From Bricks to Canvas

Through my research with OURE in the 2020-2021 school year, I argued for a new form of periodization for the graffiti on the Berlin wall. The periodization I proposed was based on times when there was no graffiti, political graffiti, and when the graffiti was seemingly a chaotic mix of messages over art, politics, and personal life. This theory of periodization was based on one specific area on the Berlin wall, near the Brandenburg gate, called Potsdamer Platz. For my research, I would like to test my theory on other parts of the wall. I would like to look at more than just Potsdamer Platz to see if my theory stands for more areas, allowing for a stronger argument for it. I would also like to find more causes for the changing graffiti, while also finding more meaning behind what was put on the wall itself. Using the graffiti to strengthen my arguments, my research will delve into media studies, Germanic studies, and even German politics of the Cold War era. The OURE Fellows program will allow me to have the necessary resources to commit to this research by helping me to fund and find primary resource materials like German newspapers from the decades the wall stood. My research will use interpretations of graffiti on the Berlin wall to strengthen my earlier arguments of its periodization, while also giving a deeper insight into the thoughts and feelings of the civilians who lived near the wall and how they changed over the decades.

Ethan Prior is a Junior working on a B. A. in history at the Missouri University of Science and Technology. After graduation, Ethan plans on moving forward to earning a masters and doctorate in history, with hopes on becoming a professor.