



Alumni Profile

Rachael Park

BA Hons '16 Thanatology and Criminology

Current Career

Organization: London Police Services

Title: 911 Dispatcher

Career Overview

I take all incoming 911 calls and transfer them to ambulance and fire, or dispatch a police officer, or both.

How has King's helped prepare you for your current work?

Learning how to have difficult conversations was definitely an important skill. In the grief counseling course, for example, students do peer counseling. We were able to learn how to have difficult conversations with our peers. Knowing how to communicate with people is so important in my role. I need to be able to talk people down from extremely aggravated states. I am the first person they have contact with before first responders get to them, so this is such a vital skill in my role.

My degree helped me to be able to speak to people who are in a crisis. It has helped me be able to keep my voice calm so it projects onto the callers. My degree has allowed me to be empathetic to people who are in crisis situations. Every Thanatology course talks about self care and this is hugely important. In my field, there is a lot of PTSD; we are exposed to screaming and panic on the other end of the line, and we don't always learn the outcome. Learning how to do my personal self-care has been so beneficial.

What advice do you have for current students?

Really engage yourself in your classes; they are what you make of them. In Thanatology, a lot leans on your participation. Get into the discussions that are happening. That's the only way you will learn how to communicate effectively. For students who are interested in entering my field, I say work on your multitasking skills. Take a Thanatology course to learn how to speak to people about grief and trauma - that will help you immensely. Work on your typing skills and keep your criminal record clean!

What do you wish you knew before you started your career?

I wish I knew sooner this is what I wanted to do! I would have done it sooner. I had a Police Foundations diploma before coming to King's, so that led me to study Criminology. While I was reading the course descriptions at King's, I kept coming back to the Thanatology courses. They sounded so interesting. So I started with two courses to see if I would like it. I was hooked! It went from being my electives to my second Major.

“ Thanatology doesn't just provide you with a skill set for a particular job, it provides you with a skill set for life. It's such a solid grounding. One that can be applied to any career path. ”