My decision to attend the Global Advocacy study abroad program in South Africa was one of the best I have made. The experience was truly unforgettable. During the five weeks I spent in South Africa, I took intense but fascinating courses, explored Johannesburg and its surrounding areas, and met and learned from African students.

The courses offered by the program are unlike any offered at my home institution in the U.S. not only because they were co-taught by South African professors but also because the subject matter was different. Instead of simply learning the law, I was given the freedom to critique the law and come up with creative solutions. The courses I took allowed me to analyze (1) the effectiveness of the legal writing styles and strategies adopted by U.S. and South African courts; (2) various theories for establishing legal legitimacy in a country with a relatively new Constitution; and (3) methods for holding corporations responsible for human rights violations despite their inexistence in contemporary international law. In addition, I was taught by professors from extraordinary backgrounds: a former employee of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the principal defender of Charles Taylor in the Special Court of Sierra Leone, and some of the top legal scholars in South Africa.

Beyond the classroom, the program included scheduled field trips and talks that provided a historical background of South Africa as well as a firsthand look at current issues. While some trips were more meaningful than others, highlights included: lunch with the first Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, a trip to the Apartheid Museum, a mini safari in Pilanesberg, and a visit to a refugee camp to serve dinner and talk to victims of recent xenophobic attacks. Overall, I found the professors very flexible and understanding of deadlines so as to accommodate such important experiences.

Sharing classes and, in some cases, residences with students from South Africa, Botswana, and Kenya made my experience more significant and memorable. Socializing on the weekends and discussing course topics and current events with other students exposed me to cultural differences that challenged my perceptions.

I highly recommend this program to anyone who is interested but I would suggest going with an open mind and making the most of what is before you. Expect to work hard and absorb a lot!

Micol Sirkin
2L at Seattle University School of Law