KURTIS BISHOP DECIDED TO ADD A MAJOR IN Jewish Studies to his degrees in sociology and psychology, making him a triple threat. His new major opened doors right away. He studied abroad in Eastern Europe and had the honor of interviewing Nobel laureate and human rights activist Elie Wiesel when he came to campus.

The Jewish Studies major suits Kurtis’ keen interest in history. “I took a class on the origins of the Hasidic movement and learned about Eastern European life in the 1700s. That’s so different from what you’re usually taught about that period. Mention the 1700s and people think Paul Revere, but there were mystical religious movements going on in Eastern Europe then, and other things that were a big deal in the Jewish world – things you rarely learn about.”

Among the many experiences that he’s had in the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program, Kurtis regards his 10-day study-abroad course in Lithuania, Poland and Germany as a highlight. “We had very long days, visiting historic ghettos and Holocaust death camps. We did a lot of background reading and had amazing discussions. Even though we were together for fewer than two weeks, we all became very close. It was a really significant experience.”

After graduating, Kurtis hopes to sign on with Americorps, specifically with AVODAH – the inner-city program for Jewish youth. “I’ve done a lot of volunteer work with Habitat for Humanity, and I’d like to end up working with AVODAH. After that, my plan is to attend graduate school.”

In the meantime, he’ll continue his work in Jewish Studies, aided by what he regards as a phenomenal set of resources.

“The Jewish Studies Center offers so much. I’m in there almost all the time, and I go to most of the events because they’re so interesting. Also, Addlestone Library houses one of the country’s largest collections on southern Jewish history and culture. Those resources have really helped me with my courses.”