

Jennica Betsch

3/23/16

After months of impatient waiting, I recently accepted an invitation to be a Peace Corps volunteer in Burkina Faso as a preschool teacher. I'll be working to promote the Let Girls Learn initiative headed by the White House and incorporate gender awareness in education as well as increasing learning opportunities for preschool students.

Burkina Faso is a francophone country, but there are almost seventy languages spoken in total. Since I will be working with preschoolers, their knowledge of French may not be very developed yet, so I will be teaching both in French and the local language. Before I start my position in a village, I will have three months of training in the capital city to get accustomed to the language and culture.

My studies of both French and International Studies certainly helped prepare me to be a Peace Corps volunteer. My knowledge of the French language will help me more easily integrate into my community and build connections with the people I'll be living and working with for the next two years. My francophone studies classes expanded my knowledge of the francophone world outside of France so I am more prepared to face the cultural differences I will soon come across. International Studies is important for any aspiring world traveler; learning how others view the world and interact with major issues facing our society as well as gaining an understanding of how to effectively communicate with people across cultural and linguistic barriers. My year-long study abroad experience in Grenoble, France showed me what I am capable of, proving that life-long connections can be made anywhere.

As my studies are coming to a close, and I am in the midst of writing my senior thesis, my ability to understand French is invaluable as I can more accurately paint a picture of views of francophone speakers. Instead of only including sources in English, I can include the direct opinions and experiences of other cultures which add a well-rounded assessment to my research.

Now that we find ourselves in an ever-shrinking world, language study is increasingly important. The French program at BGSU is set up to teach you more than just the language. Through film and literature from around the world, it gives you the cultural context behind the history of the language that is needed to fully appreciate it. An understanding of the impacts of colonization and the francophone world add so much to the study of the language, preparing you to be a true global citizen in life outside of Bowling Green.