In September 2015, Paul Rusesabagina stepped to the podium in Dimmit Memorial Chapel and told his rapt audience about a society that had been beset by a waking nightmare. Rusesabagina, the real-life hero of the acclaimed film *Hotel Rwanda*, was speaking in advance of that year’s two-day Critical Issues Symposium, “Auschwitz to Darfur: Genocide in the Global Village.” While Rwanda was in the grips of genocide in 1994—an estimated 800,000 were massacred by extremists in just 100 days—Rusesabagina had sheltered more than 1,200 people at the luxury hotel he managed, working ceaselessly to save them from the army that surrounded and threatened those within.

In June of this year, a group of 10 students and their two Hope faculty mentors stayed only a few blocks from that same hotel in the capital city of Kigali, in a Banda that 16 years after the tragic events of 1994 is widely regarded as one of Africa’s success stories and which they found to be safe and peaceful. They were there to learn about the Rwanda that was and the Rwanda that is and, cruciﬁely, to consider their place in a complex world with deep needs, and to enhance their understanding of how they might help meet them.

There were no easy answers. “It seemed like everything contradicted itself,” said Adam Nelson of Elmhurst, Ill. “It sparked a lot of good discussion with the other students and Annie and Joel [faculty leaders Dr. Annie Dandavati and Dr. Joel Toppen ‘91].”

The course reﬂects the college’s Senior Seminar June Term in Rwanda provided numerous opportunities for students to reﬂect on how their training and talents could be put to use in leading and serving a world in need.

As they traveled through the nation they were quickly befriended by the children that they met. They also confronted the sobering statistic that some 45 percent of Rwandan children suffer from malnutrition. “It’s inspiring to see and meet people who are rebuilding and moving forward, working together and taking responsibility for the nation’s future,” Dr. Toppen said.

Together, the faculty and students also approached the class and the impact that it had on them. “Many of them described it as a life-changing experience,” Dr. Toppen said.

The professors provided the students with an advance reading list and met with each before the trip to talk about the learning ahead—and also how to approach it. “We went there with humility, with grace, as learners,” Dr. Dandavati said.

The two professors are hoping that they’ll be able to offer the course again—sooner to help a new group of students learn not only about the world but their place in it along the way.

“They’re not the only ones. “I wish that almost every student going through Hope would take this class,” Nelson said.

This class was pretty much at the core of what I see as Hope’s vision and what students can experience by going to Hope.”

— Adam Nelson ‘11