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### **Gardner-Webb English Major Analyzes Gendered Language in Sport Hunting Community**

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# Gardner-Webb English Major Analyzes Gendered Language in Sport Hunting Community

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Office of University  
Communications

December 3, 2018

## *Ally Ward '19 Explores Her Hobby Through Linguist's Perspective*

The town of Norwood, N.C., is situated on the Pee Dee River and near the Uwharrie National Forest, offering residents several places to hunt and fish. Gardner-Webb

University senior Ally Ward grew up there and took up bow hunting when she was in middle school.



Photo by Savannah Stringer

The hobby began as a bonding time for Ward and her dad. "My mom also picked it up as a way to bond with my dad and me in an activity that both of us really enjoyed," Ward shared. "It is something all of us continue to do."

An English major, Ward is also passionate about reading and linguistics. Her Undergraduate Research Project combined her interests. "I decided to study sport hunting as a discourse community and determine how the jargon is gendered," she related. "I explored scholarly sources that gave lots of background information on sport hunting, including feminist theory, mythology, and social and culture factors, etc., that all influence the language used in sport hunting."

Ward was one of 13 GWU students who received grants for their scholarly research during the 2018 summer terms. Her findings confirmed that discourse in the sport hunting community is indeed gendered. "Many magazines referred to sportswomen as a 'Diana,' which refers to mythology," Ward noted. "Diana is also associated with Artemis and is known as the huntress of the chase. She's also associated with childbirth. World War II also played a role in the differing attitudes towards women hunters. Post-World War II, for example, caused men to equate the battlefield with the hunting field and masculinity. Men also view hunting as an initiation process and a rite of passage that symbolically shows a male's transition from a boy to a man."

Her research is the basis for her final thesis for graduation. She will present her work at the Life of the Scholar Multidisciplinary Conference at GWU in the spring. The experience also prepared her for graduate school. "My plan is to become an English professor, specializing in 19th century British literature," she affirmed. "I would encourage other students to participate in undergraduate research, as it not only teaches you more about a topic you are

interested in, but also teaches you a lot about yourself. I learned that the time of day and my location determine how focused I am on my research. It also taught me that I like to organize things, and I must print every source so that I can better understand it.”

Ward’s mentor was Dr. June Hobbs, professor of English, GWU Director of Undergraduate Research and chair of the Fay Webb Gardner Master Mentorship Program. Hobbs guided her through the challenges she faced. “There is no source that lists all the words that men are more apt to use versus what women are more apt to use,” Ward explained. “I had to discover a pattern for myself that is specific to the discourse community of hunting. Dr. Hobbs helped me not to become overwhelmed by giving me the tools to organize and structure my research.”

*Learn more about the Undergraduate Research Scholars Program.*