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International Experience Reflection Paper

My international experience consisted of studying abroad at the University of Cape Town followed by an internship at Oranjezicht City Farm (OZCF). I arrived in Cape Town at the end of January. I had about 2 weeks to orient myself to Cape Town and South Africa. After this time, I began classes at the University of Cape Town. I ended up taking three classes: Third World Politics, State Management and Administration, and Crime and Deviance in South African Cities. These classes were very useful in bolstering my understanding of South Africa and how I fit into the existing dynamics as an American exchange student. The State Management and Administration class was particularly informative, as it put the transition from apartheid to democracy into a public policy framework while also teaching me about South Africa’s history.

I feel strongly that learning at an educational institution is one of the best ways to understand a place. Having an academic perspective on existing issues allowed me to discuss things from a more thoughtful perspective than everyday rhetoric. During my time at the University Cape Town, major changes began at the university with calls to remove a statue of Cecil Rhodes on campus. What began as a few students protesting became a larger movement to remove aspects institutional racism at the university. Towards the end of the semester the statue was removed. Overall, it was a very
interesting time to be at the University of Cape Town, and I am happy with my decision to study abroad before doing an internship in Cape Town.

After completing the semester, I began my internship. I ended up interning at Oranjezicht City Farm (OZCF). OZCF is a non-profit organization that works to build a local food movement through various mechanisms. It began as an urban farm in Oranjezicht, one of the neighborhoods in Cape Town, on an abandoned piece of land. Through cleanup and much work by the community, it became what it is today. The farm serves as an educational tool, where school groups come to learn about agriculture and where anyone can volunteer and learn how to grow organically. The produce from the farm is also sold at the Saturday market, where other locally grown vegetables and local artisanal foods are sold. Market Day is a mechanism to increase access to fresh vegetables for the community, while supporting local organic farmers. The farm also collects kitchen waste from the community to create compost using bokasi. Finally, in partnership with Harvest of Hope, another non-profit organization, OZCF sells a weekly vegetable box that comes from micro-farmers in the Cape Flats, which are Cape Town’s townships.

During my internship at OZCF, I worked on several parts of OZCF’s projects. My largest role was running the weekly vegetable box program. The responsibilities of this included maintaining 30 subscribers, coordinating with Harvest of Hope and artisanal food producers from the market, and facilitating the weekly pick-up. In addition, I worked on structuring the weekly process of coordinating the project, and developing plans for the future of the project. My other role was working at Market Day, which had
responsibilities including setting up the market, assisting customers in purchasing produce, and cleaning up at its conclusion. My final role was assisting other members of the OZCF team when needed. This ranged from doing background research on other CSAs to helping with a school trip to the farm. I greatly enjoyed my time at OZCF, as I learned a lot from my work as well as from the people who are part of the organization.

I greatly enjoyed my experience in Cape Town and South Africa more generally. I learned a lot about how I operate in and adapt to a new environment. There is always a learning curve when you are in a new place, so I am happy that I was in Cape Town long enough to attain situational awareness and be able to navigate myself comfortably. Cape Town was a great fit for me, as I was able to pursue my academic and personal interests there. One of my personal interests is photography. South Africa was the perfect place to explore and take photographs because so much natural beauty exists. It’s incredible that you can always see the mountain anywhere around Cape Town.

Overall, I gained valuable experience through my semester at the University of Cape Town and my internship at OZCF. I would recommend both experiences because they both provided me with valuable, challenging experiences that enhanced learning beyond what I have learned at Cornell.