

Spring 2006
DEPARTMENT OF AFRICANA STUDIES
AFST 380N: Cross Cultural Perspectives-Senegal (In Senegal)

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This 4-credit course on cross-cultural perspectives on Senegal, with a study abroad component, provides students with a unique opportunity to learn about the impact of Senegalese culture on the arts (music and visual arts), gender and Islam. The integrated coursework and study abroad component gives students an experiential and conceptual understanding of a West African country and culture that contrast sharply with United States social practices and aspirations. The course helps students to develop an international perspective of the world, to analyze social issues, to engage in critical discourses of the world as a global community, and to develop an understanding of the self and others in a transcultural world. A major aspect of the program is that students will learn directly from Senegalese scholars, students, musicians, filmmakers, and artists.

The course consists of two main parts. Part one is a semester long period of readings, Internet group research, video screening, critical responses, two 5-page papers, and three mandatory weekend retreats of lectures. Part two is the two study weeks in Senegal beginning the third week of May to the end of the first of June. The study abroad segment consists of lectures, gallery visits, attendance at music performances, field trips to Gorée Island, Saint Louis, the historic holy cities of Touba and Porokhane. The trip to Touba and Porokhane also will help students understand the fragile eco-system of the Sahel and the connection between this ecosystem and the character of Mourid (or Murid) philosophy and social movement. At the end of the course students will come away with an extensive knowledge of at least three of Senegal's contribution to the contemporary, modern world.

GENERAL STRUCTURE

The course consists of three modules. Module one focuses on the arts, predominantly, music and the visual arts, and film. Module two focuses on gender issues and on the ways Islam in Senegal intersects with the differing local ethnicities and the Western value system. Module three focuses on Islam, the Wolof culture, and the doctrine of Mouridiyya (The Way of Imitation of the Prophet) articulated by Cheikh Amadou Bamba. It highlights an Africanized Islamic movement—Mouridism, (El Mouridiyya is a tariqa, in Arabic “a path” of Sufism)—that radically modified two major tenets of Islam. In the evenings students will meet to analyze their experiences.

MODULE 1 - ART

Music Component

The practice sessions, public performances, recording studios, and the market of Dakar are the classroom for this segment of the program, which focuses on the hip-hop and musical scene of Dakar. Visits to the performances of major Senegalese musicians such as Youssou N’Dour, Baaba Maal, Ceddo, Cheikh Lo, Fatou Guewel, Africando/salsa, Aminata Fall, and Orchestre Baobab will be supplemented by discussions of the history and development of popular Senegalese music. In learning to appreciate this music, students will also learn about the distribution networks of Senegal.

Visual Art component

The art and historical museums, galleries, and the studios of contemporary Senegalese artists in Dakar are the classroom for this component, which focuses on sculptor Ousmane Sow, Moussa Tine’s assemblages, Chalys Leye, Viye Diba, Souleymane, and sous verre (glass painting, or in local parlance—suwer). Meetings with officials will hopefully explain the philosophy of Dak Art, and help them assess their experiences and analyze the works of artists in the context of this philosophy. Visits to the studios of Senegalese sculptors, painters, and mixed media artists such as Souleymane, Sow will be supplemented by discussions of the history and development of modern Senegalese art. Students will meet in the evenings to assess and analyze their experiences in the context of Dak Art.

MODULE 2 - GENDER

Who are the Signares? What do their lives tell us about Wolof culture and the history of women in Senegal? Also, who is Lat Dior? What significant feat did his daughter person during on of the Kayor battles against the French? What does the daughter’s story offer contemporary gender discourses? What do we make of Cheikh Anta Diop’s contention that the Wolof culture was matriarchal? We will study the writings of some Senegalese feminists such as Penda M’Bow, former Minister of State for Culture and a former mayoral candidate of Dakar; and Fatou Sow, sociologist and researcher with IFAN at Cheikh Anta Diop University and with the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris.

MODULE 3 - ISLAM

The ideas of Cheikh Amadou Bamba have profoundly reshaped Islam and the socioeconomic sectors of Senegal. Responding to the cultural needs of his Kayor district brethren, Cheikh Bamba articulated certain precepts of Islam to accommodate Wolof cultural world being and world sense. This module is designed to study his indigenization of Islam and the excisions of Arabic cultural elements of Mouridism. The infusion of Wolof cultural values into Islam provides a way to come to terms with the importance of Mam Diarra Bousso and Porokhane to Mouridism. The importance of the maternal principle provides an entrée into gender discourses within Mouridism and the global politics of gender in Islam.

ENROLLMENT

The minimum enrollment number is 20 students. This course is open to all Binghamton University students past their freshman year regardless of major, who are interested in Africa and Africana-related studies. Students from the Africa-New World Studies Program of Florida International University are welcome to apply. The course is designed so that students can gain extensive knowledge of at least three of Senegal's contribution to the contemporary, modern world. Its study abroad component will draw on the resources of Senegal's music scene, museums and galleries, and the Mourid centers.

FACULTY

Nkiru Nzegwu, Professor and Chair, Program Director, African art historian and gender specialist coordinates the visual arts and gender components of the program.

James Burns, Assistant Professor, Africanist musicologist bring his vast knowledge of skills to guide the students in navigating Dakar's world music and hip-hop scenes.

Ousmane Sene, Cheikh Anta Diop University, IFAN, In-country Program Coordinator

CALENDER

Tentative May 23 – June 4, 2006

EXCURSIONS

Field trips are to Goree Island, Touba and Porokhane, and Saint Louis. Students will abide by local dress codes during the trips to Touba and Porokhane.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

The Senegal program is appropriate for sophomore, junior, and senior students in the areas of Africana Studies, music, history, sociology, human development, and other majors in the humanities, social sciences, sciences, and professional schools.

LODGING AND MEALS

Lodging will be at residences at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar.

HEALTH INSURANCE

To participate in the program, students are required to have an international health insurance coverage. Students may purchase international healthcare insurance for an additional fee.

ESTIMATED COSTS

The estimated cost for the two weeks program is \$3,600, which includes the program fee (lodging and airfare from New York to Dakar), meals and four credits of in-state tuition. This fee does not include passport or personal expenses.

FINANCIAL AID

Students participating in a SUNY study-abroad program are eligible for regular financial aid. Consult your financial aid adviser for more specific details.

HOW TO APPLY

Students are required to complete an application, submit one letter of reference and official academic transcript and have an individual interview. Students from other SUNY campuses may arrange for an individual telephone interview and submit two letters of reference. Students from Florida International University will be screened by the director of the Africa-New World Studies program. All applications, along with official academic transcripts and letters of reference must be received by at the end of the Fall semester. Applications received following that deadline will be considered if there is available space in the program. The program director strongly recommends early application, enrollment to the program is limited.