

Alumni Journeys

MATT BOLDEN ('17)



ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJOR,
PHYSICAL SCIENCES MINOR

College is only the first of many big decisions that you'll be making for yourself, so please, before you go hurtling yourself down the path to a midlife crisis, learn just what kind of person 'yourself' is. And then make these choices not on the basis of whether they're correct but whether or not you can say, with all the pride and certainty that you can muster, they're yours.

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Fun Facts

- **Major/Minor:** Environmental Studies/Physical Sciences
- **Residential College:** Cendana College
- **Favorite Common Curriculum Class:** Modern Social Thought
- **Favorite Major Class:** The Theory and Practice of Environmental Policymaking
- **Favorite Elective(s):** Contemporary Social Theory
- **Extracurricular Activities in Yale-NUS:** Singers' Guild, Yale-NUS Improv, The Mocktant, Barbershop Chorus
- **Favorite Book:** John Steinbeck's The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights
- **Favorite Movie:** Can't choose one!
- **Dogs or Cats?:** Dogs
- **Fun Fact:** My first job was running the lights for my town's annual performance of the Nutcracker.

Academic Experience in Yale-NUS College

Favorite Common Curriculum Class

Modern Social Thought. It was an ambitious course that covered most of the foundational topics in political science, social thought, and critical theory. It tied together many of the themes explored in other Common Curriculum courses while illustrating the force of ideas and the ways they gave rise to the institutions and revolutions that shaped our world. By contextualizing these theories in a larger dialogue of ideas, the course also demonstrated how these concepts weren't made from scratch but instead were built upon the insights of the works that preceded them. That lesson alone was worth the price of admission.

[Click here to learn more about the Common Curriculum!](#)

Favorite Major Class

The Theory and Practice of Environmental Policymaking. It's a class about environmental policy, but its lessons are about people, their decision making, and the ways they organize around politics and ideology. It challenges you to understand the underlying dynamics that drive political struggle and that can create the conditions for social change. The course upends the idea that policies can ever be made by technocrats in an environment sanitized of politics and values. The lessons I took away from this class are the ones I use most in my work now.

[Click here to learn more about the Environmental Studies Major!](#)

Favorite Elective Class

Contemporary Social Theory. It was designed as an optional sequel to Modern Social Thought. It continued the ambitious agenda of Modern Social Thought into the late 20th and early 21st centuries, covering topics like reflexive sociology, critical theory, and orientalism. In line with this jump to the contemporary era, it pushed us to apply these ideas to present debates around gender identity, religious expression, and ethnic representation. It also urged us to think critically about the state of political discourse and how technology has impacted democratic ideals. This course, more than any other, made me a better 21st century citizen.

Learning Outside the Classroom

Week 7: Varieties of Religious Experience in Singapore

My Week 7 was titled "Varieties of Religious Experience in Singapore". We visited different places of worship around Singapore and teased out how place and context were just as important as sacred text to a lived religion. My favorite memory from this (and honestly one of the best memories from my college experience) has to be celebrating my 18th birthday with a rabbi we spoke with who then sung me happy birthday in four different languages.

Summer Abroad

Freshman summer, two of my best friends and I were awarded a CIPE travel fellowship to document a journey from Singapore to London by train. Sophomore summer, I put together an internship that CIPE generously funded with the Story of Stuff Project where I supported them in their work on a plastic pollution bill. Junior summer, I worked with the then outgoing dean of the Yale Forestry School to set up his new organization: the Oak Spring Garden Foundation. Out of all this, my favorite memory would be riding horses with my friends on the Mongolian steppe during our travel fellowship.

Yale-NUS College Learning Across Boundaries (LAB)

As part of a LAB, I went to the Paris Climate Conference in December 2015. That whole week I was there was a nonstop series of emotional and eye-opening experiences. It was an incredible privilege to get to meet and hear from the people that were making history working on the climate challenge.

Semester Abroad: Yale College

I spent the spring of 2016 at Yale College where I made some of my closest friends.

Dear Applicant,

I'd like to pass on to you the best piece of advice I got when I was your age: take the time to be a person.

There is no reason to go to a college, any college, beyond the fact that you as your own person want to. And coming to terms with what it is that you want requires more time and study than any chemistry exam or history paper. Mastering the subject of 'you' often involves getting your hands dirty with some of the wildest aspects of the human experience, things like sharing a profound conversation with a stranger, meeting someone who laughs at all the same dumb jokes you do, or getting dumped by your first love. Getting to know yourself is as much an act of wrestling with your most personal quirks as it is a practice in being just another wonderfully ordinary human being. It challenges you to learn how to be comfortable sitting alone, in silence, with only your thoughts. But it also pushes you to watch cartoons with your best friends until 2 in the morning and to learn how to dance salsa with new friends and to read trashy novels that you can't help but love. It asks that you take the time to do nothing but be a person.

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