What is the role of culture in articulating local and global issues? How do writers, artists, and filmmakers deploy their craft to critique and affect change on their social or political realities? What can we learn from these cultural practitioners about our own worlds, and our own voices? In this Maymester, we will go out in the field in Dakar, Senegal to meet with writers, artists, and cultural dignitaries, tour cultural sites and museums, and immerse ourselves in Dakarois life to answer these questions—and more.

Because this course means to be interdisciplinary and diverse, students will be encouraged to follow their own research interests throughout the various modules of the syllabus, yet all through the lens of culture and more specifically, literature. Students can pursue, among other topics: postcolonial politics; women’s rights; education; social justice; health; disability; immigration. The curriculum is student-centered, and each student will be expected to develop his or her own path through the course material, culminating in an online multimedia research project.

Detailed program info

Course 4-Units; French major/minor or elective credit. No pre-req, but students should have a good knowledge of French, as course is taught in French. Students will also learn some Wolof, a national language of Senegal.

Course material is culled from readings, discussions, and most importantly, daily in-the-field research. Course culminates in an online multimedia research project compiled of text, audio and video files, and images.

Class Dates May 15 – 19 (USC) * May 20 – June 4 (Dakar, Senegal) * June 5 – 9 (via virtual online meetings)

Enrollment In Fall semester, students will meet with Dr. Van Dam individually to discuss his/her interest in the class, background, and personal research interests. At that point, students may submit an application. Once accepted, students are given D-Clearance to register for the class, starting October 24. The class will meet as a group in January for a basic orientation and prep. Throughout Spring semester, Dr. Van Dam will help each student to develop an individualized research project.

Costs (est.) 4-Unit tuition is included in Spring load; ask about financial aid/scholarships and SOAR funding)

Airfare to Dakar: $1500
Lodging* in Dakar at Hotel Nina: $600 (double-occupancy, breakfast included)
Extra expenses: $1500 (food, books, souvenirs, etc)
SOAR Funding is available, as well as other funding (see website)
*Please note: Students are responsible for securing their own lodging at USC during first week of program.

Int’l Travel USC requires students to be safe and informed when traveling internationally. All information and required forms are posted on the course website.

For more information, please contact Dr. Julie Van Dam, julie.vandam@usc.edu and see course website: https://sites.google.com/site/pwpdakar/