching Fellow for Dr. Julia Gossard, and an assistant to Clint Pumphrey, the manuscripts curator in USU’s Special Collections and Archives. Cody is currently working to curate an exhibit for the Merrill-Cazier Library on the Becker Brewing and Malting Company, which operated out of Ogden, Utah in the early twentieth century. Upon asking Cody about his experience as a student at Utah State, he said, “There’s just so much opportunity here. All you have to do is ask.” Outside of history, Cody is passionate about environmental policy and water conservation. He enjoys reading fantasy and science fiction, and recommends Dan Carlin’s “Hard Core History” podcast to anyone who is interested in history as a major.

A number of things. First of all, I toured a couple of different campuses in Utah, and I liked the campus here the best. Also, I got the best scholarship here, which made it a pretty easy decision.

When and how did you first develop an interest in history, classics, or religious studies?

I’ve always kind of liked history. As a kid I watched Liberty Kids on PBS and things like that, but I really started getting super interested my sophomore year of high school when I took AP World History. The class made it seem more real to me. I was exposed to primary source documents in that class and I just thought it was fascinating to read a diary of someone who lived two hundred years ago and how their perspective of the world is so much different than ours today. I thought it was really fascinating.

What projects are you working on right now?

I am super busy. I’m the president of the history honor society, Phi Alpha Theta, so I’m working on planning events for that. In addition to that I work at the Special Collection and Archives at the Merrill-Cazier Library. Right now, I’m working to curate an exhibit there on one of our collections which is about the Becker Brewing and Malting Company, which was a brewery that operated out of Ogden from 1890 to 1965. We have the largest collection of documents and photos of the brewery as far as I know. In addition to all that, I’m also an Undergraduate Teaching Fellow and I work with Dr. Julia Gossard. Her class is working on an online digital food timeline for a Modern Western Civilizations class. We’ve been helping the students realize that there are other things in history that matter besides people. Like food is really important and influences a lot of decisions and is an important thing not to skip over in history.

Last time we talked you mentioned something about a French Revolution re-enactment in Dr. Gossard’s History of the French Revolution class. What’s that all about?

Oh. Haha. This thing is getting out of hand. It is consuming my life! Basically, we got assigned roles of real people in the National Assembly in France in 1791 and we are reenacting the constitution debates. We’ve elected a president, someone is playing Lafayette, we have a...
Feuillant faction, the Jacobin faction and a conservative faction, and we all get up and give speeches on the primary documents we have. We are trying to decide if we want to edit the constitution or not, and today the Pope invaded because he was mad about some legislation we passed in regards to the Catholic Church, so we teamed up with the King’s Royal Guard and the National Guard to repulse the Pope’s invasion and the conservatives lost a lot of delegates because of that. Lafayette is going to turn to Napoleon, so my faction is dedicated to stopping him now, and it’s just getting out of control, and I don’t want to work on any other homework except this class! This class is super interesting. I’ve never been more engaged with my research documents.

What is your favorite part of studying at Utah State University so far?

So far, even though it’s a small program here, I feel like the smallness of the program has allowed me to be involved in things I wouldn’t otherwise get to at a larger university. I did undergraduate research with a professor in my sophomore year, I work at Special Collections and Archives, I’m a UTF, and I know almost all the faculty in the department. I feel like you don’t get that at a big school. I’ve gotten a lot of really good resume building experiences here because I’ve been able to do all these things. There’s just so much opportunity. All you have to do is ask. They are more than willing to help you.

What is your least favorite part?

My least favorite part: beside walking up Old Main Hill every day? No. Honestly, I feel like there is not a huge support for the humanities here at this school. You talk to students and they tell you they are a business major and they ask you what you do and you say, “Oh, I am a history major”, and they say, “Have fun being poor” or something else like that. You get that everywhere, and with every major. Sometimes I feel like we focus so much on business and engineering here that CHASS gets forgotten. But other than that, I generally like it up here.

What is your number one goal as a student at USU?

My number one goal as a student? Uhh, to graduate. No, really just to develop myself personally. I feel like college is a time to find out who you really are. When I first came to school I was all set to be a history teacher. That was what I was going to do, and that was all I was going to do. I’ve kind of decided that that is not what I want to do as I’ve gotten more education and gotten more involved in things. I really feel like I’m developing the true me, and I feel like that is my main goal: to find out who I really am.

What skills do you think are the most valuable and that you would like to learn over the course of your time here?

Definitely writing. In high school I was a “smart kid” so writing was super easy for me and I feel like the teachers didn’t hold me to a super high standard. So coming to college I feel like I’ve really developed my writing skills.

Is there a certain historical figure who inspires you the most?

That’s a really hard question. I really don’t have a favorite historical person or time period. I really like early modern Europe and I like twentieth century Europe a lot. As far as inspiring me, I haven’t really found that person yet, but I’m sure I will at some point. I like Alexander Hamilton, but that’s probably just because of the musical. I really like that musical because it got people to look at and appreciate history in a different way. It’s not just some dry boring book, it can be a fantastic story, and it really happened, so a true fantastic story.

Is there a movie, book or other media that you would suggest to others?

I really like podcasts. I found this one podcast by Dan Carlin called “Hard Core History,” and its super cool. If you want to get into history, I would definitely recommend that.

What are you passionate about, other than history?

One of my roommates is a Quinney Scholar in the College of Natural Resources and in getting to know him I’ve really become more environmentally conscious and care more about green policy. Every day when I walk to school and it’s raining and the USU sprinklers are on, I get so mad. We live in the desert and I care about water conservation, and I think that as an institution of higher education we should do more to be a model for the community. So I’m
really passionate about getting more people to be aware of water waste. As far as hobbies go, I really like to read science fiction and fantasy, and play video games. I also like to binge watch shows on Netflix.

If interested individuals want to follow you on social media or find you on the web, what is a good website or twitter handle for you?

They can find me on Facebook. That’s really the only social media I use, and not very often.