



Rachael Meadors

Majors: Women's and gender studies, psychology

Activities: Black Student Union, iStem, Zeta Phi Kappa sorority, Micah House

Internships: Education and programming department at Holden Village

Post-grad plans: Live and work in Holden Village, an intentional community in the state of Washington

“Rachael has taken to heart Black feminist Patricia Hill Collins’ claim that social justice comes about through dialogue, empathy, and centering the knowledge emerging from the lived experiences of the most marginalized. Rachael brings honesty and sense of purpose to all she does, whether it be academic writing or sorting compost at Holden Village. Rachael is a powerful listener, a sharp interdisciplinary thinker, a tactful critic, a tireless advocate and a joyful person.”

— Dr. Jane Simonsen, professor, history and women's and gender studies

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2018

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

On my visit here, I was inspired by the student engagement; people seemed so passionate about what they were studying. Most people I talked to had multiple majors, which I knew I was interested doing as well. I also wanted small class sizes and professors who knew me by name. I was sold by Fenwick in the psychology department. I met her on my first visit, and when I came back for the scholarship competition, she remembered me and remembered our conversation from many months prior.

Are you where you thought you'd be when you first came to campus?

Yes and no. I stayed in the departments that I anticipated, but I definitely came into Augustana with an open mind, which allowed me to be really flexible over the past four years. Thanks to the interdisciplinary nature of the women's and gender studies department, I was able to take a lot of different types of classes and develop academic interests that I never anticipated. While I originally thought I might be applying to grad programs for clinical psychology during my senior year, I've instead decided to apply my passion for psychology in the nonprofit sector.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

Jane Simonsen has been so important to my time at Augie. She is not just some academic advisor who I see three times a year for advising. She really has been a mentor for me. She encourages me academically and socially, has been an ally in my many protests, and has worked with me to take risks in my research and passions. She is such an incredible professor in the classroom that I've had seven classes with her, and I wish I could take more! I also appreciate her allowing me to drop by her office (usually while she is trying to eat lunch) just to chat. She is also an excellent puppeteer.

I have deep gratitude for the women's and gender studies department. Specifically, Jennifer Popple, who is an incredible activist and mentor.

I also would not have made it to senior year without the Office of Multicultural Student Life. The students and staff in the office have given me the greatest sense of community and solidarity. The Black Culture House is one of my favorite places on campus, and I know I can always go there for a vent session or for a good laugh.

Peak experience?

Being part of organizing a #blacklivesmatter protest my freshman year was a really formative experience for me. Even though it was my first year, older students valued my voice and contributions. I was able to learn and grow from my peers and build a community that will last a lifetime. I have since been involved with multiple other demonstrations, and I'm proud of them all in different ways.

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What surprised you?

I learned that I am not afraid of uncertainty, and I am still surprised by the risks that I'm willing to take.

How did you use Augie Choice?

I used it to travel to India over spring break with a women's and gender studies class. We spent two weeks visiting different NGOs and grassroots organizations that were impacting local communities.

What will you miss the most?

I will miss all the meaningful and critical conversations about social issues, the vibrant Quad-Cities community, and all the snacks in the women's and gender studies office.

Advice for the Class of 2022?

Ask for what you want at Augustana! What makes the school special is the ability for you to customize your experience here. Whether you want to do research with a professor, get added into a class or do a really weird internship (mine was in the middle of a mountain!), it's possible to do so many things out of the box, but you have to be a self-advocate and speak up.