May 26th, 2009 was the day my whole life was changed. At 6:09 pm I departed from Delta Airlines in New York, New York to Ghana, West Africa. My hands and
palms are sweating as I’m thinking about the experience while being nervous at the same time. Just arriving on the plane and taking off had my heart pounding due to my fear of planes. Once realizing the altitude reaching 31,002 feet/ 9,447 meters, the plane’s speed of 937 kilometers/h (ground speed), and -39 degrees in the air. During the 9 hour and 17 minute flight I was wondering……….. “What the hell I’m here for?? Why Africa???” I felt a good vibe on being in the air while thinking about the experience. I’m turning a dream of mines into a reality. Also, I’m making a difference for African Americans, residents in the state of Connecticut, college students, youth around my hometown, Hartford, and my family. I’m studying abroad to not only enjoy the fact being there but to bring back another perspective of the continent and to study Africa while helping out the homeless in regions around Africa.

Once landing in Ghana, I just felt good, I felt comfortable as if I lived there. The Ghanaians treated the professors, my classmates, and me with love. They wanted to carry our bags to our vehicles waiting for our arrival, they was shaking our hands while looking at us in the eyes with a face that was priceless. Even though some of the Ghanaians treated us that way for money, I noticed some was just being themselves and just happy to see Americans which they call us their “brothers and sisters”.

Eastern Connecticut State University, Delaware State, collaborated with the University of Cape Coast on organizing an international study program for two weeks to Africa to study culture, science and sustainable development in Africa. The University of Cape Coast has articulated a view of a realistic, credible and attractive future for itself; a target that inspires all stakeholders to maximum effort in bridging the gap between their current reality and their desired future. The University constantly seeks alternative ways
to respond to changing needs. The institution continues to expand its existing highly qualified Faculty and Administrative staff, by offering a conductive environment that motivates them to position the University to respond effectively to the development needs of a changing world.

Ghana is situated in West Africa and is a rectangular-shaped country bordered to the north by Burkina Faso, the east by Togo, the south by the Atlantic Ocean and the west by Côte d’Ivoire. A narrow grassy plain stretches inland from the coast, widening in the east, while the south and west are covered by dense rainforest. To the north are forested hills, beyond which is dry savannah and open woodland. In the far north is a plateau averaging 500m (1,600ft) in height. In the east the Akuapim Togo hills run inland from the coast along the Togo border. The Black and White Volta rivers enter Ghana from Burkina Faso, merging into the largest man-made lake in the world, Lake Volta. Ghana’s coastline is dotted with sandy palm-fringed beaches and lagoons.

The University of Cape Coast (UCC) was inaugurated on December 15, 1962 as a University College and placed in a special relationship with the University of Ghana. Students are offered a wide variety of undergraduate and graduate academic programs and majors at University of Cape Coast. The University main major that was provided was teaching education, also other majors are faculty of Science, Sociology, Medical, Social Science, Law and Business. From an initial intake of 155 students in 1962, the University now boasts of a student population of about 17,000 regular students, 4,000 sandwich (summer) students and 20,000 distant learners. Students who attend the university from other regions around the continent. They have produced over 30,000
highly trained graduates in several fields. Our products are found in all socio-economic and political sectors in and outside Ghana.

University of Cape Coast was established out of a dire need for highly qualified and skilled manpower that would, in turn, train and develop the nation’s human capital. Thus, it was established to train graduates teachers for second cycle institutions, teacher training colleges and technical institutions - a mission the two Universities existing at the time were ill-equipped to fulfill. The University was also given the mandate “to serve the needs of the whole country” and “to play a unique role in national development by identifying national needs and addressing them.”

During our stay in Ghana, we had the opportunity to present the current Vice-Chancellor (VC), Professor (Mrs.) Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang with a plague and take a picture. Vice-Chancellor is the academic and administrative head and chief disciplinary officer of the university. S/he is responsible to the University Council for maintaining and promoting the good order and efficiency of the university:
Our lectures on a weekly basis help us as students go through the two weeks in Ghana knowing a lot of important information. Other than lectures and being active on community service, we had relaxation days where we spent them at Elmina Beach Resort, located in the heart of the historic Central Region, Elmina Beach Resort is just a few kilometers from famous World Heritage sites such as Elmina Castle, Cape Coast Castle, and Fort St. Jago. A 30-minute drive rewards you with the unique Kakum National Park featuring the famous Canopy Walkway.
Where us as students enjoy by eating at Homowo Restaurant, where it offers scenic views of the Atlantic Ocean, the finest in Ghanaian dishes, tropical fruits, and seafood served with continental flavour. Further, Damba Bar, with its open terrace, the Damba Bar offers a unique ocean view and natural breeze. Come and experience our open grill food, assorted wines and cocktails with music soothing to the ears. Furthermore, Ngwa Bar & Night club, where you can enjoy the party with its lively night club ambiance. Provides an up beat atmosphere for a fantastic evening at the hottest spot in the Central Region. We only had a little bit of time to enjoy those moments so we as one made the best of it.

One moment that I will never forget in when we traveled in Ghana is when we were visiting the crocodile’s pond. I was so nervous on the way there, however, I love being a dare devil in moments like those. Once we arrived there I just recently found that in that little pond we was staring at laid about 188 crocodiles and the elder was about 103 years old. It was a bit exciting watching the people in charge feeding the crocs live baby chickens however it was really crazy when I seen Ryan decide to slowly walk around the croc and take a picture on top of the crocodile.

Once Ryan decided to take a picture, we all were shocked but happy he did it. By Ryan doing that it convinced the whole entire group to be brave and to put our fears aside by taking a picture also. It was fun but I was very nervous when I took my picture, I was trying to be patient when everybody was taking pictures with their cameras but they took to long:
Once signing up for the international studies course, my first thought was that I
was going to get homesick and will want to go home the next day. I can honestly say that
I didn’t want to leave Africa after two weeks; I would like to stay at least an extra week
or two. I learned a lot about Africa, from the regions to the environments in my
surroundings. I noticed how us Americans have more opportunities to achieve and go
farther in life than the Ghanaians. Both continents have money, however, Africa lack power and leadership.

I personally feel that Ghana has a bright future ahead of them if someone decides to lead. Also, Africa has a lot of people living there with a future ahead just not giving the opportunity the want, however, they never complains about what they have or don’t have which I love about them. I can say that The Ghanaians help me better myself overall and be grateful of what I have and the position I have by getting the chance to receive my degree in college.

It hurts knowing that when I visit villages in Ghana, youth hardly asked me about having clothes…all they wanted was school supplies such as: pencils, pens, notebooks, and markers. That was the most difficult moment I ever been through in my life so far due to the fact that I wanted to provide those materials for them, however, I didn’t have any with me at the time. I plan to start a project with my fellow classmate, Wiley Dawson Jr., on providing those materials for the students in Ghana. Once we expand, we can focus on providing for every single region in Africa by taking everything one step at a time.
This picture shows the group showing some interaction with youth in a community in Ghana:

In that picture we were in the process of visiting one of the most important sites in Ghana, the youth was heart-warming in many ways. I can say that I was actually comfortable having a whole conversation with all of them, no matter what age or nothing, the only thing that bothered me was the heat at the time. I can say that was the hottest day out of the entire two weeks, I swear if I had to take a guess about that heat that day, I would say…..about 106 at least. I was drenched, we already came off a long ride from Cape Coast to our destination, which was about 10 hours, and us being hot was very uncomfortable. Even though the heat was a factor for us throughout the trip, we got use to the heat day by day that went by.
Getting the opportunity to travel to Africa was a big step in life right now, Dr. Canterbury was right it changed my life FOREVER…Africa turn me into a changed man. I’m more focused on my goal getting my degree, improving in my academics because that should be my number one priority, giving back to my family and my people. I came back to the United States with a clear mind; I did a lot of thinking while I was in Africa and leaving all my problems behind. I realized that I have a bright future ahead of myself; I need to stay focus and stop worrying about what I don’t have. There are others who wish they were in the situation I’m in with the opportunity to graduate college. So all the complaining will not benefit me in the future, I will turn all my issues and turn them in positive, be thankful for what the things that are provided for me and to make good use of them.

I would like to thank you Dr. Canterbury for the wonderful experience to travel to Ghana, by giving the chance by overriding me into the class having faith in me. I hope throughout the trip, I never gave you the thought that you made a mistake of recruiting me for the course. I know that you learned a lot me on this trip that you never knew before, and I learned a lot about you. No matter what occurred on the trip, good or bad, you always had the positive attitude to make your students more comfortable for the trip, and I respect you more for that.