



Chocolate and Gold:

Politics and Culture in Ghana, West Africa

An IA Faculty-Led Travel Seminar to Ghana
Dr. Christopher Whann and Dr. Gerald Erchak
March 12-22, 2005

The International Affairs Program at Skidmore College offers majors, minors, and interested students the opportunity to engage in a focused travel experience that combines study of a region before traveling there and reflection upon return. Destinations vary each year. To launch this program in Spring 2005, IA faculty have devised "Chocolate and Gold: Politics and Culture in Ghana, West Africa," a two-course (3 credits total) learning experience combining class work and readings on campus during the first part of the spring semester, a field trip with class work and lectures in Ghana, West Africa during spring break, and time for reflection and final presentations on campus after the journey.

TX 201B IA Regional Topics: Ghana (2 credits) is the on-campus segment. TX202 IA Faculty-Led Travel Seminar: Ghana (1 credit) is the travel segment of the experience. Students must be registered for TX 201B in order to qualify for the travel seminar TX 202.

Why Ghana?

West Africa has a unique history of connections with the Atlantic world, most importantly as a crucial regional player in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, but also in the biological exchange of old and new world plants, animals, peoples and diseases. As a result of its long involvement in the slave trade, West Africa was far more commercially integrated into the world market economy than other parts of continent, which helps to explain the rapid transition to other forms of commerce in the 19th century. Ghana's history is unique for other reasons as well: The kingdom of Ashanti was one of the last to be completely conquered by Europeans (1901), and Ghanaian politicians like Kwame Nkrumah have historically been in the forefront of pan-African activity. Ghana's importance has continued in the post-colonial period. It was the first sub-Saharan African country to have gained independence (1956), and it was one of the very first African countries to experience single-party rule and a military coup (1966), and one of the first to return to civilian rule (1969-72). Ghana is a classic example of a "collapsed state" that has had a successful economic recovery as a primary product exporter—under IMF and World Bank auspices, no less. And Ghana is one of the examples of an African country that is undergoing self-examination through a "truth commission" (2003). Ghana historically has hosted many international students, including Americans on educational programs, a testimony to its well-deserved reputation for safety.

Preliminary Course Schedule

Subject to change

This course meets on campus as well as in, the West African country of Ghana, Friday March 12- Monday March 22, 2005. The instructors will schedule two separate meetings on Skidmore campus in February to discuss the logistics and the code of conduct for the travel experience and one follow-up meeting upon returning from Ghana (dates to be determined).

March 12: Travel to Ghana

March 13: Introduction to Ghana Culture and Society (Accra)

March 14: Visit Lake Akosombo; view Akosombo Dam by boat; meet with representative from Volta River Authority

March 15: Tour Accra; meet with faculty members from University of Ghana; tour campus; visit botanical garden

March 16: Visit cocoa plantation; traditional Ghanaian village; and sacred “monkey village”

March 17: Visit National Museum-Nkrumah Mausoleum, Makola Market, National Center for Art and Culture, and W. E. B. Dubois Center

March 18: Travel to Cape Coast; visit slave castle-fishing village-slave museum on Cape Coast

March 19: Travel to Kumasi (Ashanti kingdom’s capital); visit world heritage site: Ashanti Shrine and example of traditional palace architecture, Kings Palace Museum, National Center of Culture; visit Ashanti gold mine

March 20: Visit Bonwire; take participants to buy cloth; Guest Lecture: Power and Art in Ghana, Professor Lisa Aronson, Skidmore College (on sabbatical research in Ghana during spring 2005); return to Accra

March 21: Travel from Kumasi to Accra

March 22: Return from Ghana (Accra-US)

Note: As one might expect, West Africa is not to be confused with upstate New York. While Ghana is by all accounts a safe place to travel, Accra and Kumasi are large cities, and travelers should proceed with the normal care and good judgment that traveling overseas or in any large city require. A set of guidelines and a college-endorsed code of conduct will be distributed to students before travel. Students will be required to sign the code of conduct to assure that they are familiar with and agree to follow the rules.

IA Faculty

Dr. Christopher Whann is a Lecturer in the Department of Government and an Academic Advisor at the University Without Walls. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science and African Studies from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, where he studied Lesotho-South African relations during the apartheid period. He teaches Skidmore UWW and residential students in the areas of African studies, international affairs, political economy and environmental studies. His research focuses on the politics of development in poorer countries, comparative public policy, such as labor migration in the mining industry and the politics of water transfer projects.

Dr. Gerald Erchak is a Professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work. Gerald M. Erchak received his Ph.D. in social anthropology from Harvard University in 1976, the same year he joined the Skidmore faculty. Professor Erchak teaches courses in liberal studies, cultural anthropology, psychological anthropology, Sub-Saharan African cultures South Africa and race, and controversies in the scientific study of human sexuality. He is the author of *The Anthropology of Self and Behavior* (Rutgers, 1992) and numerous articles in the field of psychological anthropology. He has carried out field research in Liberia, Micronesia, South Africa, Brazil, and most recently, Namibia.

Anticipated Costs

The anticipated cost for the travel seminar to Ghana is \$3,500. This includes roundtrip airfare from New York City to Ghana, all ground transportation in Ghana, onsite accommodations with double occupancy, meals, medical insurance, entrance and performance fees, local guides, cultural excursions, Skidmore IA faculty onsite, and the support of Skidmore's Office of International Programs. The fee does not include personal expenses.

Applications

Applications are available from Professors Whann in Ladd Hall, Professor Erchak in Tisch 226, or Professor O'Brien in PMH 406. Review of Applications will begin on November 1, 2004.

Further Information

For information on the cost and travel logistics of TX 202, please contact Cori Filson, Director of the Office of International Programs (OIP) at 580-5355.

For further information on the course content, academic requirements, and the IA major program, contact Professor Mary-Elizabeth O'Brien, Director of International Affairs at 580-5216.

Why Travel?

"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one corner of the earth all one's lifetime." Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) Chapter LXII