

Wyndham Robertson Library Undergraduate Research Award



First Year/Sophomore Winner 2020

[Rejecting Bolivarism: Political Power in South America](#)

by Jaiya McMillan

Recommended by Associate Professor [Rachel Nunez](#)



What about this topic made you want to find out more?

I've always been fairly interested in South American politics, and Hugo Chavez changed Venezuela and its political system significantly. I wanted to learn more about the connection between Simon Bolivar and Chavez, and see if they were as alike as Chavez claims they were.

What are you most proud of when it comes to this project?

I'm very proud of my research skills. This was my research project, and I didn't know how much work it actually was. I spent a lot more time looking for books in the library than I was expecting to.

Having completed a project like this, if you could advise other students working on a research project, what would you tell them?

I would tell them to just go for it! I really enjoyed the research process, there is something exciting about finding information you didn't expect to find, and figuring out a way to work it into your paper. I would also tell people not to be afraid to ask for help or get professors to read it over. It really helps!

Is there anything else you would like people to know about your work?

South America's story, especially regarding Venezuela, doesn't start with Bolivar or stop with Chavez. Currently, the country is facing a humanitarian crisis as a result of economic and political tumult. This crisis cannot be ignored.

Judges' Comments:

"[S]hows an incredible grasp of the leaders' political views and histories, making Bolivar and Hugo live on the pages. They provided an easy to understand definition of political theories with a grasp unexpected for their class year. Their argument is clearly stated and well defended"

"[A] deeply imaginative, elegantly framed, and powerfully argued paper. A study that traces Hugo Chavez's appropriation of Simon Bolivar's political legacy, the paper is also an exemplary work of historical comparison, one that pulls together seemingly disparate histories in creative and compelling ways. "