International Study Tour in Ghana Paper

May 26: Day One- Today we left for Ghana. I was excited and nervous. I got to the airport at 1:30 and looked for the group for an hour because there were a couple Terminal 3’s and I wasn’t sure which one it was. That was really stressful because I didn’t want to miss the flight and no one at the airport seemed to be able to help me. Finally, I found where I was supposed to be, luckily, because I didn’t have my phone with me and I so I couldn’t call anyone. I was just relieved to have found everyone. We checked in for our nine hour flight and it all of a sudden hit me. We had been planning this trip for so long that it hadn’t ever really become real to me until now. We were really going to Africa. Everything we had been learning about and preparing for all semester was about to become a reality to us. The flight was the longest one I had ever been on and I could not sleep at all. I read until the cabin lights turned off and didn’t even try to go to sleep until I saw my iPod clock turn to midnight. I was 21 now. I had no idea what to expect when we landed. Our first day’s itinerary had changed because our meeting with the Embassy had to be moved, so I wasn’t sure what we were going to be doing the first day since I didn’t bring my itinerary with me either. I also had a feeling that my luggage was going to get lost.

May 27: Day Two- We arrived early in the morning on my birthday. To my surprise as we landed, an announcement came over the loudspeaker that it was my birthday and the whole plane sang “Happy Birthday” to me. It was really embarrassing and so strange to be celebrating this milestone of a birthday in a foreign country. Looking back on it, it was so perfect because 21 is such a coming of age number to reach in a person’s life and this trip was definitely a coming of age experience to me. We got off the plane on a roadway, not through a tunnel into the airport. I thought that was really cool because it reminded me of seeing pictures of my favorite band, The
Beatles, coming to America in the same way. It was incredibly humid out, but we got our luggage without a problem and the buses met us out front. Some natives immediately bombarded us and tried to carry our luggage for us so we’d have to tip them. The culture shock began. Our next stop was to the W.E.B. DuBois Center in Accra. We took a small tour of the center and they charged us to use our cameras, which I had never seen before but I’m pretty sure that happens in the U.S. also. We ended up leaving after three hours when we encountered our first big issue that proved to be a recurring problem throughout the trip: we still hadn’t gotten our food. Ghanaian culture does not lend itself to eating out often, and so restaurants rarely get business. When they do, it is not usually in such large groups. While I realize this is something that could not be avoided or improved, it was still very annoying and inconvenient because we were on a strict time schedule. We were all so tired and hungry and to make matters worse, a group of young men were following us around trying to get us to buy things. They were incredibly persistent and would not take no for an answer. I really didn’t have the patience to deal with it, so I just ignored them. When I told people I was going on this trip, I heard all sorts of stereotyped comments and remarks about what it would be like and it bothered me that people could be so ignorant. When I got to Ghana, I realized that it works both ways. People there automatically assumed that because I was obviously American that I must have money, which is not true at all. In fact, I overdrew my bank account to pay for this trip. I kept telling the natives that while they pay 200 cedis for a year of college, I pay like $12,000 and so, really, I literally have no more money! The three hour ride to Cape Coast was a huge eye-opener for me. I had never been to a developing country before so I had never seen people living in shacks or open sewers before. It was really sad. We made it to Cape Coast for dinner and our families were there to greet us. We had birthday cake and sang again which was a really nice surprise. It was a great
birthday. I loved my family immediately. Auntie Christie was so nice and Joyce was really cute. All the families seemed really friendly and eager to spend time with us. It would have been nice to have had more time to get to know them. Auntie Christie lived in a small house above a salon with her granddaughter and her maid, Naomi. Reece and I shared a bed in her daughter’s room and she made us a delicious breakfast every morning that we stayed there. It was an extremely long first day and we had to get up early the next day so we went to bed as soon as we got home basically.

May 28th: Day Three- Today we had our orientation at Cape Coast University. It definitely took my mind off of what had happened earlier this morning. Some man walking by commented on my applying sunscreen in public. I couldn’t really tell what his issue was because I couldn’t understand him and Naomi’s English isn’t that great either, but I gathered that my actions were offensive to the culture or at least to that man in particular, which was strange because in our culture, the way he addressed me would be considered inappropriate. After we had lunch at the student center, we went to Cape Coast Slave Castle. It was very depressing to see how thousands of Ghanaians were forced into slavery and held in prison cells. The cells were dark and damp and still smelled of death. As a history major, I knew a great deal about the Triangle Slave Trade, but what really struck me was that some of the slave ship captains and their wives were buried at the castle. Also, the castle was so beautiful and had such a scenic view, but such a devastating history. After reviewing the pictures, some other students and I noticed that in some of the cells, we could see what looked like ghosts in the photos. On another note, the hawksers from Accra, who must have seen the University logo on our bus, had followed us down to Cape Coast, which was a little unnerving. I’m sure they were there peddling their products and not following us, but it was still shocking to see. Also today, we went to meet the
vice chancellor, who I was surprised to see, is a woman. We presented her with a plaque and described our mission to her. She was very nice and well-spoken. Later that night, we went to the Castle Restaurant, on the beach across from Cape Coast Castle. It was nice to have a break from chicken and fish and rice. I got pizza, which still wasn’t like the pizza I was used to, but it was different enough from what I had been eating recently that it was a relief. We had been hoping that we would have a little while to hang out at the restaurant, but we were told that we had to bring the driver and the bus back to the university, and when we got back to the university, there was no place open to hang out. This was frustrating because one of the main reasons people went on the trip was to bond with each other and we had been under the impression that we would all be living on campus with the families and therefore be near each other and able to spend leisure time together outside our normal schedule. Unfortunately, this was a misunderstanding and we were quite far away from each other without phones, proper addresses or knowledge of the area, or transportation. Eventually we were able to overcome some of these barriers and learn at least where we lived and our house numbers, but we hadn’t counted on those problems or the need for our own personal cell phones, which we discovered would have been a lot more helpful. On the bus ride home, we had a new driver who had some trouble finding our houses and we were unable to help him since we had only stayed there one night so far. At one point he and our guide left us all alone in the dark on the bus while they went to ask people in the village if they knew who our house parents were. They even dropped off some students at one location claiming it was their residence when the students said it wasn’t. Eventually this confusion was also overcome, but when we got picked up in the morning, we always ended up waiting for at least an hour since we were only told the time the bus would begin pick-ups instead of the approximate time we personally would be picked-up or at least the route so we could figure it out for
ourselves. This was stressful because we were not sure if we were being forgotten and we could have been getting much needed sleep instead of waiting. We waited a LOT in Ghana.

**May 29th: Day Four**- Reece and I are unable to be picked-up at our house like everyone else because the bus cannot make it up our hill. After seeing the bus go to and from Mole Park, this reasoning irritated me a bit. So we walked to the top of the hill to meet the bus every morning for the rest of our stay in Cape Coast. We had a lecture by Professor Agyeman, whose book I did my article review on. He was an extremely prolific speaker and his lecture on the history of Ghana and tribal families was incredibly interesting. He focused on ethnic tensions and the different groups that live in Ghana, which is what my article review was about. I was able to speak to him briefly after the lecture about the book and the review, which gave me a great understanding of the subject and was definitely the academic highlight of my trip. On another note, I still haven’t been able to change over my traveler’s checks because the lines at the banks are hours long and we don’t have time in our schedule to wait. I’m so glad that we paid for everything in advance so I haven’t had to worry about money yet but I definitely would have gotten some souvenirs at Cape Coast Castle if I was able to. It’s close enough so that I can go back when I do have money just to shop. Back at the university, we heard another lecture. It promised to be interesting as it was supposed to be on the African Woman. However, our lecturer seemed to think she had two hours to speak instead of one. The first half of her lecture was background information that was kind of repetitive of the lecture we had in the morning, which was a little annoying since we already knew the information. Only in the last few minutes did we get into the real subject matter when the time miscommunication had been pointed out. I would have liked to have heard more on the African Woman, but we had to go to Elmina Castle for another tour. Like Cape Coast, it was a very somber experience. There were memorial
wreaths for people whose ancestors had left Ghana through the castle as slaves and we saw the Door of No Return, which was the gateway from the castles to the ships. It was cool how they had us exit through it and then re-enter the castle through it again to symbolize the coming home of slaves’ ancestors. After this tour, we had dinner at the Elmina Beach Resort. It was so nice and the buffet was really good. Once again, we thought we would be able to hang out, but what the professors found out was that the Resort and club that we were all supposed to go to became a hot spot for some unsavory characters at night and so they wanted to take us back. Once that was explained to us, we understood their concern and had no problem leaving. Some of us even had a discussion in the lobby of how the trip was failing to meet our expectations so far and what we thought should be improved. It was a very constructive conversation and we felt that our input was finally being addressed and that our suggestions would improve the conditions for the rest of the trip. It also helped us to understand a bit more about the position the professors were in and their take on the whole tour. Our main point was that we understood that we were the guinea pigs of this project, but that didn’t mean that we should be missing out. Fortunately, we were able to compromise on some issues and we knew that once we got to the North we’d be staying in hotels together and have much more time to hang out after our day’s agenda was complete. But we still had a problem at Elmina. Some students had selfishly and irresponsibly ran off with some people they had met who were staying at the hotel and we could not find them when it was time to leave. That was really annoying because we had just been negotiating with the professors to be able to go out more and people were showing that we may not have been ready or deserving of that responsibility. One of my biggest pet peeves is when a few people act out and ruin things for a whole group because it is one of the most immature things a person can do, especially in a foreign country. To make matters worse, these students didn’t seem to
understand what the big deal was or have any remorse for inconveniencing everyone. Finally, we found everyone and went home, but the problem wasn’t really dealt with because there were no repercussions for those students who acted out. The rest of us knew it would only be a matter of time before it happened again and that there was very little that we could do to prevent this. When we got home, we had to explain to our house mother what had happened because we were late and she had waited up for us and was worried. That made us feel really bad because we were so grateful to be there and we didn’t want to upset her especially this early in the trip, but I think she understood that it wasn’t our fault and didn’t seem mad at us. We also felt bad that Joyce had fallen asleep waiting up for us because we were not going to see her that much before we went to the North and we had wanted to play with her since she thought we’d be home early.

May 30th: Day Five- After breakfast, we went to the University of Cape Coast for a lecture on social laboratories and decentralization. It was really interesting. After that, we went to Kakum National Park. We were hoping to do the canopy walk, but it had been rainy lately and so we weren’t allowed to because the bridge was wet. Instead, we went on a nature walk through the forest. It was really cool to see all the different trees. Some had interesting stories behind them and some were used for different products such as cologne. The most eventful part of our walk was when we went through a patch of army ants by mistake. Everyone got bit and it was really painful, especially because some people were wearing sandals. I was lucky to be wearing sneakers, but the ants tried to burrow through my shoelace holes and bit my ankles. At least I took a lot of cool pictures of trees and lizards! We saw lots of crazy looking bugs as well. And there was a stand with coconuts so we got some. It was my first time trying coconut milk, and I liked it even though a lot of other people didn’t. We also saw lots of pretty butterflies. After that, we went to Han’s Cottage, a restaurant with a crocodile pond. Today was really exciting because
we were finally starting to see some of the major attractions we heard we would do on the trip. I felt like the trip really had begun because we were doing the things we had been looking forward to and we were pretty much adjusted to the culture and the style of the trip. We got to the cottage and we immediately saw crocodiles. They weren’t tamed like the ones we were going to see up north so we had to be really careful. This was our first encounter with the wild animals of Africa. We got some great pictures and got pretty close to the crocodiles. We also saw some really exotic birds. The food was good there too. There was supposed to be a live band, which would have been really cool to see, but we had to get back to the university and get some sleep because we were leaving early in the morning to go up north. I was really excited about going up north. I was looking forward to a change of scenery and we were supposed to do a lot of really cool things up north like go on a safari and pet crocodiles. I was looking forward to staying in a hotel too because I heard the ones we were staying in were really nice. I was also going to be able to exchange my traveler’s checks since the bank lines were supposedly shorter there. I’m glad I’ll be able to buy some souvenirs and it’s just in time too because I won’t be able to go back to any of the places we visit up north so I’ll only have that one opportunity to get stuff. I’m actually not worried about the long drive either because I think it will be really cool to get to see the scenery and I’ve always enjoyed long car rides. Hopefully I can get some sleep on the ride because I haven’t been sleeping that much since we got here, I don’t know if I’m not adjusted to the time change yet or what, but all the traveling will definitely tire me out.

May 31st: Day Six- This morning I got up at 4:00 to be ready for our drive to the North. We were going to a hotel in Tamale twelve hours away. I slept a lot on the bus, which I needed because I hadn’t been getting a lot of sleep lately. When we drove up to the hotel, we couldn’t believe it. It was so nice! We even got our own rooms. I was excited to have my own bed for the
next few days. It was nice to have a break from lectures today, and I’m sure the other students felt the same way, especially those who had blatantly been falling asleep in the lectures. We were looking forward to the food at the hotel as well because the food along the way wasn’t the greatest. I was looking forward to having the night to hang out with my friends as well. Looking back on it, I think most people would say that Tamale was the most fun we had on the trip. The Ghana Black Stars, the pro football team was staying there too which was really cool for me because I love football. Finally the trip was turning out the way we expected. The food at the hotel was okay, breakfast was really good, and we even had some input on the menu which was really helpful because at this point food was definitely becoming an issue. I felt a lot more comfortable at the hotel because I felt like I had more freedom, which I am more accustomed to. I like my house family but I can’t help but feel like an inconvenience especially when we are waking up so early and coming home later.

**June 1st: Day Seven** - I can’t believe we’ve already been gone a week. It definitely doesn’t feel like we flew out a week ago. We had a book donation this morning where Delaware State presented books to our hosts in the North, The University of Development Studies. We also presented them with a plaque. It was filmed by the local press, who also stayed and listened in on the lecture on Northern cultures and customs. I didn’t appreciate the way some of the students behaved when they knew the lecture was being documented by the press. Some people were very rude and inattentive. I found the lecture interesting and helpful because I knew the culture and practices of the people in the North were a bit different from those in the South. It was kind of hard to understand the lecturer though because his accent was very strong. I liked learning about how development in the North occurs and who is involved in the development process. I felt like we really heard input from the people and it made me think how effective governance would be
if it followed this kind of format where the people explained their ideas and expectations about development to the Western leaders aiding them. After the lecture, we went to the development site and saw a traditional dance and heard some drummers play. Then the dancers made us get up and dance. I was so nervous because I already felt like I stood out a lot in Africa and I definitely was not yet accustomed to people staring at me so the last thing I wanted was to draw more attention to myself, but it was fun. I am not a dancer by any means. I’m trained in Irish step-dancing but that’s about it. The more we did on this trip and the more I saw my classmates connect and get back to their roots, the more I wanted to go to Ireland and see the land of my ancestors. It was really inspiring. So after the dancing, we got to go shopping in the village. This was the first time I had money to spend, so I was looking forward to getting some things to bring home for my family and friends. I ended up getting lots of good bargains and finding some very unique stuff. A local store owner who had danced and played in the presentation at the development site taught me how to play the drums. That was really cool, and he also showed me how they make the drums. We went back to our hotel for dinner, and then we got to go out for the night. We went to the rooftop of this restaurant to hang out and listen to music with some locals. It was so much fun. Unfortunately, some people took advantage of our freedom and took off. When it was time to go, people were missing and the rest of us were really upset because it was the same people who were ruining things for everyone all along and peoples’ tempers got way out of hand. The group essentially divided itself into two camps, with the exception of a few students including myself. It was very unsettling that a group of students that came to a developing country to try and work with leading scholars and make a difference couldn’t act maturely and see the big picture. I felt like the frustration of the unplanned circumstances on the trip had taken its toll on peoples’ patience and that some of us had taken that out on each other.
Luckily, we found the missing people pretty quickly and resolved to discuss the issue the next morning when we had calmed down and could think about what we wanted to say. I was disappointed that all this trouble culminated when we were just starting to really enjoy ourselves and the trip was just beginning to meet our expectations.

June 2nd: Day Eight- This morning after breakfast we had an open forum to discuss what had happened the night before. I wasn’t really all that upset. I had become apathetic to strange and unexpected things on this trip, I just hoped that the rumors about racism were not true and that no one thought poorly of me. I addressed the group to say that I didn’t have a problem with anyone and that I hoped no one had a problem with or judged me either. I also said that I would like to get to know everyone better since I wasn’t close with anyone on the trip. When I went to England last summer, I was the only one in the program from Connecticut so I’m no stranger to traveling abroad with people I didn’t know and being used to it, I think I handled everything quite well. Having this discussion made us late to meet our host in Navorongo for our final lecture. We definitely had one of the most engaging lectures up there and I’m happy that we ended on a good note. After the lecture, we traveled all the way up to the border of Burkina Faso. I couldn’t believe we had driven across the whole country. When we were told in class that we would be, I didn’t believe it. Even as we were traveling I didn’t believe it looking at the map until we finally did. We would have a long ride back, but we were making stops along the way. We stopped for lunch at the most rural place we would eat at on the trip. It was over one hundred degrees when we got to the restaurant and there was lots of livestock outside, including guinea fowl, a type of bird I had never seen before. I was a bit shocked to discover a few less animals outside from when we had entered, though by the looks of out lunch, it was very fresh. The “chicken” was very gamey and was most likely the guinea fowl. After lunch, we went to Paga to
see the tame crocodiles. I thought it would be more of a tourist place, but it was basically just a lake full of crocodiles. It was one of the coolest things we did, petting the crocodiles. It was kind of scary too though because they walk really fast and there was a few times that we had to get the attention of the workers that the crocs were heading toward us pretty fast. There were other wild animals there too, like goats and donkeys. We went to dinner and stayed at a hotel in Navorongo that was pretty nice. This was only day one of our most daring adventures and I couldn’t wait to go to Mole Park the next day. It was what I was looking forward to most on the trip and there was some concern about the bus actually being able to make it there since the road is unpaved and tough on the shocks. I was happy to hear that we would definitely be going and it felt good to be heading back to the South soon. I missed my house family and I had almost run out of clean clothes. Today was much more comfortable. It seemed as though the incident in Tamale had blown over and that everyone had really listened to each other’s comments and taken them to heart. We seemed much more unified which was a huge relief.

**June 3rd**: Day Nine- Today we begin our journey back to the South. We are stopping at Mole Park for a walking safari and I can’t wait. This bus ride was the longest of all. We spent four hours on the bumpiest road I had ever been on. It was nerve-wracking. I was afraid that we wouldn’t make it because halfway down the road we were discussing whether or not we should continue or turn back. Fortunately, we decided to continue. If we were to turn back, I would have been very upset because this is what I was looking forward to most on the trip. Whenever I would tell someone I was going to Africa, they would ask if I was going on a safari. I made a lot of people jealous by saying that I was. We got to Mole a lot later than we had anticipated and had lunch a few miles from the Park hotel. It was really good food for a change and it was cool to see some villages along the road. People lived in the most remote areas, it was very different
from what I was used to and it was interesting to experience. We got to the hotel at night and went swimming. I was so happy to be back in a pool. The dinner there was pretty good as well. It is a tourist place and so they have a lot of typical Western foods, though they don’t taste the same as they do in the West. The soda, however, tasted just like the soda back home and was really good. After dinner, we all hung out before bed for a little while. We had to get up really early if we were going to see all the animals.

**June 4th: Day Ten** - We were going on the safari today! I was so excited until we got there and I had to rent these gross stinky boots because I forgot my sneakers in the South. I got blisters immediately. It was worth it though because after about five minutes I had seen green monkeys, baboons, and warthogs. We followed the guide down to the watering hole in pursuit of the elephants, stopping to look at antelopes and various things along the way. We caught up with the elephants just as they had finished bathing and we got to see them eat. It was the most amazing thing I had ever seen, and we were only a couple yards away from these real live wild animals. The view of the park was also amazing. This was definitely the best part of the trip and totally worth all the bruises on my back from the bumpy ride. One group even saw a cobra on the safari. After the safari, we began the long ride back to the main road. It actually was a lot shorter than the way there and we were all so relieved to be back on the paved road, but we still had quite a journey ahead of us. We were heading to Kumasi and it would take us all day to get there. Another day was spent entirely on the road, but it still didn’t bother me. In my experiences traveling abroad, I’ve learned that a good majority of what you experience is what you see along the way. I liked being on the road, but I was looking forward to going to our homes and being in one place again. I had run out of clean clothes and sleeping on the bus had given me a stiff neck. We arrived in Kumasi so late that we ended up having to spend the night unexpectedly. I was
anxious to get home, but I was also tired. The hotel we stayed in wasn’t the nicest, but it was fun because everyone came down to our room to hang out before bed. Once again, we were getting up early to travel back down south.

June 5th: Day 11- Today was supposed to be our day of rest, and we all very much needed it. Because we had been running behind schedule, we had to forgo our day of rest which upset a lot of people, but we still had a lot of driving to do before we got back to Cape Coast. We drove all day and reached a small village near Cape Coast called Kormantse. We were welcomed by the entire village and it reminded me of when we went to the mosque up north and the whole village came out to welcome us on the way to Mole Park. There was a huge celebration and we presented books to the school there. The children did dances and read poems and plays. Then the adults made us dance with them. I am still not used to having attention and dancing, but I began to loosen up and have fun. We didn’t realize how long the ceremony was going to be and it was kind of frustrating because we hadn’t eaten all day and we were starving, not to mention extremely overtired. We got back to the University for dinner and went back to our homes that night. I was exhausted and it felt really good to be home. We were supposed to go to the West on Saturday, but we decided to skip it and take it easy. We had been doing so much traveling and everyone was worn out. We all needed a good night’s sleep in a real bed and a decent shower. Reece and I stayed up to show our family our pictures and talk about our journey to the North. Auntie Christie had never been there and she enjoyed our photos and stories.

June 6th: Day Twelve- Today we were going to be able to sleep in and go shopping. We went back to the Cape Coast Castle and I was able to finish getting my souvenirs. We had dinner at the Castle Restaurant and I ordered a special pizza with spaghetti on it, but when I got it, there were onions and tuna fish on it too! It was definitely interesting but it tasted okay. I called my
parents and actually got to talk to them for a decent amount of time, which was a first. We had all contributed to buying minutes for a group phone, but some people were taking advantage of it to call their friends and abusing the privilege while others were barely getting to talk to their parents. Not to mention, the service in the North was terrible and if I tried calling home, my parents couldn’t hear me and so I was worried that they were worried about me. I gave them a brief summary of the trip and finalized plans for New York where they would pick me up in just a few days. I started making a list of all the food I wanted to eat when I got back and when I returned to Auntie Christie’s, I made an appointment to have my hair braided on Monday. Everything was finally coming together and it felt like the trip was coming to a close. Tomorrow we are going on the canopy walk and to Coconut Grove. I can’t wait to relax and do the last exciting/tourist event of the trip.

**June 7th: Day Thirteen-** This morning we had to get up early once again and for one of the last times. We were going on the canopy walk! This was one of the first things I heard about on the trip and I had been looking forward to it ever since I signed on to do the trip in the winter. We walked through the jungle and had to climb a steep hill for a long time to reach the canopy walk. I was one of the last people to go because I wanted to take my time and take lots of pictures and enjoy the scenery. The bridge was more stable than I thought at first and there were a few stops along the way. In the middle the bridge was wobbly and kind of scary, but I didn’t feel like we were that far up because the trees were right below us and seemed to form like a bed below us. We heard some monkeys, but we weren’t able to see any animals along the walk. Some people were being loud and I understand that they might’ve been scared, but I think they scared the animals away. After we got off the bridge I still felt like I was swaying back and forth when we were climbing back down. We saw lots of crazy bugs and did some more shopping.
while we waited for our breakfast at the park. On our way to Coconut Grove, we bought some palm wine. I wanted to bring it home for my friends and family. I went swimming as soon as we got to Coconut Grove. We also played volleyball and saw some pictures of Will Smith from when he filmed Ali there. That was cool because I didn’t know parts of that movie were shot there. I took a nap and ate the best meal of the trip, fish and chips. It was so nice to have a few hours of relaxation, but we had to go back to the University for dinner with all our families to sum up the trip and show our appreciation. We all talked about how much we enjoyed staying with them and how we would’ve liked to spend more time with them. In the middle of dinner, one of the palm wine bottles exploded. I guess palm wine ferments so quickly that it has a very short shelf life and so we all drank ours before it went bad. We went home early and got some rest and did some packing. As much as I enjoyed my stay in Ghana, I was very anxious to go home.

June 8th: Day Fourteen- This morning was our last trip to the University. It wasn’t until later in the morning so that we would get a chance to sleep in, but I got up to get my hair done. It was braided at the top and twisted at the bottom. It was really cheap and it only took two and a half hours. It didn’t hurt and it was very different from other hairstyles I’ve seen, so I knew when I went home with it, people would know I had traveled some place really unique. We met with the director to discuss and evaluate the program. She seemed surprised by some of our comments but we were glad for the chance to be honest about the experience and to hear some explanations of why things happened the way they did. We filled out a written survey of the tour and went to the student center for lunch after our final book donation at the University library. Despite the misunderstanding over the University rules regarding driving and using the bus last Saturday, when we tipped the driver to go back to Elmina at night, and having to walk one day because the
bus was so late, I had a good time at the University. After lunch, we got to split up and go shopping. Some students unfairly took a cab with our bus driver while others were left out and had to pay for our cab. That really made me angry, but I tried to enjoy myself because soon we would be gone. We went back to Coconut Grove that night for dinner and to hang out and got home to finish packing and to say goodbye to our house families. We were leaving for Accra early in the morning. I wished that we had more time to spend at Coconut Grove that day in the sun, but it was still a good time.

**June 9\(^{th}\): Day Fifteen-** This morning we left for Accra. It was sad saying goodbye to our house family, but we exchanged information so that we could keep in touch. I slept on the bus until we got to the lunch place. The food was okay, but we didn’t have long to eat because we were going to the U.S. Embassy. At the embassy, we were joined by two other schools, the University of Texas at Austin and Yale. Those students were here for a lot longer to do humanitarian work. We heard some embassy employees give job descriptions about life in the Foreign Service and in the volunteer services. The Peace Corps seems much more dangerous than I had anticipated, and I wish we had more time to learn about the different occupations and the ways to get involved in that kind of work. I was proud of my fellow students who asked far more questions than the other universities whom others might consider more prestigious. Little Eastern Connecticut State University which no one probably had heard of certainly held its own and showed that a good deal of the purpose of our whole tour was this trip to the embassy. At this point we were all exhausted, so we dropped off our stuff at the hostel and tried to walk to the mall for dinner. My lock to my hostel room was broken and so I ended up having to convince the staff to let me switch rooms since I couldn’t get in or out of it. When we tried to walk to the mall, we almost died trying to run across the highway dodging traffic. A bunch of us tripped over the
sewer and fell to the ground. When I fell, my shoe dropped into the sewer, but the sewer was dry so I just fished it out. My tolerance for the unsanitary and the unexpected has increased greatly since the start of this trip. When we got to the mall, we went to this ritzy nightclub-style restaurant for dinner. I stopped at a pizza place for the best pizza I had on the trip and basically inhaled my food. The mall was really fun and it was nice to see a more Western element of Accra and Africa. It was a good way to get us ready to go back to America and the things we were used to. We got back kind of late and some people wanted to go back out, but I went to bed. At that point, I just wanted to go back home and the idea of running back across the highway was not appealing to me in my state of exhaustion. I packed all my stuff except what I would need tomorrow and organized my carry-on stuff. I had a lot of room left over even though I thought I bought a lot of souvenirs and I purposely left a lot of room to bring stuff back when I packed to leave for Africa. I went to bed after midnight and got very little sleep because I was so excited to go home that I couldn’t sleep despite how tired I was from getting very little sleep the whole trip.

June 10th: Day Sixteen- This morning I heard my classmates coming in and I thought the hostel had forgotten to call and wake me up so I got up about an hour early. All we had to take to the airport was the University van, so we were going to have to go to the airport in shifts. I went in the first shift. We got to the airport and checked our bags in and went to this little café for breakfast while we waited for the second group to get there. Once they arrived, we had to go straight through security to the terminal. The set-up of the airport was so different from American and even European airports and it was much smaller than most airports I’ve been to. The security process was less strict than I thought it would be, and we went right through and boarded the plane soon after. The flight wasn’t as full as the flight there had been which surprised me because I thought it would be the other way around. The plane ride home was a lot
longer. Realistically, it was only an hour or so longer, but it felt longer than that. It seemed like we got more food on the way back, but the food on the way there was better. The plane was freezing cold and I had a difficult time staying bundled up in my blanket and trying to read at the same time. I could tell that I was getting a fever, but I knew it was from the temperature on the plane, different food, and lack of sleep I experienced during the trip. I slept more on the way back than on the way there. I maybe slept for an hour and a half on the way there and I slept for nearly half the flight on the way back. We arrived in New York early, and so our gate wasn’t ready yet. We were only supposed to wait for about fifteen minutes, but I think we waited for almost an hour. When we finally got off the plane, it was dinner time and we went right through customs fairly quickly and right to baggage claim. Our bags came out pretty fast as well. Efficiency was a sign that we were finally back in America. My parents met me at the airport to take me out to dinner with my family and to go home. Looking back, the trip was definitely interesting and it would be hard to explain to people who didn’t go or to who don’t know much about Africa, but it was a truly unforgettable experience. Under the right circumstances, I think I would go back, like if I was in a guided group again, but not on my own. It was so different from anything I had ever done before, but it was an amazing time. I am very humbled by the chance to explore such a different culture and I hope that we enriched the lives of the people we met along the way, because they certainly changed my life and the way I view Ghana for the better.