

Visit Us:
College Hall, First Floor
Amherst College
Amherst MA 01002
www.amherst.edu/~careers



Contact Us:
Tel: 413-542-2265
Fax: 413-542-5790
Box 5000 / AC# 2210
careers@amherst.edu

SENEGAL | FALL 2007 STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM EVALUATION

FIRST: Megan
LAST: Harlow
CLASS: 2009
ACBOX#: 207
EMAIL: mharlow09@amherst.edu
TEL: (860)961-1781
MAJOR1: Anthropology
ABROAD_DURING: Fall 2007

PROGRAM: The School for International Training (Senegal: Arts and Culture)

COURSE_#1: Arts and Culture Seminar
COURSE_#2: Field Studies Seminar
COURSE_#3: French
COURSE_#4: Wolof
COURSE_#5: Independent Study Project



TYPES_OF_COURSES: Program sponsored courses

EXPLANATION_OF_COURSES:

COMMENTS_ON_COURSE_WORK: All students in the program take the same five courses. There were 18 students in total and some course sessions were held with the entire group while others were broken into sections. The days were highly scheduled and packed with classes and cultural activities. Grading was fair, maybe a bit on the easy side, but A LOT of work was expected and necessary in order to be successful. In general, course work was writing and oral-presentation heavy. There were no exams, except for language proficiency evaluation tests in French and Wolof.

Arts and Culture Seminar: sessions with the whole group; lectures by outside lecturers on Senegalese history, politics, music, culture, human rights issues, etc; arts workshops with Senegalese artists; field trips and tours of sites of cultural and historical significance; and week-long excursions all over Senegal.

Field Studies Seminar: sessions with the whole group; lectures and readings on conducting field research using a variety of methodologies and the nuts and bolts of undertaking a major independent research project -- i.e. writing proposals, getting IRB approval, ethics, conducting interviews, collecting and analyzing data, bias in research, etc etc.

French: the group of 18 students was broken into 4 levels based on a French evaluation at the start of the semester. Focused on reading, writing, presenting and grammar.

SENEGAL | FALL 2007 STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM EVALUATION

Wolof: the group of 18 students was broken randomly into 4 Wolof classes -- the course emphasized mastering the practical speaking skills that we needed to effectively communicate in Senegal.

Independent Study Project: the last month of the program was dedicated to conducting a research project on the subject of our choice. The results of our research had to be presented in a 20 to 40 page paper and a 20 minute presentation. The evaluation and grading of these projects was serious and thorough.

STUDENT_BODY_COMPOSITION: All American

COMMENTS_ON_TEACHING: The faculty were extremely accessible and wonderful teachers. Very invested in the students, I am sure partly because the program is so small and professors and students develop close relationships.

ACADEMIC/LANGUAGE_PREPARATION_NEEDED: I would recommend 3 semesters of French before going on the program. (Through Amherst's French 5 or higher) This much preparation is required by SIT. No other course preparation is really necessary.

DESCRIPTION_OF_HOUSING_&_MEALS: All students live with a host family in Dakar and have breakfast and dinner with the family. The experience was invaluable, but often challenging as I found it difficult to balance class, course work and spending adequate time with the family. Family is extremely important in Senegal, and it is expected that one try to integrate oneself into and become part of one's host family, which ultimately takes an enormous amount of time, energy and perseverance.

WHO_MADE_HOUSE/MEAL_ARRANGEMENTS: SIT made all housing arrangements.

LIVING_COSTS: \$500

MEDICAL_FACILITIES_AVAILABLE?: Yes.

WHAT_PROGRAM_SERVICES_WERE_AVAILABLE?: We had an extensive and comprehensive, one week long orientation in which we did exercises and excursions to help us identify and sort out Senegalese cultural behaviors and modify our own behaviors so as to adapt better to Senegalese life.

HOW_DID_YOU_MEET_LOCALS?: Spending time with the host family, talking to Senegalese.

DID_YOU_EXPERIENCE_DISCRIMINATION?: Not exactly. Women are most definitely considered lower than men on the social ladder, and Senegalese women generally work much harder than Senegalese men. In rural areas, status and position within the community becomes even more important; and those with a little power and a little more education than the rest seem to exploit their elevated status. There are long-lived cultural tensions between certain ethnic groups that don't seem to provoke violence or really negative behavior, but rather exist as barriers that keep members of the "opposing" ethnic groups from interacting.

DID_YOU_TRAVEL?: Planned excursions were part of the program.

WOULD_YOU_RECOMMEND_THIS_PROGRAM/UNIVERSITY?: Yes -- living and studying in Senegal for 4 months is a wonderful experience and a great challenge. Senegal is a beautiful country and it's people are warm, welcoming and radiant. Difficulties in Senegal -- sporadic electricity, sweltering heat, ceaseless attention for being foreign, inefficient bureaucracy -- make one realize the tremendous luxury that surrounds us on a daily basis and that allows us to easily accomplish what may be considered impossible by a typical Senegalese.

SUMMARY: As an Anthropology major, spending this time studying and conducting field work in Senegal is invaluable to my Amherst education. I had a taste of what it is actually like to be a practicing anthropologist and wrote a significant research paper, which I consider as practice or perhaps a starting point for my senior thesis in anthropology. I plan to become a Certified Nurse-Midwife and as a person who may ultimately work with women from different backgrounds, this experience was necessary to my developing cultural sensitivity and understanding.

