



Chris Allen, APEP Class of 2025

Hometown: Quincy, Ill.

Major: Communication studies

What is your favorite field of study/topic?

I find how media influences society fascinating, but I would say that literature and how it informs the masses of important issues in an entertaining way is my favorite field of study.

What does it mean to you to be a part of APEP?

To be a part of APEP has been transformative in my development as a person. Whoever said that “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks” needs to experience an environment in which they are respected, pushed and encouraged to be the best version of themselves. APEP has been a place in which I feel that I am not only heard, but told that what I think and the things I have to say about an issue matter. APEP has helped me find my voice and given me the autonomy, which is non-existent in prison.

What course has had the biggest impact on you and why?

The course that had the biggest impact on me was Greek Warrior Myth and Combat Trauma, which I took during my first semester. That course helped me come to terms with the effects my incarceration has had on me, and helped me take further responsibility for the consequences of my actions and that my incarceration, though excessive in my opinion, is the result of my own shortcomings and actions.

What is your favorite book or article that you have read in your APEP classes?

Howard Thurman’s “Jesus and the Disinherited” has been my favorite book, and the most transformative text I’ve read. Thurman discusses how those with their backs against the wall should interact with those who are pushing them there, which has encouraged me to not blame the powers that be and be a victim, but to treat them with love, regardless of how they view or treat me.

What assignment have you found the most rewarding?

The most rewarding assignment, thus far, has been the research proposal I did in Comm Theory 380. The reward didn’t come from the grade I received, but from understanding and the bond it helped me form with my daughter.

“Chris Allen is proof of the power of liberal arts learning! Not only was he able to major in communications, minor in religion and fulfill the rest of his liberal arts degree in less than four years, he also brought all this together in his Senior Inquiry project. That project draws on ‘Jesus and the Disinherited’, the 1949 book by African American theologian Howard Thurman, to consider the kinds of communication needed between officers and incarcerated individuals in America’s prisons. Chris is humble and softspoken, but don’t let that fool you. He is also wicked smart and able to use his learning to enact social change in our world!”

– Dr. Jason Mahn, professor of religion