

Off-Campus Study Student Profile

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Sociology (Africana Studies minor)

SIT: Culture, Development, & Social Justice - Fortaleza, Brazil



Program Highlights

- Working with different types of community organizations in Fortaleza
- Overnight stays in communities outside the city
- Excursions to Recife, Pernambuco and Salvador, Bahia
- Independent research project during last month of program

Why did you choose your program and location in particular?

I've always been drawn to Latin America, and have spent a considerable amount of time in Central America. I wanted to extend my experience to Brazil, which has such a dynamic multicultural makeup, and I wanted to learn Portuguese. Northeast Brazil is particularly distinctive from the rest of the country, for it is the cradle of Afro-Brazilian history and culture. In terms of my studies in Sociology and Africana Studies here at the College, I felt that this would be relevant and would also expand my knowledge on our South American counterpart.

How did your experience fit into your academic major and your Wooster education?

As a Sociology and Africana Studies student, Northeast Brazil provided a real intersection of indigenous and Afro-Brazilian perspectives within the context of Latin American culture. I also had the opportunity to examine the Music within the context of my studies of culture in society, which has really shaped the focus of my Senior I.S.

What unique experience did you have while abroad that contributed to your education?

I had the opportunity to study the music of *Capoeira* in a small community in the outskirts of Fortaleza. I got to know a lot of the kids and their families, and learned a lot about the spirituality and ancestry that is distinct in Afro-Brazilian culture. At the end of my semester, the group held a special *batizado* for me, which is a Capoeira initiation ceremony with roots in ancestral Afro-Brazilian spiritual practice. I've lived abroad before and traveled a fair amount, but this experience in particular was one of the most beautiful things I've had the privilege to be a part of. I'm still in touch with a lot of the friends I made in Fortaleza.

What specific advice would you give to other students preparing for this program and for living in your host country, or studying off-campus in general?

As a student abroad, I often felt a sort of pressure to be taking advantage of every single opportunity and do everything I possibly could. You don't need to do that! Just follow what excites you, and if you feel like spending some downtime with your host family than doing whatever all the other students are doing, that's okay! My experience was certainly better for it. If you try to do everything, you won't be able to really explore the things that interest you most.

SIT: Culture, Development, & Social Change - Fortaleza, Brazil

This program examines the multifaceted dynamics shaping development patterns in northeastern Brazil, including social, political, and economic forces.