

**UGANDA STUDIES PROGRAM, SEMESTER ABROAD
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The majority of the students who take part in the Uganda Studies Program really do not know what to expect aside from maybe a change in weather, different food, and having to sleep under mosquito nets. Little did we know that these were going to be the least of our worries or should I say our challenges! I arrived at the Washington D.C, Dulles airport on a Tuesday afternoon. This was where all 47 students taking

part of the study abroad program flew from all over the country and were now going to meet for the very first time. We were entering into a new world, a life changing adventure, so why don't I begin with the first 26 hours of airport and flying time, major "quality time" I have to say, on our way to Mukono, Uganda. I am usually pretty comfortable with large groups, but in all honesty, it was a little overwhelming to have to introduce myself about 47 different times.

I can still remember everyone's excitement whether it be in their voices, facial expressions or just in how much we all talked about going to Rwanda as soon as we got on campus. Yes, a week before classes started at Uganda Christian University, we traveled to Kigali, Rwanda and stayed there for 9 days. Our definition of traveling turned out to be very different to the 28 hours of driving we experienced in two coaster buses, which are 15 passenger vans. How did the staff and all 47 of us fit? You don't want to know, so much for safety! We were limited to one backpack, which in many cases turned out to be the book bag we brought for classes. I did not think it was possible for me to pack for a 9 day trip, which included going to church and looking formal everywhere we went to, in ONE SMALL BACK PACK! We were left with no choice but to abide by the coaster rules and make sure we brought just enough!

During the 9 days we stayed in Rwanda, I learned how to bathe using a basin or some say a bucket. It's pretty simple, you fill up a bucket with COLD water and take a bath standing up.....soon I realized I wasn't supposed to stand inside the bucket! During our time in Rwanda we visited many memorials and museums studying the Tutsi Genocide of 1994. We were privileged in being able to speak with several Tutsi survivors and those who planned the genocide. It was by far one of the most life changing moments of my life. The concept I once had about forgiveness will forever be challenged by the

radical process of reconciliation that the Tutsi and Hutu people are undergoing as we speak.

Soon classes started and a typical day at UCU consisted of the following: waking up in time for breakfast, which was served at 7 am and consisted of two slices of white bread with butter if you were lucky and a cup of tea. Showers usually weren't a problem; I quickly realized most of us did not like to be under cold water, so everyone made sure they were in and out as fast as they could. While at UCU I took 16 credit hours; I studied African Traditional Religions, Reading the New Testament in Africa, Faith and Action, and Understanding Philosophical Ethics in Africa. These classes opened my eyes to a different world, such a unique culture and beautiful people. Uganda allowed me to experience God's love in a special way. I experienced first hand what it means to be compassionate and the importance of being present for someone, having no expectations, just loving them for who they were created to be.

I also had the opportunity to work in a children's hospital/ rehabilitation center, where I was able to learn about prominent congenital and acquired health conditions specific to children in Uganda. I worked with Dr. Paul Ochieng, who is the primary health provider of the organization. This experience allowed me to appreciate the passion and dedication of people who are able to do so much with limited resources. Cases of cerebral palsy and osteomyelites (bone infection) are very common among the children in the community. Most cerebral palsy patients had acquired the condition due to medical negligence when administering malaria preventive medicine, such as quinine injections. Studying in Uganda allowed me to reevaluate my life, my faith and my career goals. I am interested in studying more about the epidemiology of malaria in Africa and the causes of cerebral palsy and osteomyelites.