

For as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to work with people. So, when I arrived at Ithaca College, I declared a Clinical Health Studies major to start a path toward my goal—working in a people-centered environment. I quickly discovered that a new program structure required all incoming students to take on a minor field of study. At first, I didn't know what to do.

I have also always felt comfortable around older adults, for I view aging as a journey, rather than a destination. As a result, I decided to take Introduction to Aging Studies to fulfill a general education requirement my first semester. The class covered a range of topics, and before I knew it, I was getting signatures from department heads to declare Aging Studies as my minor concentration.

The next part of my academic journey came somewhat unexpectedly. Though I had always wanted to study abroad, my rigid major made plans for doing so difficult. During this time, my Aging Studies professor approached me and suggested I declare Aging Studies as a second major. I was worried at first about what a second major might do to my workload, but with everyone's blessings and encouragements, I found forgoing overseas study to make room for another discipline was the best decision for me.

Today, I am the first Clinical Health Studies and Aging Studies double major student. I am happy with my choice to study in both programs, and I love learning from and interacting with older adults.

Ithaca College's course offerings in aging studies are fantastic—and they span a broad spectrum of topics in the field. For example, last semester, I took Dementia & Aging, a class dedicated to learning about Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. I also took Aging & Social Policy, a class where students challenge and debate politics and ideologies. Since I advocate progressivism and value learning from past mistakes, this course was one of my favorites. One of the most pivotal lessons I learned is that it is vitally important to examine the role government plays in the process of aging.

Of course, fieldwork is another crucial part of the program. For mine, I volunteered at Oak Hill Manor Nursing Home (which is just down the hill from IC). I helped the regular staff by leading arts and crafts sessions, bingo games, and cocktail hours. While I continue to volunteer at Oak Hill Manor, I have also taken a role as Vice President of the IC *Do Anything Nice* club, a student organization that emphasizes social progress through random acts of kindness. Now, IC D.A.N. helps out with the activities for Oak Hill Manor's monthly birthday celebration.

Overall, studying Aging Studies at IC is great because of the campus's connection with Ithaca's older adult community. In addition, the Gerontology Institute's partnership with Longview, a residential senior community near campus, is thriving—allowing students at all levels to not only learn, but also experience. Besides Longview, there are numerous senior facilities close to the college, and it is difficult not to feel a sense of community with them. As a student, I have always felt welcome in these places. My home is far away from Ithaca, so it's nice to know that there is someplace nearby I can go and feel like part of a family.