SKIDMORE IN PARIS
NEWSLETTER  
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Issue 1

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Le mot du directeur

Dynamic! If there’s one word I’d use to describe this semester’s group, this is it. The largest group that the program has seen in over 6 years, all 28 students were actively engaged in making the best of their study abroad experience. Art classes at the Académie de Port-Royal, business classes at American Business School, literature at the Institut Catholique, American studies at the Sorbonne – these are some of the classes taken at our Paris partner institutions. We had a larger number of in-center classes with instructors from the Sorbonne, the Institut Catholique, Sciences Politiques & the Ecole du Louvre. The academic program is not the only reason to come study in Paris. Skidmore in Paris organized two deluxe 3-day excursions, first the Loire Valley to see the most famous French castles and then to Provence where we retraced the steps of the painter, Vincent Van Gogh. In Paris, students were treated to a number of outings: a dance performance at the Opéra Garnier, a jazz concert and an ionesco play. In addition to these venues, students have a 100 Euros allowance to explore other culture options including cinema, museums, art galleries & even attended an exhilarating soccer match between Paris-St-Germain & Barcelona. Finally, the cultural immersion aspect of the program is greatly enhanced by our host families, many of whom have housed Skidmore students for a number of years. “The host family was wonderful and made me feel at home.” “I got to speak French every night with my family and went out numerous times with my host sister and met some of her French friends.” “I didn’t speak a word of French upon arrival; though most of our conversations were in English, my host siblings would help with my French vocabulary.” We have a wonderful selection of families and do our utmost to match each student with the right family. In one month’s time, class of ‘14 will be leaving Paris with some unforgettable memories and a new momentum as they head into their senior year. Bon voyage et bonne chance!
Ce semestre, je suis étudiante à plein-temps à L'Ecole Nationale Supérieur d'Arts Appliqués et Métiers d'Art, une école Parisienne située dans le quinzième et qui s'appelle Olivier de Serres.

Je l'ai trouvée grâce à ma sœur d'accueil; elle y a reçu son diplôme il y a trois ans. En tant qu'étudiante étrangère j’ai un planning assez unique et flexible, et j’ai aussi la chance de faire ce que les étudiants français ne peuvent pas faire car je suis deux formations à la fois. Je suis un atelier de formation à la laque (quelque chose qu’on n’aurait pas l’occasion d’étudier aux Etats Unis) et également la moitié de la formation ‘design de textile’ (soit les ateliers de tissage et sérigraphie). De plus, je prends un cours sur l’histoire de l’art dans le cadre de la formation Design d’Espace. Ce cours mets l’accent plutôt sur l’aspect architectural. Et enfin, j’ai aussi la chance d’y avoir trouvé un stage en tant qu’assistante de langue. Je travaille avec quatre professeurs différents pendant la semaine, et je m’occupe en gros des petits cours de conversation et des corrections à l’oral et à l’écrit.

Je trouve que les cours d’art en France ont une approche plus technique que conceptuel. Les profs connaissent bien leur métier et transmettent beaucoup de connaissance sur la construction, l’histoire, et l’industrie à leurs élèves mais souvent on ne se concentre pas sur les idées créatrices à l’origine d’une œuvre. La quantité de travail est pareille aux cours de Skidmore, mais on est moins flexible dans son planning parce que l’école ferme à 18h et n’ouvre pas le weekend, mais ça veut dire que presque tout le temps qu’on passe dans l’atelier on est avec le prof. Je passe au moins 40 heures en cours chaque semaine. En gros, l’ambiance d’un cours est plutôt studieuse; les étudiants bossent chacun sur leurs projets et le prof n’encourage pas beaucoup de communication parmi les étudiants (c’est-à-dire qu’il n’y a jamais de critique formelle). Mais comme on passe pas mal de temps ensemble, on échange des idées, on se pose des questions, et on finit par bien se connaître. Je trouve que c’est une expérience très riche parce que j’en apprends beaucoup sur les Français, mais aussi beaucoup sur moi-même et notamment sur ma façon de travailler et de réfléchir. Comme on est très autonome et que les professeurs sont très exigeants, j’ai l’impression d’avoir pris mon travail plus à cœur.

Elise Auger

*RD’s note: This article in French gives an account of one student’s experience in a national art school. While it is an incredible example of what a motivated student can do to find out-of-center classes, it could not have happened unless the student had 300-level French prior to coming on the program. For those with lesser skills in French, the options for outside classes are listed on our website.*
Paris is a city where every American already has several preconceived stereotypes; and upon living there, each one of those stereotypes can either be proven completely false — or surprisingly correct. But *studying* in Paris is something else entirely. Reading novels written in French, being reminded to always speak in French, preparing extensive presentations on the North Korean crisis or the political identities of North African immigrants (in French) — this imminently burdensome seemed quite foreboding; and I had questioned my original decision to embark on the program.

Yet I eventually found myself learning quite a bit; and slowly, my less-than-adequate level of French improved in a way that only living in a foreign country can. No, the amount of work never lessened, but what I had at first considered an insurmountable challenge became a... endeavor of higher learning. And I am grateful for the experience.

Taking an International Relations course at L’Institut Catholique in the “foreign learners department” was unlike anything else that I could have experienced back at Skidmore. It was a class where students had come from the likes of Columbia, Germany, India, and Malaysia — all to study in Paris. With each student bringing the insights of their respective nationalities and providing commentary on the various hot-button topics in global politics, the class truly was an eye-opener.

This semester I took a class at the Institut Catholique on French history from the Revolution to WWII. The course was through the foreign language department so most of the other students were studying abroad in Paris as well and taking all of their courses at the Institut Catholique. Given what I had heard about the French university system, I was expecting lectures of 100 plus students. Instead, the class was held in a smaller, seminar style room and was very similar to a Skidmore class. The professor was fantastic and it was really interesting to get out of the Skid center and meet students from other countries who were also studying in Paris. For many of us the only language that we spoke in common was French and it was fun to hear their thoughts on Paris based on their separate cultural backgrounds.
My internship with la Commission pour l’Abolition des Mutilations Sexuelles (CAMS) is easily the best thing I’ve done in Paris. CAMS is an organization that fights for women’s rights through legal channels in addition to the usual education and awareness methods. Today CAMS is working on two specific projects: combating female genital mutilation and equality for female athletes. My internship focuses on the former, FGM. I work one-on-one with Linda Weil-Curiel, the leading FGM prosecutor in France. My hours and duties are flexible and change from week to week depending on her schedule. My tasks can be as mundane as printing documents or helping to buy plane tickets while other times I might attend a conference at UNESCO or an intimate meeting with the French police commissioner. I also do research for the Fleur du Désert website.

Having an internship in Paris is not always easy and has forced me to step outside of my comfort zone. I’m forced to ask questions, introduce myself to important figures and speak French on the phone—a task that never seems to get easier. Nonetheless, I’ve learned so much from this opportunity, in regard to FGM and French culture. It often feels like I’ve taken a class rather than fulfilled an internship.

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The opportunity to intern at the Librairie Chrétien (a bookstore of antiquarian illustrated books) arose last semester. I was in Prof. Anzalone’s graphic novels class, and when I decided to stay in Paris during our Fall Break, he suggested I meet his friend Jean (the bookstore owner) at one of the Salon du Livres. While I arrived in Paris without any plans to search for an internship, I was soon mesmerized by the variety of books and drawings I saw, and felt the need to reintroduce art back into my daily routine—which seemed only natural as a studio major, who, oddly wasn’t taking any studio classes. I showed some of my drawings, which also interested Jean, and Loren later proposed the idea of an internship, to which he agreed.

I started in early March and enjoy working with the staff of four—three book experts and another intern from the scan books and drawings for their online website, for their archives, and also for the catalogue for the different Salons. In addition, I send books to clients from the local post office and help create written descriptions of books and drawings. I haven’t advanced to answering phone calls yet, but have learned a great deal about book binding and the famous French illustrators: knowledge that I hope to incorporate into my artwork when I return to Skidmore. I schedule my work hours a week in advance, and usually try to work for a few hours before or after class. The bookstore is only 15-20 minutes away from the Skidmore Center via the M9, which is convenient. It also provides a nice change in pace from classes, but provides the same educational experience.

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Arissa Fram

Leah Meserve
With one exception: the final Croque that we will eat in Paris will be the critically-acclaimed 16€ "Queen of All Croques," at Cafe Marly, a sandwich widely regarded as the best Croque Madame in Paris. Using a strict criteria, the blog breaks down the coveted sandwich; a percentage breakdown of the components out of 110%, 100% being for the sandwich, and 10% reserved for the egg. This blog is a great treat and would probably entertain anybody that you know via email, especially if they like to eat, or need to eat, or would like to eat, and will be going to Paris, ever. So, yeah, check out LaCroqueMadame.tumblr.com, and keep salivating.

Love,

Matthew Schonfeld
Nicholas Sobel
Michael Brennan
After arriving in Paris in January, I immediately began my search for jazz clubs in order to meet some French musicians. I figured that playing music with native Parisians would offer me a new global outlook on jazz as a genre while simultaneously allowing me to practice my French. A friend recommended that I visit the Sunset Sunside Club to see some great modern jazz, so I quickly checked the schedule for the venue and hopped on the metro towards the heart of Paris. I was absolutely blown away by the young musicians who played that night and felt obligated to introduce myself to the piano player. As it turns out, he studied at the Berklee School of Music in Boston and we had many common musician friends. We exchanged numbers and the following week I met him at a small studio in the basement of an old Haussmannian building. I was greeted at the studio with an espresso and pastry and played with several musicians for over three hours. We communicated in French, English, and most importantly, jazz. I’ll never forget the warmth and kindness that these musicians expressed towards me and I look forward to incorporating this experience in my music back home in the U.S.

Robin Shore

**RD’s note:** In late March, the entire group went to see a jazz performance at the Sunset Sunside Club. The Florent Corbou ‘Organic’ Quintet proved to be a fascinating blend of electro-percussion minimalist jazz.

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**We’re on the Web!**

See us at:

http://cms.skidmore.edu/ocse/programs/paris/

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**Photos:** Loren Ringer