



Todd, Samantha

E10000012

Last, First Middle

Student ID

In the early years of my education at Evergreen, I initially thought I had to decide between studying ceramics and the more academic path towards queer and transgender studies. However through the opportunity of creating my own classes through Independent Learning Contracts (ILCs), I quickly found that these two areas of interest are intimately connected to one another. Ceramics is noted as the backbone of cultural histories around the world, often because it's one of the most durable artifacts to survive for centuries, whether buried or displayed elsewhere. Similarly, queer and transgender identities have always resided within every culture. The trick to finding these identities, similar to ceramics, is learning where to dig down and find the work. Through my ILCs, several ceramics classes, and my own curiosity, I have earned a BA that unearthed the relationship between ceramics and queer/transgender studies which will be the foundation of my graduate studies.

In my first program at Evergreen, Bodies That Matter, I used ethnography to independently research transgender identities. This initial project began by simply identifying what neutral gender identities may look like in the United States fueled my passion to pursue queer and transgender studies.

At the beginning of my second year in a program called Art, Mindfulness and Psychology: Racial Identity, I explored racial identity development and used artistic tools such as clay to transform ideas into a physical form. I found that clay is a therapeutic form of art that is an incredibly resourceful tool when paired with academia. When I dig my fingers in, I connect concepts, integrating them into art pieces that often communicate ideas I cannot always describe in words. Armed with ILCs, I combined my love for ceramics with my keen interests in queer/transgender identities fluidly.

In my first contract, I examined texts, media, and workbooks focused on the neutral gender identities, and if these sources represented the intersectionality of gender identity with race and culture. At the conclusion of this project, I argued that discussing race and cultural backgrounds must be present in conversations on neutral gender identity history. I complemented my research with sculptural work to craft my own identity's history. The final products consisted of three sculptural pieces depicting my non-binary identity and the relationship I have with the world through this.

My second contract, I examined the fan art in online communities, queer symbolism focused on ceramics, and the media's representation of the community. While researching the most common forms of symbolism in queer art, I integrated my findings into my sculptural work as I progressed through the quarter. I was able to incorporate new mediums into my ceramic process with fiber art. At the end of this final quarter, I participated in a group art show as a capstone to my undergraduate work.

At Evergreen, I have practiced refining ceramic skills in techniques such as handbuilding, wheel throwing, cold and hot surfacing, and sculpting portraits through busts and figures. In my final year, I worked as an aide for the Ceramics Studio, where I became more intimately acquainted with the ceramic cycle, becoming skilled in both gas and electric kiln firings, exploring glaze and stain mixing, and recycling clay. Along with my studio maintenance, I worked with fellow students on their assignments from classes, sharing knowledge and working collaboratively together to solve problems. In this way, I have united academic work and my artistic craft. I learn new techniques constantly when I have the chance to connect with my peers and to engage in deeper questions with the artwork as a whole.

Evergreen has shown me the tools that I can craft to build my future. I discovered in the course of my first degree that I am not an artist without being an academic, nor am I an academic without being an artist. I intend to take these newly crafted tools and apply them in my future degrees, and one day provide the same materials for my future students to create.