

**Why My Course of Study is Important to Me    Madison Haslam    [madi.haslam@hotmail.com](mailto:madi.haslam@hotmail.com)**

Stories define us. They chronicle our history, celebrate our achievements, and mourn our heartaches. They have the power to galvanize a nation, or divide it. Incite laughter or tears. Inspire hope or despair. In stories, we find common ground and shared experiences. They fuel discoveries – reveal who we are and who we hope to become.

Upon reflection, I've come to realize that many of my days have been spent storytelling. At the age of three, I stepped inside a ballet studio for the first time. It did not take long for dance to become a passion that shaped my life. I participated in an intensive professional training program for eight years. The curriculum refined my talent and exposed me to incredibly creative individuals who used music and movement to sculpt my identity. The training was extremely gratifying; the daily regimen of repetition an invaluable tool in perfecting my technique. The hours in studio, however, could not compare to my time on stage. To perform choreography for an audience, to tell a story through a work of art was deeply rewarding. Having others understand and react to the narrative was the essence of my dancing.

I discovered my passion for photography when I first picked up my dad's Nikon F-601 camera. I shot three rolls of film in less than an hour and quickly became addicted. While I love taking pictures that are aesthetically pleasing and compelling, I prefer capturing images that have meaning. Whether the photographs are posed or candid, those that tell a story will always be more evocative to me. Having others interpret and respond to my photographs is a critical part of the art form.

Many of the most important parts of my life have revolved around sharing stories with others through various mediums. It seems natural that I wish to continue doing so using the most fundamental tool -- words.

For many years, I've tried to convince myself that I have no aspiration to become a journalist. I have grown up with not one, but two parents in the industry. My mom is a National Television News Producer and my dad the host of a local feature program. Dinnertime conversations and debates focused on heated and worldly subjects – issues that my younger self rarely cared for. Trips to the grocery store took hours, as viewers of my dad's program would stop to discuss his most recent episodes for unbearably long interludes--my siblings and I silently enduring the painful encounters or dozing off in the shopping cart. In addition to my childhood woes, I have become intimately aware of the countless challenges facing journalists. I've come to understand the stress of an impending deadline. I can testify to the heartache resulting from reporting difficult stories. I've witnessed the consuming anguish related to making complex ethical decisions while reporting. The hours can be merciless and the financial compensation disappointing.

Yet, incredulously, my desire to join the world of journalism prevails. I truly believe the beauty of storytelling is unparalleled by any other craft. To share honest stories is to regard life for all that it is. To report truthfully is to acknowledge and accept both the world's splendor and its imperfections.

My parents have always emphasized the importance of being able to write and speak with purpose and intention. The ability to communicate effectively, I've learned, is a precious and exceptional gift. Over the next four years, my yearning to express ideas will be nurtured and developed by the passionate community of staff and students at the University of King's College. I feel very privileged to enter their Journalism program. During a recent visit, I was warmly welcomed by a group of eloquent and curious individuals who tend to see the world a little bit differently. I can't imagine a better place to hone my craft before embarking on the career of my dreams.