Program: UMN Arabic Language & Culture, Spring

Mary’s Major: International Studies

Academic Life: I really enjoyed all my classes at the Arabic Language Institute in Fez and found them very applicable to my daily life in Morocco. I studied Moroccan dialect and Modern Standard Arabic, took a class on Moroccan society, and did a research project on a topic of my choice. I found that my instructors were very knowledgeable and enjoyed how they wound aspects of Moroccan culture into our lessons. The class sizes were very small, which is especially beneficial in a language class, and also allowed for individualized instruction. My classmates were all American students in the same program, which enabled us to get to know each other well over the course of the semester.

Living in Fez: I lived in the old medina of Fez, a medieval, car-free city of winding alleys and bustling markets. I stayed with a host family, which allowed me to be fully immersed in Moroccan life and use my Arabic in daily life. Through frequent discussions with my host sisters, I was able to gain insight into Moroccan society and culture from a Moroccan perspective, giving me a deeper understanding of my new home. Despite the considerable differences in our lives and backgrounds, we had even more in common. Living in the medina was definitely the right choice, as I was able to experience life in Fez as it has been for centuries.

Advantages of Study Abroad: As an International Studies major hoping to work abroad for a period of time, I believe my study abroad experience will prove important in my future career goals. In an increasingly globalized and connected world, it is now more important than ever that we understand and respect cultures and lifestyles that may differ from our own. Spending time abroad is the single best way to accomplish this. Immersion in an Arabic-speaking country definitely enhanced my language skills and confidence speaking a foreign language.

“I have gained an understanding and appreciation of a culture that I could not have acquired otherwise.”