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Office of University
Communications

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Elisabeth Moore '16 Enjoys Teaching Students to Appreciate History

Elisabeth Moore working on her computer

Elisabeth Moore, a 2016 graduate of Gardner-Webb University, has been awarded the Robbins Fellowship at West Virginia University (WVU) in Morgantown. The honor provides a deserving graduate assistant with a year off from teaching. "This is a huge benefit, and I am incredibly grateful to the WVU history department," stated Moore, a native of Brevard, N.C. "Typically a PhD student takes on a rigorous course load, reads additional books on the side to prepare for comprehensive exams, and conducts research for seminar papers. For my work load this semester, I read at least six books a week."

Before the fall 2018 semester begins, Moore must pass her comprehensive exams, which are written and oral questions about her major and minor subjects. She feels ready for the challenge. "As a student at Gardner-Webb, I received a first-class education that prepared me to do what I'm doing now," she concluded. "The professors in the GWU Department of Social Sciences teach students how to discuss and conduct arguments and how to synthesize different historians' approaches to a given topic."

While she appreciates the time to study, she misses teaching. "When I taught my first class as the instructor of record, I wanted nothing more than to do for those students what the professors at GWU did for me," Moore reflected. "History, like few other subjects, provides a lens through which to analyze our world and learn to think critically."

She taught introductory survey courses, and her students were mostly freshmen from a range of majors. She began with a technique that Dr. David Yelton used in his classes. "We watch a clip from 'Ferris Bueller's Day off,' and we discuss why studying history can help a business major or an artist and why it doesn't have to be boring," Moore offered. "I intentionally try to dispel some of their misconceptions about the study of the past and get their buy in before the semester begins."

Elisabeth Moore poses in the Appalachian history room at the downtown library in Morgantown, W.Va.

Moore also asked students to read a book on a historic subject, and the book was reviewed orally in class, deconstructing the strengths and weaknesses of its argument. This is an activity Dr. Joseph Moore did with his classes. To help students think about the objectivity of primary sources, she had them pull out their phones and read through tweets from their friends. “As we laughed and discussed what these tweets taught us about people in 2017, students also realized that primary sources aren’t constructed for historians,” Moore said. “They come with their own biases and problems that we must take into account when studying the past. I think we also left the classroom a little shocked that historians of the 21st century will be left with an odd conglomeration of 250 characters or less to work with. The idea for that activity came from Professor Donna Schronce’s Social Studies Methods course.”

Moore is studying to become an expert in the field of Southern history. “My primary research emphasis is the Civil Rights Movement in Appalachia,” she expounded. “I am particularly interested in the racial attitudes of middle class mountaineers. I am also very interested in the role of tourism in determining the course of integration and race rhetoric throughout the wider South. Ultimately, I would love to get a position teaching at a university. Being a PhD student has confirmed my love for teaching undergraduates and doing research outside of the classroom.”