Program: University of Cape Town Exchange, Fall

Nyesha’s Majors: HDFS; Gender and Women’s Studies

Academic Life: I took three classes: Gender & History; The Politics of Gendered Knowledge; and a class about Political Art. For the two gender studies courses, my classes were with mostly South African students, which I really enjoyed because I was able to learn about gender relations in the South African context. All of my classes met for 45 minutes and it took me a little while to get used to having class every day. However, I had an atypical academic experience at the University of Cape Town. I only had classes for about 6 weeks before the campus shut down for the rest of the semester due to student activism and unrest. I learned a lot about student activism, and I realize that I lived in Cape Town during a historical moment for students. [Note: Students were able to complete the semester in Cape Town through online assignments and discussion.]

Housing: I lived in a house with 9 other international students. Since I’m used to living alone, this was definitely a unique experience for me. Half of my housemates were from the U.S, and the other half were from various places in Europe.

Benefits of Study Abroad: I was able to conduct a research project where I examined the politics of mobility for women in Cape Town. Comparing my experiences in Wisconsin to my experiences in Cape Town enabled me to write this paper from an intersectional standpoint, and I was able to use this project as my writing sample for graduate school applications.

Tips for Future Students: There were a lot of times when I had to remind myself that there is no “typical” study abroad experience. Get rid of any expectations you have because the experience doesn’t always work out how you imagined it to.

Nyesha in the Bo-Kaap Neighborhood with Table Mountain in the distance.

“Make friends with students & locals so you can experience South Africa more holistically.”