

Saif Raza Interview:

How would you describe your area of study to a novice?

Examining literature is fascinating! Initially, it's the stories that draw you in, but as you examine the literature you notice how various works are connected to historical, political, and social trends. The fun lies in unpacking these works so that we can examine their relationship to the era they are from, how they respond to the "literary cannon" of their time, and how contemporary authors respond to these "canonical" works.

What is your primary motivation for persevering through graduate school?

It's about doing what you enjoy. I spent the last several years working in a field that I didn't enjoy, and now that I'm here it's a dream come true!

Do you think there is any value in social networking with other graduate students in non-related fields?

Yes! There's a tremendous amount of value academically and socially in building relationships with fellow graduate students across disciplines. For instance, entire fields of study are based upon cross-discipline studies such as Cognitive Science.

What is your favorite stress-reduction technique?

Taking my dog to the dog park. I have a ton of fun watching her play with the other dogs.

What is the last book you read strictly for pleasure and how long ago was it?

I just read *A Dance With Dragons* by George R.R. Martin over winter break and loved it!

Please describe your most meaningful academic relationship.

I've been very lucky to have strong academic relationships! Dr. Mathews from the English Department has been incredibly helpful in guiding me towards pursuing a teaching license, and has offered excellent career/educational advice. My advisor, Dr. Witkowsky, probably dreads my two thousand e-mails a week, but he's continuously helping me by sending me research articles. As a result, I'm probably going to focus my thesis on American Transcendentalists. And I have to mention Dr. Morrison, from STEL, whose help in mapping out a dual Masters strategy has been invaluable.

What surprised you the most about graduate school?

How a day of studying can be as exhausting as a day of hiking!

If travel to Mars happens in your lifetime, would you want to be one of the scientists on board? If yes, what would you contribute to the mission?

Yes! I'd love to go as a journalist and document what happened. I'd love to be like Ibn Battuta or Marco Polo and write about the expedition.

What is your favorite comfort food and why? How often do you consume it?

Coffee, and I consume it all too often!

If you hadn't been admitted to graduate school, what do you think you would be doing right now?

I would probably be still be working in sales management, and be miserable!

When do you expect to complete your degree?

I plan to finish my M.A. in English in the spring of 2013 and the M.S. in Education in the spring of 2014.