South Africa: Social and Political Transformation
Spring 2016

General Information
Given the historic events in South Africa over the last 20 years, this is an exciting time to be in the country, witnessing history as the country continues to strive toward facilitating reconciliation and development. In 20 years, South Africa has made great strides in righting the wrongs of an unjust system, but it has much further to go. Jacob Zuma is South Africa’s fourth post-apartheid President and his presidency is proving to be an interesting and tumultuous one. The ‘new’ government of South Africa has a monumental task confronting the massive inequalities inherited from the apartheid era as well as in trying to match a progressive national constitution with a population much more conservative in political and social outlook. It also has to deliver basic services to all communities, find the resources needed to fight the AIDS epidemic, grapple with crime and societal violence, and work through a still uneasy racial divide.

Your program will be based in Durban, which is located in KwaZulu-Natal, one of the nine provinces of South Africa. It is a large, modern city with a population of three to four million people. The most commonly spoken languages are Zulu and English. To put its size into perspective, Seattle-Tacoma has a population of about 3.4 million, Miami-Fort Lauderdale 3.6 million, Atlanta 3.7 million, and Houston 4.4 million.

Durban has a warm, often very humid climate and many South Africans vacation in the city during South Africa’s winter. In Durban, winter months are warm and mild. It also has a significant Indian population with a distinct cultural presence. It was the banning of Indians from purchasing land in central Durban in 1922 that was one of the first laws to sow the seeds of the apartheid legislation that was to follow two decades later. Durban was a center of resistance to racism long before the
National Party took over the national government in 1948. Durban and KwaZulu Natal have a rich history of political activity, with contributions by noted activists like Mahatma Gandhi, former ANC Presidents John Dube and Chief Albert Luthuli, and the foundation of organizations such as the Natal Indian Congress and the African National Congress.

Post-apartheid, the province was controlled for ten years (1994-2004) by the Zulu ethno-nationalistic political group, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), but is now under the control of the ANC, creating interesting political dynamics and tensions. Because of its historical development and present conflicts, many organizations and structures have evolved to address the problems facing the province. These issues fall into two broad categories: development and reconciliation. Obviously these are inextricably linked, as, without reconciliation and peace, all development efforts will be fruitless. Given this background, KwaZulu Natal, with Durban as its core city, is an ideal base from which to study the extremely interesting political and developmental issues facing the country.

Climate and Geography
South Africa extends nearly 2000km (1242 miles) from the Limpopo River in the north to Cape Town in the south and nearly 1500km (932 miles) from Port Nolloth in the west to Durban in the east. Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Swaziland run from west to east along South Africa’s northern border and Lesotho is entirely contained within South Africa’s borders. South Africa is the seventh largest African country and twice the size of Texas.

It’s position just south of the Tropic of Capricorn makes South Africa a mostly dry and sunny place, but the climate is moderated by its topography and the surrounding oceans. The further east you go, the more useful your raingear becomes, but there are also damp pockets in the southwest, particularly around Cape Town. At 56 feet above sea level, Cape Town has a climate similar to that of California. The coast north from the Cape becomes progressively drier and hotter, culminating in the desert region just south of Namibia. Along the southern coast the weather is temperate, but due to the Agulhas current, the east coast becomes increasingly tropical the further north you go. The northeastern hump gets very hot, and there are spectacular storms here during the summer. In the winter, the days are sunny and warm. Durban’s summers are warm and humid; winters are milder. The average annual rainfall is about 484 millimeters. It can get very hot and humid, with risk of sunburn and/or dehydration.

Average Durban maximum and minimum temperatures in Fahrenheit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>81-69</td>
<td>81-68</td>
<td>78-64</td>
<td>76-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep</td>
<td>74-59</td>
<td>75-62</td>
<td>77-65</td>
<td>79-67</td>
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</tbody>
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Diet
Participating in the local food culture is a central aspect of daily life in South Africa. You should be willing to try the local cuisine and share in your host family’s mealtimes. Special or restricted diets may not be fully understood by your host family although they may have previously hosted a student with similar dietary restrictions. By trying to replicate your diet at home you will miss out on an important part of your host culture.

During your homestays, expect to eat some form of starch (cornmeal is the local staple, but most families eat rice and bread as well), and a meat-based stew or curry. Additionally, please note that in the cities of South Africa, water is normally clean and potable out of the taps.
South Africans are great meat eaters, and the concept of vegetarianism or veganism is little known to many of the people living in the areas we will be visiting. As serving meat is thought to be a sign of hospitality and respect in South Africa, many of the vegetarian and vegan foods available in the U.S. are not available in South Africa, or may be extremely expensive. While you will not be expected to eat meat in the homestay or on excursions if you would rather not (this may require discussion with your host families), students with specific diets should not expect host families or program staff to purchase expensive items to cater to your individual needs. You will need to be flexible and sensitive on such matters when interacting with South Africans.

We do have a fridge at the program centre and you are welcome to stock up on fruits, vegetables, and yogurt during the day. Vegetarian students are also advised to bring or purchase locally a small supply of protein bars to supplement your diet and to make sure you get the necessary daily protein requirements. Students wishing to follow a Kosher or Halaal diet generally have success if they switch to a vegetarian diet for the duration of the program.

Note: if you have special dietary needs, including allergies, please inform our office prior to the start of your program. We will advise you on realistic expectations about avoiding or incorporating certain foods within the program context. In some locations, we cannot guarantee zero exposure to certain foods or a given allergen.

**Homestays**

As many SIT Study Abroad alumni will tell you, the homestay experience can be one of the most rewarding and most challenging aspects of the program. You will learn firsthand the joys and responsibilities of being a guest, a family member, and a friend. You will also have the opportunity to share your culture and to learn from another’s culture. We hope you will come prepared for the experience and committed to moving beyond cultural immersion as you begin to question, distinguish, and analyze the host culture vis-à-vis your own culture and come to a deeper understanding of both. Family structures vary in every culture, and SIT Study Abroad values the diversity of homestay families. For example, your family may include a single mother of two small children or a large extended family with many people coming and going all the time. They may be quite familiar with your hometown or with international students, or your homestay family may not know much about where you’re home area. Additionally, please bear in mind that, in many countries, the idea of what constitutes a “home” (i.e., the physical nature of the house) may be different from what you expect. You will need to be prepared to adapt to a new life with a new diet, a new schedule, new people, and possibly new priorities and expectations.

Each program’s homestay coordinator will be responsible for placing students in homestays. These placements are made first based on health concerns, including any allergies or dietary needs, to the extent possible. **Please note: SIT will not have information about your homestay family before you depart for the program.**

You will have three homestays in this program. Your first homestay will be with Zulu-speaking families in Cato Manor, a township about 10km from the centre of the city. Each student will have his/her own family but...
will be within a few hundred yards of other students and within a mile of the whole group, as the program staff select families from one neighborhood. All houses will have cell phone reception, flush toilets, and electricity, and they are constructed of cinder brick. The Cato Manor homestay will be approximately four to five weeks in duration.

**You will have three homestays: Cato Manor, Amacambini, and Newlands.**

Your second homestay will be in the rural area of Amacambini, about 100km north of Durban. Students will be placed in pairs, usually within walking distance of at least one other pair of students. Conditions in the homestay will be basic, with some marked differentiation between households. Most households will have electricity and piped water but outside toilets and no television. Some will be a combination of traditional structures made from mud and thatch and usually a cement-block house as well. Students will be walking a great deal during the rural homestay, and will be bathing in their homestays via a bucket of warmed water and washcloth. This homestay will last about eight nights.

Your third homestay will be with English speaking families in Newlands East and Newlands West—you will experience one of these areas. Newlands East and West are located about 15km from the SIT offices. Newlands East is a Colored township, while Newlands West is an Indian township. All houses will have cell phone reception, flush toilets, and electricity, and they are constructed of cinder brick. This Newlands East and West homestay will be approximately eight nights in duration.

**Other Accommodations**

Other accommodations are at backpacker hostels. These are usually situated in town or in suburbs and provide dormitory-type accommodation. They have showers, flush toilets, and electricity. Showers in backpacker hostels are shared; students can expect to share bathroom facilities with all SIT students of their gender in addition to other same gender guests residing at the respective hostels.

During ISP, students stay in a variety of settings, depending on need and preference. Some stay in apartments with other students, some stay at backpacker dormitories, and some choose to stay with a homestay family. Please note that self-catering apartments sometimes require a deposit, which is the student’s responsibility. If you feel you may want to stay in an apartment setting with other students, bring approximately an extra US$300 to specifically use for this purpose. If all goes well, much of the deposit should be refundable at the end of your stay (different landlords will have different policies).

**Local Customs**

South Africa is one of the most multicultural countries in the world, it has eleven official languages and as many different ethnic groups particularly in urban areas. It is difficult to generalize on South African etiquettes and culture due to the diversity, however, here are a few things to keep in mind.

**Cultural Dos**

- **Be polite**—Greet people when you meet them, Greetings are leisurely and include time for social discussion and exchanging pleasantries. Thank people when they do something for you and say goodbye when you or someone else leaves. **Clean up after yourself**—you are expected to clean after yourself in your home stay, in the classroom, in hotel rooms. **Be on time** to class and meetings. **Respect** others, regardless of their viewpoint and respect yourself. **Dress conservatively**—especially when meeting someone for the first time.
**Gift giving is important** and wrapping your gifts shows extra effort. **Offer to help** and be prepared to receive help that is offered.

**Cultural Don'ts**
Do not smell food at the dinner table. Do not smoke indoors. Do not bring alcohol into the homestay, hotel or lodge or classroom. Do not use laptops in class without the permission of the lecturer.

**Transportation**
The program has the use of a minibus for daily shuttles between homestays and the program center. The commute from Cato Manor to our classroom takes about 10-15 minutes. For excursions and day trips, the program uses an additional 10-seat vehicle. The longest drive during the program is from Johannesburg to Durban, which takes seven hours. There is also a lengthy trip, during orientation, from Johannesburg to Mozambique.

**Money**
In addition to tuition, SIT Study Abroad program fees cover room and board throughout the program. When room and/or board are not taken with the group, students will be given a stipend to cover related expenses. SIT will cover daily commuting costs, if any, and excursions that are part of the normal program itinerary. Daily commuting costs will be determined by the program. During the ISP period, students will receive a stipend for basic room and board only, based on the cost of living at the program base. Any domestic travel, interpretation services, or supplies necessary for the ISP are the students’ responsibility. Please plan accordingly.

It is advisable to bring your funds in various forms so that if there is a problem with one option you will still have access to money. The local currency is the South African rand. The exchange rate usually stands at approximately R10 = US$1. ATMs are widely available in cities. Be sure to know your PIN from your bank in the U.S. Try to get insurance in case your ATM card is lost and your PIN has been observed. Some students in the past have had their cards lost or stolen, so **do get insurance and be careful at ATMs**. You can use your credit card for purchases in stores, but not in rural areas.

Cash is used for most daily transactions and the use of checks, traveler’s checks, and credit/debit cards for **direct purchases** is rare. A VISA or MasterCard credit card (not American Express or Diner’s Club) can be useful for emergencies, medical or otherwise. A money belt large enough to hold your passport and traveler’s checks is useful.

If using a debit and/or credit card, you should contact your bank and/or credit card companies regarding your travel plans. This is very important; if you don’t inform these companies that you will be away, when they see charges from another country, they will often assume that the card has been lost or stolen and will put an immediate hold on the card. You should also check on costs of withdrawal, as these costs vary and can sometimes be very expensive. Renewing and receiving reissued credit and debit cards while on the program will be an expensive and highly inconvenient process. Before you leave for your program, please check the expiration dates on your cards to ensure that they will not expire while you are abroad. If they will expire while you are overseas, please contact your bank and/or credit card companies for early renewal. It is also very important that you make photocopies of all your debit/credit card information and leave them with someone you trust just in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen.

Following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for textbooks, ISP-related expenses, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Figures are based on recent student evaluations, though individual spending habits vary widely and these costs are averages.

A suggested total amount of money to budget ranges from **US$850-US$1400**. To determine where you might fall in this range, please examine your spending habits during a typical semester at your home school and consider any exceptional expenditures you may
have on the program, including travel costs for your
planned ISP or a specific personal expense.

Check current exchange rates:
http://www.oanda.com/currency/convert/

Please budget approximately:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal spending (from past student suggestions):</th>
<th>$500-$700</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique visa</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books, printing, supplies:</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up-front medical costs:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottled water:</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical Internet café usage:</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential ISP/Practicum travel expenses:</td>
<td>$100-$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated total of personal and other expenses:</td>
<td>$950-1500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Communication**

While you may want to be in regular communication
with friends and family from home during the term
abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones,
unreliable phone lines, and changing program activities
can complicate communication. We have a few
suggestions regarding communication during the term,
based upon our experience.

It’s important to be clear with family and friends about
your availability during the term. Many students
recommend making an appointment to call home or to
receive a call, thereby avoiding frustration and making
connections more meaningful. You should also consider
the impact of constant communication with friends and
family at home on your cultural immersion. While you
are encouraged to share with those close to you and
use them for support whenever necessary, it is also
important to remember that you are on the program
for just one term, and that you get out of the program
what you put into it.

**You will be able to buy a cell phone in South Africa. You may want to bring your laptop with you from the US.**

**Phones and Email**

When you arrive in South Africa, it may not be possible
for you to contact your family right away to let them
know that you have arrived safely. You will also likely
NOT have email contact until day five of the program,
so be prepared for this and prepare your family and
friends. If desired, parents can contact SIT in Vermont to confirm
that you landed safely. Please allow
enough time for us to help you get
settled and then send a message to
SIT in Vermont confirming your
arrival. The SIT Program Center has
limited internet access for email and
research purposes during office hours. Wireless
internet is available, but please note that due to
bandwidth restrictions many programs and download
sites are not available on our network. Internet access
is widely available at Internet cafés in and around
Durban.

Students have limited access to the
web for email and research purposes
at the program office. Internet cafés
are widely available.

All students are required to have a working cell phone
while on SIT Study Abroad programs. This policy is
part of our commitment to student safety and will
facilitate communication in case of an emergency. It is
the responsibility of the student to ensure that they are
reachable by phone at all times. This means keeping the
phone charged and stocked with airtime/minutes as well
as notifying staff of, and replacing, lost or stolen phones.
Please note that students who do not comply with this
policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

AT&T and MCI services are available. U.S. toll free
numbers can be dialed from South Africa but at normal
international rates. Public phones and places to send
faxes are plentiful. As previously mentioned, it is also
possible, if you so choose, to buy a cell phone and pre-
paid minutes once in country (see Money section for
costs). Local cell phone calls cost about US$0.25 a
minute, while landline calls with phone cards will cost
about half that. We strongly recommend this to
students whose parents or close friends are inclined to
want to keep in touch, but advise that it can be very
costly to make international calls. Cell phones are
especially useful if you decide to do your ISP in a more
rural area. Please keep in mind time zone differences
throughout the semester.

Please bear in mind that a basic cell phone with simple
call and text messaging is the best option for all
programs. Expensive or flashy phones (including
iPhones) are not recommended as these may attract
unwanted attention in some economically depressed areas.
Mailings
Throughout the semester, posted letters should be sent to the following address:

Student Name
C/o School for International Training
Postnet Suite 151
Private Bag X04
Dalbridge 4014
SOUTH AFRICA

Sending and receiving packages is another matter, however. Unlike receiving a package here in the US, receiving a package at your program site is usually expensive and problematic. Customs agents must inspect all packages and you, as the recipient, are responsible for duty and storage fees. In addition, there are cases of items being lost in the mail or taking so long to reach the recipient (due to customs delays) that the recipient is nearly back in the US by the time the items are received.

For these reasons, unless it is an emergency, sending packages should be done on a needs basis. Additionally, sending valuables is highly discouraged (this certainly includes laptops!). For this reason, make sure you bring your laptop with you on the plane if you think you’ll want it in country). If you will be celebrating a birthday during the program, please inform parents, grandparents, significant others, and anyone else who might think of sending you packages, of the above.

For this program, DHL services are available in country. Reliance on the U.S. Postal Service is not advised; while they may send packages for a cheaper price, timeliness and reliability have been more inconsistent than with the preferred express mailing agencies. When given the option, it’s always a good idea to send packages certified and with a number that allows the sender to track the package.

If it is necessary to mail packages, it should be sent to the following address:

Student Name
C/o School for International Training
Postnet Suite 151
Private Bag X04
Dalbridge 4014
SOUTH AFRICA

Visitors and Free Time
Parents or friends may wish to visit students while they are abroad. This can be a wonderful experience; however, SIT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors to students during the term, due to the rigorous nature of the programs and the disruption that such visits cause in program flow and group dynamics. Students should be sure that relatives and friends are aware of this policy and that visits are scheduled for dates after the formal conclusion of the program. Students will not be excused from program components to attend to visitors. Please note that any visitors during the course of the program must plan their own independent accommodations; SIT Study Abroad homestay families can accommodate only their assigned student and, due to cultural and contractual understandings with SIT, should not be asked to host students’ guests.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes and field-based learning assignments, even during the ISP. Free time for pursuing an independent interest or hobby during the program will be limited. Your admissions counselor can advise you about particular interests you may have. For example, if you must keep in shape for your next athletic season, or if you play a musical instrument and want to know whether to bring it, we can help you to understand your schedule and any concerns or limitations that may exist. Please note that you will not have a long break during the program, such as Thanksgiving or Spring Break. Students typically have four weeks to conduct research, gather and analyze data, write, and prepare for the ISP presentation. There is a lot to cover, and students find the ISP period a very busy time. For this reason, please plan to use your time wisely.

Students are not allowed to make any independent trips outside of South Africa at any time during the program.

Alumni Mentor
If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor or ask an alumni mentor:
http://studyabroad.sit.edu/pn/admitted-students/contact-a-former-student/