



ALLISON BRUCE

What History program did you take at Western? What year did you graduate?

I took the Honours history program and graduated in 2006.

How have you been engaged since you graduated? What is your current position?

The first year after I graduated I spent eight months travelling in Europe and volunteering in Ghana, in western Africa. My time travelling gave me many opportunities to learn, see new things and to experience the cities that I learned about during my history degree. In Ghana, I volunteered at a remote school and in an orphanage, which increased my desire to be a teacher. I returned to Canada and in the fall started a two year Elementary Education Degree at the University of Alberta. After finishing my degree I left Canada for South America and spent four months in Buenos Aires, Argentina teaching English and volunteering followed by four months volunteering at a school in Cochabamba, Bolivia. I had taken a number of Spanish language courses in high school and university, and continued with Spanish language lessons while there, dramatically improving my fluency. I also made many friends and again was able to experience a different way of life and a different culture. After a few months back in Canada I accepted a teaching position at a Canadian school in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where I lived for two years. While there, I travelled regularly in the region, and spent six weeks travelling across Africa by truck from Nairobi to Cape Town. I am now finishing my second year as a Kindergarten teacher at an international school in Wuxi, China. I am enjoying my school and love living near Shanghai so I will be staying for a third year. Living internationally is an amazing experience that opens one's mind to so many possibilities, teaches tolerances and patience, is at times challenging, but overall is incredible.

How did your History degree prepare you for your current position?

I frequently reflect on how I learned many useful skills during my history degree. I do a lot of research about best practices for teaching and must also research concepts to develop my personal knowledge in order to teach my students. The writing skills that I developed while studying history are probably the most important skill that I use on a regular basis. Whether it is an email to parents or formal report cards, communication skills are invaluable for a teacher. I also think that my history degree cemented my love for travel, my desire to learn about the world and contributed significantly to my career choice and career successes so far.

What would you tell an incoming History student?

I would encourage students to be open-minded when selecting their courses and try to learn a little bit about all regions of the world. Also, work hard and learn as much as you can, but it is the skills that will remain with you for the rest of your life so don't stress about learning and remembering all the facts; we have Google for that now. Also, be a risk-taker and push yourself to get the most out of your courses and to learn as much as you can from the people around you. Talk with your professors during their office hours; they are wonderful people and have much knowledge and wisdom to share with you.

Any other thoughts or comments?

Thank you to all the professors and TA's who shared their time and wisdom with me. I have many special memories from my time at Western.