“That first class introduced us to Brazilian culture and language in unique ways,” Tori explains. “We studied Brazilian film and got to know the background behind national holidays and celebrations. It really set the hook for me.”

Since then, Tori has deepened her experience, both in the classroom and in a number of Latin American countries. “I spent a semester studying in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and it was awesome. I took classes that were taught in English and Spanish, and I lived with a host family. I also traveled around a lot and had great exposure to contemporary literature, cultural elements and politics. There’s so much going on politically in Argentina. I feel like I really got to tackle that city.”

She also traveled to Honduras one spring break to participate in a microfinance initiative. “I didn’t know much about that form of business going into the trip, but I learned quite a bit about it while also getting to deepen my use of Spanish and learn about another Latin American country.”

Some of Tori’s favorite classes have been Spanish literature courses in the LACS major. “Studying literature in Spanish is compelling. You get to understand more precisely what the writer is saying. I’m studying the Boom and Post-Boom eras in Latin American literature and there are some amazing authors we’re reading.”

Working with her advisor, Tori arranged a summer internship in Merida, Mexico. “I’ll be teaching English, but I’ll also be studying the culture of that region. And that’s really the beauty of this major. It allows you to pursue a wide range of interests. It could be history, or art, or literature or environmental studies, and all those you could pursue in the context of a different culture. I think that’s a very effective way of understanding the world around you.”

LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STUDIES

TORI AKERLEY DIDN’T COME TO THE COLLEGE with plans to study Latin America and the Caribbean. But she took a Freshman Year Seminar – Visions of Brazil – and everything changed. Now, she’s thriving in this major and making big plans for a career that fully utilizes her academic background.

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