

Sydney Burton (B.A, M.A) is a current Interdisciplinary PhD. candidate in History, Gender Studies and Classics at Memorial University of Newfoundland. As is common with most students, the path that led to such an eclectic degree was anything but linear. In 2009, Sydney began a BSc. in Physics at St. Francis Xavier University, but by the end of her second year, it became clear that her strengths were more suited to the arts. After much deliberation she switched her degree to a B.A. in History (specifically focusing on the medieval west) with a Minor in Religious Studies. Throughout her degree, Sydney held a variety of different TA positions including the consolidation of Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha into an online database under the supervision of Dr. K. Penner.

After the completion of her B.A., Sydney took a year off and worked as the Programs Coordinator for the Newfoundland and Labrador Volleyball Association honing her interpersonal, time management, organization, scheduling, and social media skills while proceeded to apply for her M.A. in History at Memorial University where she hoped to study the medieval west. However, while drafting her application for the M.A. program, Sydney stumbled upon the incredible field of Byzantine Studies and quickly switched her application to reflect her newfound interest in the medieval East. Upon her acceptance, Sydney focused her studies on analyzing the changes in femininity throughout the Byzantine Iconoclasm by exploring hagiographical accounts of female saints from before, during, and after this religious event. During this time, Sydney not only had a TA position and helped with grading and conducting review classes, but she also worked as a supervisor at Starbucks Canada, was an avid volunteer at Ronald McDonald House and several local foodbanks and was the Assistant Coach for the Canada Games Female Volleyball Team. Overall, her experiences culminated in a well-rounded M.A experience that not only offered her plenty of educational opportunities but also a great many opportunities to connect with the University and St. John's community alike.

Sydney's M.A. research opened a whirlwind of new questions pertaining to the evolution of gender roles throughout the Byzantine Empire which Sydney felt could only be answered through furthering her education. She therefore, promptly applied for a PhD. Because of the nature of her work, Sydney knew she would need the language requirements of the Classics Department, the theory of the Gender Studies department, and the methodology of the History department in order to complete her future research, and so she applied to the Interdisciplinary PhD Program. Currently, Sydney is the Secretary of the Gender Studies Department, a Graduate Tutor at the Writing Centre, a full time Volleyball Coach, a volunteer at Ronald McDonald House, and a MAX Athletics Employee. Most importantly however, she is enjoying her research which focuses on how the Byzantine emperor and clergy within Constantinople aimed to control gendered bodies by halting most forms of gender fluidity to regain power over the wayward population, and to bring the urban families back into the state-run churches. In the past year, Sydney has also attended the Byzantine Studies Conference in San Antonio, where she hopes to present her research in the coming years.