Now entering sophomore year, I have not yet settled on a definitive research topic for the University Scholars program, although I am certain that the area of research will be Classical studies. At the moment I expect that my research will focus on Rome, and I have an idea of certain periods that I would like to study—I am particularly interested in the era of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, beginning with Augustus’ founding of the Roman principate in 27 BC. I plan on incorporating both literary and archaeological sources into my research; I am still deciding whether the research would be aided by the comparison of the two source types or would consist of the comparison in itself. Further, the unclear line distinguishing myth from history is a significant component of ancient scholarship, and I am very interested in exploring it.

I spent this past summer learning the ancient Greek language at the University of Chicago’s Summer Language Institute. Though not research in itself, this training contributed a great deal to my future research, for prior to this summer I was approaching Classical study with very limited and unbalanced tools at my disposal. I had seven years of Latin study under my belt, but no experience in Greek. The languages, histories, and high culture of ancient Rome and the Greek world are inextricably tied to one another; studying either of the two civilizations exclusively is limiting and almost impossible. Consequently, without knowledge of ancient Greek, a great deal of documents and literature would have been inaccessible to me in my research, no matter what aspect of the Roman world I choose for my University Scholars project; relying solely on others’ translations of Greco-Roman texts is something to avoid in cultural studies. Fortunately, after these summer classes, I now have basic understanding of both the vocabulary and syntax of the ancient Greek language, as well as a valuable introduction to Greek culture—all of which will deepen my understanding and analysis of the documents and material culture I study.

Though I still expect to focus my research on Rome, my language classes in ancient Greek deepened my appreciation for Greek culture and opened up more research topic possibilities for me. I am currently taking both ancient Greek language and history classes to further equip myself with knowledge of both of these powerful Classical civilizations.