

# **Global South Immersion: US–South Africa Academic 10-Day Exchange Program in Johannesburg, South Africa, 14-24 October, 2026.**

## **Introduction**

In today's interconnected world, students of international relations and global studies must combine classroom learning with lived experience. This 10-day program, hosted by the African Center for the Study of the United States (ACSUS) at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg, offers American university students a unique opportunity to engage with South Africa's political, economic, and cultural dynamics.

Participants will explore themes of African agency, US–South Africa relations, international development, and decolonization through academic lectures, policy dialogues, and cultural immersion. Through a combination of scholarly engagement and visits to key historical and political institutions, students will gain firsthand insight into the complexities of South Africa's role in global affairs.

## **Program Overview**

- **Duration:** 10 days
- **Dates:** 14- 24 October, 2026
- **Cost:** \$3500 (flights excluded)
- **Location:** Johannesburg and Pretoria, South Africa
- **Cohort Size:** 25–30 students
- **Host Institution:** African Center for the Study of the United States (ACSUS) at the University of the Witwatersrand
- **Target Participants:** Undergraduate and graduate students majoring in International Relations, Political Science, Global Studies, International Development, Foreign Policy, and related fields

## **Program Objectives**

1. **Deepen Academic Understanding**  
Provide students with expert lectures on African agency, global trade frameworks such as AGOA, decolonization, and contemporary US–South Africa relations.
2. **Policy Engagement**  
Connect students with South African government representatives, diplomats, and civil society leaders to understand the practice of international relations in context.

### 3. **Cultural Immersion**

Foster appreciation of South Africa's history and society through site visits to key cultural, historical, and political landmarks.

### 4. **Applied Learning**

Encourage students to synthesize academic content and field experiences into comparative reflections on US–Africa engagement.

## **Key Program Components**

### 1. **Academic Lectures and Seminars**

Delivered by Wits IR and Politics departments, guest scholars, and practitioners.

Tentative topics to include:

- African Agency in the International System
- The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and US–Africa Trade Relations
- US–South Africa Relations in a Changing World Order
- Decolonization, Knowledge Production, and Higher Education in Africa
- South Africa's Foreign Policy and Its Role on the Global Stage

### 2. **Policy Dialogues and Institutional Engagement**

- Meeting with officials from the African National Congress (ANC) party and Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) or the Office of the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation
- Visit to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to engage with government and parliamentary representatives
- Roundtable with South African civil society organizations and think tanks

### 3. **Cultural and Historical Excursions**

- Guided tour of the Apartheid Museum
- Visit to Soweto, including Nelson Mandela House and Hector Pieterse Museum
- Engagement with local community leaders in Soweto
- Optional visit to Constitution Hill

### 4. **Reflection and Academic Integration**

- Daily reflection sessions facilitated by program leaders

- Comparative analysis discussions linking US and South African foreign policy priorities
- Closing symposium where students present key insights and policy reflections

## Impact and Outcomes

### Short-Term

- Enhanced understanding of African political dynamics and international partnerships
- Direct exposure to South Africa's policymaking institutions and historical narratives
- Strengthened cross-cultural communication skills

### Long-Term

- Expanded global perspectives for future leaders in international affairs
- Potential for ongoing academic collaboration between US universities and Wits
- Development of a student alumni network for continued dialogue on US–Africa relations

## Logistics and Support

- **Accommodation:** University residences or guest housing near Wits
- **Transportation:** Local transport provided for all scheduled activities
- **Meals:** Included for program events; students responsible for independent meals
- **Safety:** Pre-departure orientation, risk management protocols, and on-site staff support
- **Pre-Program Preparation:** Virtual orientation covering South African history, politics, and cultural etiquette

## Itinerary: 10-Day Academic and Cultural Exchange Program

**Host:** African Center for the Study of the United States - University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Johannesburg

### Day 1: Arrival and Orientation

- Arrival at OR Tambo International Airport, transfer to Wits accommodations
- Welcome briefing and program orientation
- Evening group dinner with Wits faculty and program coordinators

### Day 2: Academic Foundations

- Morning Lecture: *African Agency in the International System* (Wits IR Department)
- Afternoon Seminar: *Decolonization and Knowledge Production in Africa* (Wits Politics Department)

- Guided campus tour of Wits University
- Evening reflection session

### Day 3: Historical Context

- Morning Site Visit: Apartheid Museum (guided tour)
- Afternoon Excursion: Constitution Hill (focus on law, justice, and democracy)
- Group debrief and reflection

### Day 4: Trade and Development

- Morning Lecture: *The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and US–Africa Trade Relations*
- Afternoon Roundtable: *South African economists and trade policy experts*
- Evening: Cultural activity (South African music and dance workshop)

### Day 5: Grassroots Perspectives

- Full-day excursion to Soweto
  - Nelson Mandela House
  - Hector Pieterse Museum
  - Engagement with local community leaders and youth organizations
- Group dinner in Soweto

### Day 6: Policy and Diplomacy

Travel to Pretoria

- Morning Visit: Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) or representative from the Minister’s office- discussion on SA foreign policy
- Afternoon Tour: Union Buildings and surrounding historical landmarks
- Return to Johannesburg

### Day 7: Governance and Policy

- Morning Visit: ANC Headquarters- Lithuli House; discussion with ANC representatives on issues of liberty, justice, and domestic governance
- Free Afternoon

### Day 8: South Africa in Global Affairs

- Morning Lecture: *South Africa’s Role in the African Union and BRICS*

- Afternoon Seminar: *Comparative foreign policy exercise (students debate US and South African approaches to a global issue)*
- Evening: Open time for group research or journaling

### **Day 9: Student Presentations and Closing Symposium**

- Morning preparation time for group presentations
- Afternoon Symposium: Student presentations reflecting on policy insights, cultural learnings, and comparative analysis
- Closing remarks from Wits faculty
- Farewell dinner with guests and community partners

### **Day 10: Departure**

- Departures from OR Tambo International Airport