



2024-2025

Experience-Centered Seminars
Course Information

March 3-21, 2025

Placement Criteria and Seminar Descriptions

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Placement Criteria	3
Habitat	6
Space Exploration - STEM	8
Studio Glass - A New American Art Form	9
Tall Ships	11
Senegal	12

Placement Criteria

As you consider which seminar your student is interested in, it's important to remember that ECSs are academic classes. They are experiential learning opportunities with an educational foundation. With that in mind, Upper School students will select three ECSs that they would enjoy participating in. This is not a rank order selection process. It is our hope that students will submit their three options based on the alignment between their personal passion(s), intrigue, or value system, and the topic that each ECS will explore. Upper School faculty and administration will place students in one of their three Seminar choices, weighing a variety of factors including (in no particular order):

- Grade Level
- Academics
- Extracurricular interests
- Past ECS experiences
- Behavior at school
- Group dynamics of each trip
- Size limitations of each trip (transportation, sleeping arrangements)
- Demands of the ECS (e.g. physical demands, time commitments)
- Student input

Our goal is to create the best educational opportunity for every student, on every Seminar.

Before submitting the ECS Preference Form, which will be sent out on Wednesday, May 8th and due back on Wednesday, May 22nd, please note the following points.

1. Graduation from CSS is contingent upon each student completing and passing an ECS for each year of attendance in the Upper School division. An ECS is equivalent to one (1) Carnegie unit of instruction (defined as 120 hours of contact time with an instructor). As such, each ECS is recorded on a student's transcript and counts towards the calculation of Grade Point Average.
2. Students receive a letter grade for ECSs. They are NOT pass / fail.
3. Attendance is a critical component of the ECS experience. Missing just one half-day of an ECS is roughly equivalent to missing an entire week of a traditional class. Per the CSS Parent-Student Handbook, "excused absences that cause a student to miss significant portions of an ECS will be managed in a variety of ways but often involve supplementary, independent work and the design of alternative, relevant experiences by the students. The family will be expected to cover non-refundable course costs incurred by CSS on behalf of the student even if the student is unable to reap the benefits of the experience due to conditions

beyond their control.” In most cases, reservations for transportation and housing are difficult and costly to change, and penalty charges may become the responsibility of the family that has requested the change. Consider ECS preference rankings carefully and thoughtfully with regard to potential personal conflicts to avoid making changes later. Multiple unexcused absences will result in a lower letter grade.

4. Students are encouraged to choose three Seminars based on individual interests and/or career ambitions, NOT according to social influences. It is our hope that students will submit their three options based on the alignment between their personal passion(s), intrigue, or value system, and the topic that each ECS will explore.
5. At CSS, we use technology very intentionally to meet our educational objectives. School policies limit the use of personal tech devices in divisionally specific ways. In the Upper School, we generally emphasize responsible use. However, students cannot use phones during class other than use authorized by a teacher. ECSs represent a significant reduction or a complete break from personal tech use for our students. We have observed (and research supports) that there are substantial benefits for personal social skills and group dynamics when students take a break from technology. Parents need to understand, before committing to a traveling ECS, that their student **WILL NOT** take a cell phone with them on any ECS.
6. Families, please look closely at the cost of the ECS, as you are committing to pay the cost, once your student is assigned to a Seminar. Also, students tend to value ECS experiences more when they help pay for them. We encourage students to apply themselves to earn part of the cost of their eventual ECS.
7. For the 2024-2025 academic year, we are rolling out the ECS options and building rosters prior to the start of the new fiscal year on July 1, 2023, so that we can spread the cost of Seminars out over 10 months. You will see an Ex Ed fee on your annual billing statement, which will be the fees for the CSS portion of your ECS. If you are on a non-local ECS, billing for the travel portion of your ECS will go through a third party, who is either World Ocean School or Where There Be Dragons this year, and a wrap around fee will be added to incidentals..
8. Students who have demonstrated behavioral problems or social-emotional concerns at school may be restricted from attending a national or international Seminar. It may not be possible to reimburse families for costs incurred if a change in Seminars must be made due to a disciplinary issue or a social-emotional concern. **CSS reserves the right to change or revoke an ECS placement up until the day of departure.**

9. All CSS Experiential Learning programs go through a rigorous risk management process. You may request to view our risk management plan by reaching out to Bronwyn Holman, bholman@css.org.

Habitat

Teachers: Ms. Miller, Mr. Takacs & Dr. Wells

Cost: \$350-450

Travel - Possible field trips: May include one or two overnights, TBD

Essential questions:

1. What is the power of the word “home,” and what results occur when that power is gone?
2. Who are the homeless in our community and in others?
3. What are the causes of homelessness, what services are available, and what are some ways to assist people who are experiencing homelessness?

Course description:

Mission statement for the Habitat ECS: Through community service and interactions with experts in the field and people experiencing homelessness on a path to self-sufficiency and empowerment, the Habitat ECS will move students toward greater empathy for and understanding of the complex causes and solutions to this issue, as well as impart hope that we can positively impact the human condition.

This local ECS explores the causes and conditions of homelessness in our society, as well as programs and solutions that have emerged to address this problem within our local community. We will compare our city's approach to others in the U.S. and abroad. The complexity of homelessness is naturally interconnected to issues of poverty and hunger, mental health, substance abuse, transitional and affordable housing, and family situations. The essential questions will be explored through visits to and interviews with local service providers such as the Salvation Army Shelter, Marian House Soup Kitchen, Partners in Housing, Urban Peak, National Alliance for Mental Illness, Habitat for Humanity, and many others. Readings, videos and independent research on a topic of each student's choice will provide background information essential to understand all that we observe on these visits. In addition, this ECS will include numerous service activities, from serving lunch at a local soup kitchen to pounding nails for Habitat for Humanity* (or working at the Habitat ReStore) to bring housing to families in need. If you are ready to step outside your comfort zone, to learn about "home" in a whole new way, and to make a positive difference in the lives of those experiencing homelessness, this is the ECS for you.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

***Pertinent information related to this ECS:**

*Student must be 16 years or older to work with Habitat for Humanity. Students younger than this age will work with the Habitat Re-store instead.

Student interests that match this ECS:

- Social studies
- Community service
- Economics
- Social justice
- Law
- Psychology/mental health
- The human condition

Students who select this ECS should possess the following:

- Open-mindedness and a willingness to confront uncomfortable topics (see course description above) and embrace the mission statement.
- Ability to walk several miles around Colorado Springs
- Willingness to interact with homeless people in a safe setting
- Respect for the dignity of all people we encounter

Cell phone policy: Cell phones are not allowed on Ex Ed programming. Any phones brought to school will be checked in upon arrival and returned at the end of the day. Students may not take phones on overnights / travel days.

Space: The Final Frontier

Instructors: Josh Gillon and Farai Mazhandu

Expected Cost: \$3500-\$4500

Travel: Possible trips to Houston, the San Luis Valley, and local field trips

Essential questions:

- What scientific and engineering concepts make it possible for humans to visit and sometimes live for extended periods of time in outer space?
- How do astronomers and other scientists discover and understand the composition of stars, the age of the solar system, the origins of the observable universe, the nature of black holes, etc?

Course Description:

This ECS will spend a week in Houston at the Johnson Space Center, where we will learn about rocket construction, cryogenics, microgravity, robotics, and other topics important to space exploration. During our time in Colorado, we may engage in such activities as building telescopes, models of gravity wells, and model rockets; making astronomical observations in the San Luis Valley or other dark skies locations; determining the age of the solar system using techniques based on geology, thermodynamics, and radioactive decay; and learning about the physics and mathematics of light, gravity, and other phenomena that allow us to understand our solar system, galaxy, and observable universe.

Student interests that match this ECS:

Astronomy, engineering, math, and physics

Cell Phone Policy: Cell phones are not allowed on Ex Ed programming. Any phones brought to school will be checked in upon arrival and returned at the end of the day. Students may not take phones on overnights / travel days.

Studio Glass - A New American Art form

Instructors: Mr. Wolfe & Mrs. Miller

Expected Cost: \$3,200-3,900

Travel: Approximately Wednesday, March 4, 2025 through Saturday, March 15, 2025

Essential question:

- How has the artisan glass movement in the U.S. influenced the development of new techniques and materials to build a thriving and diverse culture of glass artistry?

Course Description:

Almost everyone has seen sculptures by Dale Chihuly, or admired by the beauty of glass art on display in galleries and people's homes. Until the 1950's, in this country, glass artists were limited to fragments of information smuggled out of closely guarded glass factories on the island of Murano, Italy. After WWII, glass art moved from factory produced objects, to a craft form and then into the world of fine art. Working with little experience and big ambitions, glass artists in the US began to experiment with new materials and processes to develop their own art forms, ultimately leading to a Renaissance in the world of art glass making and whole new areas of experimentation with materials.

In this ECS we immerse ourselves in the world of modern glass art, from the production of new colors and textures in artisan factories, to the development of specialized glass for torch-working, while we learn and practice hands on with artists on the cutting edge of the glass art movement. We travel to the mecca of the glass world in the Pacific Northwest to see first hand how these artists have influenced glass making, while learning techniques like glass blowing, cold-working, fusing, sandblasting, casting and torch-working.

In the end, we will bring inspiration and techniques from these artists into our own glass art.

Student interests that match this ECS:

- Art making, marketing and collecting
- Production and innovation of artisan materials
- Economic and cultural impact of art on communities
- Ability to engage in art making processes and follow instructions
- Collaboration – glass art is a team process!

Pertinent information related to this ECS:

- No prior glass experience required, however students with some experience will move faster into new areas of exploration and develop more advanced glass artworks.
- Potential for exposure to heat and flame, and working in unheated studio environments.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

- Natural fiber clothing and closed toe shoes will be required for all studio days.
- Travel accommodations will require students sharing rooms.
- Age restrictions may apply in certain studio settings – alternative glass processes will be provided to students affected.

Cell Phone Policy: Cell phones are not allowed on Ex Ed programming. Any phones brought to school will be checked in upon arrival and returned at the end of the day. Students may not take phones on overnights / travel days.

Tall Ships

Instructors: Ms. Hanson and Mr. Hillman

Expected Cost: \$3750 - * (+ flight, cost TBD but approx \$600)

Travel: March 3-12, US Virgin Islands

Essential question:

What knowledge and skills are required to successfully operate, navigate, and maintain a Tall Ship at sea?

Course Description:

Set sail on the Dennis Sullivan, a 137-foot, two-masted, gaff-rigged schooner. The ship sails the U.S. Virgin Islands, departing from St. Croix. While aboard for 10 days, students learn the seamanship skills, coastal navigation, small boat handling, marine biology, oceanography, and historical and cultural interpretations that have been projected onto the sea. As our sail progresses, there is a distinct focus on leadership. The partnership organization, World Ocean School, promotes the concepts of ship, shipmate, and self; therefore, students must take care of the ship, their shipmates, and themselves. The students participate as crew members, assisting in raising and setting the sails, manning the helm, calculating and charting the course, standing watch, and performing hourly boat checks during the day and nightly on a rotational basis. Daily lessons also include the readings and discussions of several tales of the sea, physics of sailing, wave mechanics, ship operations, snorkeling, and possibly sea kayaking. While sailing, a variety of local stops further connect the students to marine life, biology, sea-life, and the history of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Critical to the ECS is teamwork, cooperation, responsibility, and environmental stewardship.

Pertinent information related to this ECS:

- Students must be able to swim and pass a swim test. This test will take place in a local swimming pool. The student must swim, unaided, one full lap and also tread water for 1 minute.
- Families should discuss measures to prevent/alleviate sea-sickness with their family physician
- Students must be physically able to participate in the operations of the ship, to include but not limited to hauling lines, cleaning the ship, hiking on possible rough terrain, swimming in the open ocean, snorkeling in the ocean, kayaking in the ocean.
- World Ocean School's policy on cell phones will be followed. Cell phones are not allowed on the ship, therefore, students will leave them in Colorado Springs. Cell phone use will also be limited during the local portion of this ECS.

- Proof of identity, to be examined by U.S. Customs and Border Protection during travel to USVI. A current passport is the preferred form of identification. Alternative valid documentation includes those found on the [St. Croix tourism website](#).
- If you own a snorkel and mask, please bring them.

Student interests that match this ECS:

- outdoor physical activity and hard work
- living on the ocean and oceanography
- marine biology
- physics and applied math
- history of the US Virgin Islands

Cell Phone Policy: Cell phones are not allowed on Ex Ed programming. Any phones brought to school will be checked in upon arrival and returned at the end of the day. Students may not take phones on overnights / travel days.

Senegal: The Country of Teranga

Instructors: Mr. Max Fruge and Profe. Marta Kunze

Expected Cost: COST: \$5,750* (* + flight, cost TBD but approx \$1500)

Travel Dates: March 5-17, 2025

Essential questions:

- How is migration affecting families and communities in Senegal?
- What is causing people to migrate?
- How deep was the effect of Colonization on Senegal's history and culture?
- Is the oil development project positive or negative for people that live on the coast?
- Will this project affect Senegal's environment? How?

Course Description:

Senegal, considered a West African gem, is a country on the Atlantic Ocean coastline. It is also known as "The country of Teranga," for the hospitality and warmth of the Senegalese people. During our ECS, we will be immersing ourselves in deep culture, discovering Senegal's rich artistic heritage and witnessing their linguistic diversity. Our journey begins in Yoff, where we will visit a popular fish market and have our orientation days. We will also visit the Musee de Civilization Noir and Ile de Goree, where students will learn about Colonization and West African history. We will then travel to Diakhonor, where we will engage in rural and urban homestays, and learn about local history, politics and development challenges as well as the Senegalese lifestyle. Migration will be a topic we will be studying throughout the ECS, getting information from locals, museums and guides to broaden student learning. Our last days will be in Toubab Dialaw, then sadly we will have to say goodbye to this wonderful country to go back to the USA.

Students interests that match this ECS:

- History
- Service work
- Languages
- Human condition

Students who select this ECS should possess the following:

- There will be a lot of walking while in Senegal. Students will be expected to help do chores with their homestay families, and do community service work.
- Willingness to interact with homestay families, guides and other community members with respect.
- Learn and respect all different aspects from the Senegal people.

Cell Phone Policy: Cell phones are not allowed on Ex Ed programming. Any phones brought to school will be checked in upon arrival and returned at the end of the day. Students may not take phones on overnights / travel days.