Initially, Shannon thought she’d study history, but then an Introduction to Sociology course steered her in a new direction. “One of our texts,” she recalls, “was an anthropological study that was analyzed from a sociological perspective. It described how it is that class affects the way a child is raised. That made me see a perspective different from my own. Immediately, I wanted to learn more about this. I actually had fun writing the research paper for that book, which is always a good sign.”

Shannon also recalls being drawn to the narrative and quantitative nature of studying modern cultures and civilizations. “In sociology you have the satisfaction of asking questions and getting an answer directly from the source,” she explains.

Of all the courses she’s taken, Shannon says that Women in Film has helped her grow the most. Instead of the standard classroom format, this course requires students to hold online discussions about the academic papers and films that they study. “I never thought that an online course could have that depth of analysis,” she says. “It gave me a chance to catalog my thoughts and organize them before I posted them for discussion, and it gave everyone else the same opportunity.”

At the recommendation of her advisor, Shannon has been able to apply those skills to an independent study project, which has helped prepare her for a fruitful career of research and discovery. “My professors are extremely excited about my personal development,” she says. “They want sociology majors to become experts in the field and continue to do more in the future. And every single professor in the department has been incredible.”