At the beginning of the year, after spending Christmas by myself in Ghana, I begun looking into exchange opportunity via Simon Fraser University the moment I returned to campus. While in Ghana, I did my own research into how the process would go about via the International Program Office in the various universities in Accra (the capital of Ghana). Key information regarding exchange with University of Ghana is that their semesters are five months (from August to December or January to July) thus do not plan according to SFU’s semester format. Furthermore, it is best to apply for your visa the moment one receives the admission letter, the process can be cumbersome but it best to be early than late. In terms of ticket prices, a round trip can range from $1300 to $2500. This all depends on what time one buys their ticket and the month in which it is purchase in relation to your departure. Best time to purchase your ticket is approximately three months before you have to leave- tickets are usually cheaper during this time. For packing, loose and breathable clothes work best for the weather there. It gets really hot very quickly. Hot summer days clothing would work just fine (personally I took a pair of jeans and I did not wear once throughout the trip because it was too hot for them). Also make sure to include items from home that would make you feel comfortable such as pictures, or the Canadian flag. The Ghanaian society is more cash based one but some places such as restaurant in town may take credit cards but be extra cautious in this action as some machine may be taking more information than needed.
During Exchange

In regard to arrival times, it is best to arrive a couple days before school starts as it a large campus and one’s classes may be in different areas. Orientation was held five days before class began. This is mandatory activity as the International Officers take students around the campus and explain different things and norms that are both acceptable and unacceptable. During this time, one can request specific accommodations if possible. The offered accommodation through the school is the International Student Hostels. Both Hostel 1 and 2 offer single or double room living accommodations. In addition to these options, there is also private accommodations on campus. The plus side to this option is that the room are much bigger and more private (it is basically a self-contained apartment). The main down side is you would have to pay more and apply in advance. The private hostel I used is called Ghana Hostel Limited. They are easy to find online. For academic format, lectures are given in person with the professor doing most of the talking. Some classes require full student participation – group and individual presentation are quite common depending on the program one chooses. Grading in the university is on 30% for midterms or assignments and 70% for the final exam.

Ghana is a tropical country thus the weather is quite warm regardless of what time one arrives. Therefore, as previously mentioned it is best to pack summer clothes. That being said some moths have cold morning and nights so a few sweaters bit be helpful, but one could do without. There is plethora of places to visit within the city of Accra. Some popular places are Jamestown, Osu (best at night time but also has some interesting local cafes and restaurants) and last East Legon (this area is 10 minutes away from the school – has various spots for a number of leisure activities and food adventures. There is even a bubble tea café). For these places, I personally recommend visiting on a weekday as there are less people around and it possible to request a tour guide on site for an in-depth explanation about the grounds if needed. Outside of Accra, the different regions offer different experiences. For example, in the Ashanti Region- one can visit the rounds on which the current Ashantihene resides on. Access is
limited to some extended, but requests can be made visit explore more. In the Central Region, especially in the CapeCoast / Elmina area where one explores the castles which were used to facilitate the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Each castle offers visitors with unique experiences that are honestly once-in-lifetime. Furthermore, in the northern part of Ghana, one can see elephants (who reside on a sanctuary for animals) and visit some oldest mosques in West Africa.

Reflection After Exchange

This exchange introduced me to new ways of thinking about how the world works. Especially how the same concepts and ideas can be approached from different paradigms. In the classes I took while on exchange, the professors discussed issues that I have heard from professors in SFU. For example, on the topic of international organizations and their different achievements and failures- the professors in Ghana focus on the different degrees that these organizations have failed us whereas professor in Canada highlighted the practical aspects of these organization. This difference simply showed me how one can really learn about something from two completely different approaches. I personally enjoyed this because it allowed me to see the two perspectives on a number of organizations I had hoped to work with in the future.

One thing I wish I knew before I left is to allow myself to be comfortable with being pushed outside of my comfort zone and what I deemed acceptable culture practice. Living in Canada, I was socialized into believing a certain set of practices within the community that I lived in (being of a member of minority group) that I had forgotten what it felt like to be part of society that the majority of individuals looked like me and spoken the same native language I spoke. I was not prepared to be shaken up by the directness of my fellow classmate and strangers in general. Basically, I should I have been more openminded and not generalized the
social norms have learn over the years. My biggest advice/tip for other students is that they should be prepared to fully immerse themselves in culture which is nothing like they have experienced here and do not take the bluntness and straight-up honest opinions of Ghanaians to heart. It is simply the African way of being real and true to friends and strangers alike. In addition, to this I highly recommend trying all the food.