

Adam Coogle

Florida State University student Adam Coogle of Tallahassee received the prestigious Fulbright scholarship funded through the Islamic Civilization Initiative this year, which he will use to study the Arabic language as well as survey contemporary changes in the political system in Jordan.

The award, set up to provide greater opportunities for study in Arab countries, is provided by the Fulbright program, a program that offers grants to college seniors, graduate students, teachers and other professionals to encourage research abroad.

The Fulbright program is the largest international exchange program in the United States and is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. It offers opportunities for these students, scholars and professionals to study and conduct research internationally as well as opportunities for university teaching and teaching in elementary and secondary schools worldwide.

"If one thinks of a grant as an investment, one with implications for our society and our world," said FSU professor of religion John Kelsay of Coogle's award, "then this is a good investment."

Assistant director of FSU's Office of National Fellowships, Jamie Purcell, said the program awards only the highest caliber students with a genuine commitment to cultural engagement, and it has an extensive selection process in the United States as well as in the host countries.

"The application process itself is quite a feat," Purcell said. "Students spend months designing a comprehensive and detailed plan for how they will carry out their work abroad. Being awarded a Fulbright grant is an extraordinary distinction and a career-launching opportunity."

Coogle, a Lincoln High School graduate, wrote a research proposal outlining his plans for data collection and study while abroad. He defended that proposal before a panel of FSU professors, and it was accepted by the U.S. Fulbright Scholarship board and the country of Jordan.

"Mr. Coogle's project is of considerable interest to academics and policy makers alike," said Kelsay. "Even more, time spent in Jordan will provide linguistic and cultural experience that will serve him well as he thinks about graduate study and/or a career in government or business."

Coogle received his undergraduate degrees in religion and international affairs from FSU last year, and according to his professors, he is exceptionally motivated to master languages and historical material relative to his interests. Coogle has also spent time in Irbid, Jordan, studying for eight weeks last summer through the University of Virginia/Yarmouk University's Arabic program.

His project, "Jordan: Islamic Transition in an Islamic Society," will focus on the process of democratization inside an Islamic country, and he will try to determine whether democracy, as it is understood in the United States, is the most viable form of government in Islamic countries.

"In these countries, democratic movements for the last 20 years have tended to incorporate Islamic principles rather than discard them," said Coogle of his preliminary research. "Any changes that come about still retain a distinctly religious feel."

Mark Zeigler, an associate and instructor in the Department of Communication, taught Coogle last fall, and he said Coogle was a "true scholar."

"Adam Coogle was, without a doubt, one of the most intellectually engaging students with whom I have worked," said Zeigler. "He is extremely intelligent; His writing was impeccable, and his ability to engage in discussions was absolutely unmatched."

But Coogle remains humble. He said that he felt fortunate to be in the position he is in but recognizes that the support from those who helped him along the way was a major factor in his success.

"I suppose that the real credit for all of my academic accomplishments goes to professors, parents, and friends who push me and provoke my interests," he said. "And I have a lot of hard work ahead of me, so I think I am going to wait until after I execute the grant before I pat myself on the back about this."

Coogle is one of eight FSU Fulbright award winners this year. Half of the school's Fulbright applicants (10 out of 20) were selected as awardees or alternates this year, with 40 percent (8 of 20) actually winning. This is a higher yield than most of the nation's top-producing Fulbright schools.

For more on the Fulbright Program's history, scholarships and awards, visit: <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/about.html>.