

**The Colorado Springs School**  
21 Broadmoor Avenue  
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# NEWS

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## **CSS STUDENTS PREPARE FOR 16 DAY EXPERIENCE CENTERED SEMINARS**

**Colorado Springs, Colo.** – This week ninth – twelfth graders at The Colorado Springs School will begin a 16-day term focused on one intensive course of study. As part of the Experiential Education Program at CSS, faculty has coordinated nine Experience Centered Seminars (ECS) for Upper School students to take part in from February 26 - March 18, 2009. Students have the option of being immersed in Cameroonian or Mexican culture, studying evolutionary biology in the Galapagos Islands, experiencing the history of the Blues by exploring the American South, exploring the technology behind modern geology, understanding sports physiology, taking part in a broad but intensive writing skills program, or examining the complex issues of homelessness, or life and death in America. ECSes, a hallmark of the Upper School program since 1976, were created to provide in-depth, hands-on, and research-based academic experiences for students. The courses encourage students to think critically, expand their global perspectives and to meet the needs of a dynamic world.

The ECS course offering may have a home base locally, while others will travel to regional, national or even international destinations for further immersion in the primary topic. Focusing on one subject for 16 days, students are given the chance to spend more time immersed in a field they might be considering for a career. Even if they decide against a future in that field, the seminars prepare students for the future with deep rooted knowledge, life experience, and problem-solving skills, while also allowing them to engage in meaningful community service experiences.

Greg Johnson, Upper School Science teacher, and Twyla Surritte, Upper School Math teacher, have been planning the Sports Physiology course since last April, almost as soon as last year's ECSes were completed. The partnership has worked out well, with Johnson's background in the physical sciences and Surritte's in the biological sciences, enabling them to create a course dealing with fitness and technology. Their main goals for the students include

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showing them how exercise and food directly affect the body, helping them understand how complex and amazing the human body is, cultivating an appreciation for different types of sports, and learning to use different kinds of equipment to measure workouts and exercising to create personalized training sequences. They are particularly excited about several workshops planned for the course, including a morning at the Olympic Training Center, snow shoeing and caving at Sylvan Lake State Park, two sessions with Lisa Rainsberger (Boston Marathon Champion 1985 and 3 time US Olympic Marathon Alternate), examining the correlation of lactic acid buildup and muscle fatigue at Carmichael's Training Systems, a session with Alison Dunlap (retired professional cyclist: two time Olympian, former World Champion, and former National Champion), and several others. The students will be experimenting with sports that target different muscle groups in the body, from swimming to weights to hiking and cycling to dancing and yoga. Equipment designed for physiology labs will also be used to let students track themselves throughout workouts and the course. The nineteen students involved include primarily freshmen and sophomores but also include a few junior and seniors. Many of the students are athletes in and out of school and are interested in pursuing careers dealing with exercise, sports, nutrition, and human biology.

"Whether the ECS is local, national, or international, we want experts addressing our students who really know their fields, who have a lifetime of knowledge," said Greg Johnson. "It's exciting that these are the people we were able to get involved with the program."

Another class headed by Alla Chelukhova, Upper School History and Ethics teacher, Joseph Arnold, Upper School French teacher, and John-Alex Mason, CSS alum, will be heading to the American South to discover the roots and history of the Blues. **To kick off this ECS, blues artist, Otis Taylor will give a concert to the students at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, February 25 in the Louisa Performing Arts Center on campus.** This course will focus on Blues Music, African American Literature, and Civil Rights. As the students journey through Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana, they will have the chance to hear and interact with great musicians like Kermit Ruffins, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Jumpin Johnny Sansone, Jimmy Duck Holmes & Bud Spires, Lightnin Malcolm and Cedric Burnside, Poor Monkey, Richard Johnston, Robert Belfour,



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Barrelhouse Chuck, and Honeyboy Edwards. As well as touring, the students will have a chance to give back to the community by helping out for a day at St. Margaret's retirement center in New Orleans, where they will visit residents and assist in planting a garden.

"My hope is that the students' experiences with the cultures of the unique places that we will visit will bring these subjects to life for them on a personal and enduring basis," said John-Alex Mason.

One adventurous group of students and faculty will travel to Cameroon, Central Africa where they will explore several provinces. The group will visit a sister school in the town of Fongo Tongo, where they will help set up the first computer and science lab in the area. The students will also visit the nomadic Fulani tribe and donate clothes, since the Fulani live in the colder climate of Cameroon. A library in the village of Santchou will be stocked with books brought by the students, after which the students will stay in an ecologe in Bakingili. For the last few days of the course, the group will camp in the rainforest around the town of Bimbia, whose inhabitants have been trying to prevent deforestation by inviting tourists to the area. As well as learning about the environment and the cultures of the different tribes, the students will have the chance to practice French in Fongo Tongo and Santchou. David Benson, Upper School History teacher, lived in Cameroon for ten years and is excited about the opportunity to share this experience with the students. Many of his friends in Cameroon will be hosting the students during their stay, which provides an eye-opening view into African culture. Benson mentioned that some of the most surprising aspects of the course for the students are the warm and generous nature of the Cameroonians, the diversity of language (there are roughly 300 distinct languages spoken in Cameroon alone), and the presence of polygamy. This is the fourth year that CSS has sent students to Cameroon, and each time students have been deeply touched by the experience.

The ECS program at CSS is one of the most extensive and academically powerful programs of its kind in American high schools. For more than thirty years, CSS has provided students with a link between traditional intellectual endeavors and life experiences. CSS alumni regularly comment that ECSes represented the most defining part of their high school experience. They often report that their seminars were excellent experiences that gave them a head start in college and their jobs. Many high school seniors at CSS find themselves writing

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and talking about ECSes during the college admissions process; it allows them to display responsibility and maturity and in some cases has fostered a budding interest in a career path.

### **A complete listing of 2009 ECS offerings:**

#### **The African Adventure: Life in Cameroon**

Our return to Cameroon (our fourth ECS to Africa) will solidify our sister relationship with a small school in the town of Fongo Tongo. Students live and interact with families, students, and officials in a typical rural African village. Lessons include language, music, dance, and other cultural expressions of African life.

**Faculty:** David Bensen, Upper School History, Jennifer Hedden, Upper School Math, Linda Harris, Upper School Head.

#### **The Blues: Music, History, and Folk Culture of the American South**

Arguably the most uniquely American of musical genres, the Blues traces its roots to the slave subculture of the Deep South. This ECS travels to Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana visiting the haunts of famous blues singers and meeting modern practitioners of the art. The course ends with a return visit to New Orleans.

**Faculty:** Alla Chelukhova, Upper School History, Joseph Arnold, Upper School French, John-Alex Mason, Alum.

#### **Evolutionary Biology: The Galapagos as a Classroom**

Again we dispatch a class to the sites in which Charles Darwin developed his early understanding of how evolution works. The class travels to Quito, Ecuador by air, then takes a boat to the Islands, where they study the many endemic species that Darwin encountered.

**Faculty:** Jennifer Gaskin, Upper School Science, and Dr. Paul Young, Upper School Math.

#### **Geology of the American West, Technologically Speaking**

The broad, practical science of geology is explored using modern technological methods. Students are exposed to electron microprobes, polarizing microscopes, digitized analytical

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research tools, and GPS/modern cartographic tools to learn why the West looks the way it does. The course travels to Western Colorado, Utah, and Arizona.

**Faculty:** Sam Johnson, Upper School Science, Miller Adam, Middle and Upper School Photography.

### **Habitat: Homelessness in America**

This course examines the causes and effects of homelessness in America through discussions with governmental and non-governmental social service providers and charitable organizations that deal with low-income housing. Students work in a soup kitchen, a shelter, and a Habitat project, if the weather allows. This seminar requires a mature attitude because of direct exposure to difficult human conditions.

**Faculty:** Amy Johnson-Smith, Upper School English, Paula Scarbrough, Upper School Drama.

### **Life and Death: The Beginning and the End of Life**

With proper counseling resources, students research the difficulties of getting into and out of this world. The class visits all of the organizations that serve on both ends of our lives, including birthing centers and nurseries, police detectives, penitentiaries, and hospices. There is a philosophical, but not a religious, dimension to this course.

**Faculty:** Hans Wolfe, Middle and Upper School Art, Candace Craig, Upper School English.

### **Spanish Homestays: Life in Cuernavaca**

Spanish immersion language training flows from family homestays and schooling in this culturally connected Mexican town. Students spend part of each day in a language institute where teaching is all in Spanish. Side trips explore the history and culture of the region, and daily life with their Mexican families pushes students into Spanish usage in a gentle but compelling way. Follow the Cuernavaca blog at <http://cuernavacaecs.wordpress.com/>.

**Faculty:** Marta Kunze, Upper School Spanish, Melissa Hafter, CSS Tutor.

### **Sports Physiology**

This course explores what happens in the body when it is in exercise mode. Students learn about and monitor their physiology as they mountain bike, ski, and play sports. The course

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makes use of modern medical equipment in clinics and the Olympic Training Center to show students how to optimize their workout regimens for maximum performance.

**Faculty:** Greg Johnson, Upper School Science, Twyla Surritte, Upper School Math.

### **The Writer's Gym**

Perhaps the single most important skill a student can carry to college today is the ability to write clearly, concisely, and interestingly. Whether the student is interested in fiction, poetry, journalism, or perfecting the essay, this course offers intensive training that will take the student to the next level in writing. Local and regional professionals help with criticism and advice.

**Faculty:** Dr. John Longo, Upper School English, Chris Peterson, Middle and Upper School Computers. Follow the Writer's Gym blog at <http://csswritersgym.wordpress.com/>

For more information on The Colorado Springs School and the Experience Centered Seminars, please contact, Director of Communications, Jessica L. James at [jjames@css.org](mailto:jjames@css.org) or (719)434-3506 or visit [www.css.org](http://www.css.org).

### **About the Colorado Springs School (CSS)**

CSS offers an experiential educational curriculum for PreKindergarten – 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Through superior academics and mentoring, The Colorado Springs School prepares students to think independently and to meet the needs of a dynamic world with leadership, ingenuity, problem-solving skills, and personal integrity.

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