VARANASI, INDIA

LEAH TARABOUR

Leah’s Major: Communication Sciences and Disorders, Linguistics

Program: UW in India, Fall

Academic Life: I took an Indian history course, a research methods class, and a Hindi language class along with 14 other students from different USA universities. The classes were taught by either the program director or by local professors and scholars. Everyone did independent study projects on topics of our choice where we got to conduct fieldwork and do research. We also got to take a tutorial in either language or performing arts which was a one-on-one with a “guru” or expert in their field. I chose Sanskrit as my tutorial subject and absolutely love it! The academic portion of the program really enriched my experience abroad, and I got to learn from some very insightful people.

Most Memorable Moments: One excursion we went on was to see the traditional performance of part of an ancient Hindu epic, the Ramayana. The reenactment in Varanasi is the original and has happened every year since 1830. People travel from all around to see the performance which occurs over the course of 31 days. The Maharaja also attends to watch the show from atop his elephant. The history and tradition of the place were practically tangible and it was something I will never forget.

Leah’s Field Work: I did a fieldwork project at a center for the rehabilitation and education of disabled children called the Kiran Center. I sat in on speech therapy, physical therapy, special education classes, and psychologist’s appointments and interviewed the therapists and teachers. I gained some insight into how the Indian healthcare system works and was able to compare some of the practices and therapies to ones traditionally done in the United States. I think it was a valuable experience to see how these practices are done in India even if I choose to work in the US or a different country.

“I’ve come to learn that most things aren’t really as difficult as they might seem at first.”