

Global China Studies

An Elite Undergraduate Program

NEWSLETTER, FALL, 2012

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Global
Exposure

China
Focus

Community
Engagement

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Seventeen GCS students setting off for a journey to Beijing on June 9, 2012

The launch of the BSc Global China Studies program in 2011 marked a milestone development in our School and in the University. Through this unique interdisciplinary program, we nurture our students to be holistic persons with vision, knowledge and empathy. In accordance with our motto, we seek to "better society for a better humanity."

Our School endeavors to help students develop a portfolio of knowledge about China with a global outlook. We also enhance their understanding of their roles, rights and obligations as citizens of Hong Kong, China and the world. Outside the classroom, we offer a rich assortment of learning experiences to broaden students' horizons.

This newsletter features a splendid spectrum of our GCS students' out-of-classroom experiences that they enjoyed within the past year. These include a three-week mainland study program, international exchange, community internships, cultural field trips, seminars, documentaries and meeting with distinguished world leaders. The students' reflections, which show the passion and aspirations of young hearts, form an integral part of engagement education. Our students inspire us every bit as much as we inspire them.

-- Prof. Agnes Ku, Associate Dean, SHSS

"China is increasingly global and the globe is increasingly Chinese. These trends, the opportunities they create and the tensions they engender, are important for our future."

-- Prof. James Lee, Dean, SHSS



Yonnie at SciencesPo, Spring

INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

Yonnie in Paris

It's been the most fruitful and unforgettable school term ever! I went all my way to Sciences Po Paris in January 2012 where I made friends from every part of the world.

The learning journey was sometimes tough but provided me chances to explore my potential and undertake challenges. I explored the European political field with the courses I took. One example was when I completed a 45 minute solo presentation of 'Political Economy' and got positive feedback from my classmates and one very strict tutor. The satisfaction upon completing this task was so joyous and encouraging!

In Hong Kong, students are trained to learn unquestioningly by reciting and memorizing information. In Paris, students raise a lot more questions than we normally do in class and this was really inspiring for me. Hearing others opinions raised opened my mind to different perspectives and approaches for tackling an issue. One thing I now know is that: once I ask, I think more; as I think, I learn much more.

Apart from my study, I also traveled around Europe; I've been to the U.K., Italy, Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Germany, Switzerland and other parts of France, eight countries in total! It's really been an awesome experience to see all that beautiful scenery, experience other cultures and see how people live thousands of kilometers away.

So all in all, this has been an amazing trip which really blew my mind! Sometimes I dream about Paris at night, seeing those amazingly beautiful streets and dazzling shop windows. I know I am going back sometime in the future, it is just stunning! --Yonnie Li



GLOBAL CHINA DOCUMENTARY FILM SHOW

Face to Face with Director Hu Jie



In November, 2011, Hu Jie, an independent documentary maker, brought his films "Beside The Sea" and "In Search of The Soul of Lin Zhao" to our campus. The latter received the iSUNTU Gold Prize for Chinese Documentary in 2011.

I had the very precious and pleasant opportunity of a private viewing of Director Hu Jie's two documentaries. "Beside The Sea" showed us in detail the hard life of an ordinary family living near the sea in Shandong. It was so real and touching that I could almost feel the pain and happiness of the family. "In Search of The Soul of Lin Zhao" elaborated on the story of Lin Zhao, how she changed her attitude to the Communist Party and how she preserved her belief even while enduring terrifying tortures. I was astounded by her determination and the power of the Communist Party in shaping people's life. Both documentaries expanded stories beyond my knowledge and profoundly piqued my interest in the art of documentary making. I also began to turn my attention to the lives of those people behind the scenes. More surprisingly, I had the incredible luck of having a dinner with Director Hu Jie and listening to his stories about the making of his documentaries. I was completely inspired by his courage and passion. He introduced to me a respectable way of taking civic responsibility. I am so grateful that I could meet him! -- Wang Yuqian

Global Exposure



LUNCHEON WITH PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER

Jimmy Carter, Jr. was the President of the United States in 1977-81 and was the recipient of the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize. In December 2012, Brian Leung, one of our GCS students, had the honor to be invited to a luncheon with the former US President, with students from other universities in Hong Kong.

GLOBAL CHINA SEMINAR



"Youth Online, Youth Reading: The Global Picture, the Local Practices", Prof. Wendy Griswold, Northwestern University, Feb. 6, 2012.

Professor Wendy Griswold's look at a new generation of South African youth reveals that young people are being attracted to the internet because of its glamorous attributes—it is new, youthful, exciting, collective and global—while they value reading because of its social honor. From this she proposes a multi-dimensional conception of media practices that incorporates space, time, social honor, and the imagined future.



While we explored the city and engaged in this culturally rich experience, I gained more insights into Chinese society, philosophy and the way of life than any textbook or professor could teach me. This combination of exceptional opportunities created a memorable experience that will last a lifetime.

--Brian Leung

I treasure all the experiences I had in this trip, especially those where I got to interact with the people in Peking. Even though we may not share the same political views, students in Hong Kong and students in Peking have one thing in common: passion. Both believe that we can build a better future no matter what difficulties and problems we are facing.

--Katy Wei

The program covered wide-ranging and intriguing issues about contemporary China. I enjoyed the classes, the field trips and friendships with my GCS classmates very much. This unique study program is indispensable for any Global China Studies student!

--Skying Wai

The 798 art district led me to think that the Hong Kong government should provide more space for art and let culture grow naturally without interference.

--Lau Hei

The program has been very meaningful to me...but the poor air quality in Beijing led me to think more deeply about the environmental problems in China.

--Lau Kai Yiu

Had it not been for joining this program, I might not have realized that Hong Kong differs that much from China. The experience was definitely meaningful to me.

--Winnie Fok

I talked to different people and played basketball with the local students. I was told that university students there generally pursue similar goals: good GPAs, studying abroad, and working in big companies. This makes me wonder, what social values are being promoted in contemporary China and with what implications for the pursuit of meaning?

--Stephen Tsui

MAINLAND STUDY PROGRAM

2012 Experiencing China!



Students at the Forbidden City, Beijing, June, 2012

The Mainland Study Program aims to provide our GCS students with a unique opportunity to learn more about China today through actually experiencing China. In the summer of 2012, an intensive three-week program consisting of lectures, tutorials and field trips was organized at Peking University. The theme, "Critical Issues in Contemporary China," covered a wide range of issues relating to the fast-changing society, economy, environment, culture and state-society relations in the context of contemporary China.

Global China Studies provides me with the intellectual challenges of analysing the historical contexts and current events in Hong Kong, China and the world, juxtaposed with theoretical and philosophical discussions. Developing a global outlook towards China is of utmost importance in our discipline, which is what I am most driven to achieve in HKUST.

The intellectual journey...

The Mainland Study Program further cultivated my desire to conduct rigorous research on critical issues in contemporary China, particularly problems arising from urban villages and peasant workers as a result of rapid urbanisation and economic growth. For example, Kunming's large-scale plan that aims to redevelop urban villages into gated apartment complexes has uprooted local communities and drastically reduced the availability of low-cost rental housing. The latter raises another barrier on top of the hukou system to poor migrant workers. The poor and disadvantaged have not been blessed with the gains from rapid economic growth, and are further alienated from the cities. The journey towards the realisation of increasing prosperity in both urban and rural areas will be arduous.



Experiential learning...

The Mainland Study Program also provided me invaluable opportunities to understand China's political and cultural landscape through my own personal observations in Beijing and by interacting with locals and experiencing the environment. The appreciation of a unique cultural identity, the exploration of a country's history and its interrelationship with today's development and the world, and communicating with the people is enriching my knowledge of China in relation to the world. It is also provoking me to think across boundaries and aiding me to delve into issues at a deeper level.

As a Global China Studies major, I envisage becoming a motivated individual who always stays abreast of current issues in China and the world and is capable of addressing various problems flexibly with a critical mind.

-- Lee Chi Ching Flora

China Focus



Stephen with a Beida student



"I have mentally prepared myself for the working conditions and I am also physically starting to adapt to the environment. It would be nonsense for me to complain about an environment where most of the clients have lived for years."

Angela had her summer internship at the Society for Community Organization, an NGO serving the poorest of the poor. She participated in a qualitative private housing survey project that includes visiting old buildings and cage houses in Shum Shui Po. There is much for us to learn from her perseverance and empathy.



Stark contrasts...

Outlets of the most well known designer labels are lined up in great numbers along Canton Road in Tsim Sha Tsui. While the Cultural District is on its way to becoming a world-class art and cultural hub, the West Kowloon district of Hong Kong symbolizes a ray of hope for some and a new source of business opportunities. Yet, all these positive associations might vanish if we take a closer look at the reality hidden behind the shiny surfaces of the commercial skyscrapers. Also situated in West Kowloon, Sham Shui Po is the area hardest hit by poverty. Street sleepers and vagrants were frequently my "clients" in my new workplace. Though the help I could offer was fairly limited, all they really needed was an educated person to draft a referral letter to the Housing Department or the Street Sleepers' Shelter Society. Life can be a burden if food and accommodation are the only things left to pursue in life.

Bloody companions...

Bed bugs are frequent unwanted guests in cage-homes and cubicle apartments. They live in clothing and bedding, hide within the cracks of wooden planks and feed on human blood. Dead bugs leave blood stains on the wall and when oxidized, the stains colour the wall a shade of iron rust. It never occurred to me that a bug-less bed was everything a lonely old man could ever want.

Learning to be grateful...

Sham Shui Po in Hong Kong is the Dharavi in Mumbai; the rich live a lavish lifestyle unaware of the hardship suffered by people from the other side of their society. The more you see, the more you compare. Upon comparison, my fate is a blissful one.

-- Ng Siu Ki Angela



I had a six-week summer internship at Oriental Morning Post, one of the best selling Chinese newspapers in Shanghai. Through this, I have learnt about the current situation of newspapers in China, how to be a responsible reporter, how to deal with different interviewees and the credibility of various recourses. It is most important that we judge right from wrong by ourselves instead of following others' ideas.

--Liu Zhujun Leona

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This summer, I worked as an intern in the MTR Corporation. The eight week experience broadened my horizons and I gained knowledge about the business environment of an enterprise that touches our daily lives. I learnt that it is important to take the initiative at work and be willing to try new things and accomplish different tasks. All in all, an internship is a great opportunity to explore your strengths and career interests.

--Chiu Ting Ting

FIELD TRIP TO TAI O



Photo by Agnes Ku

For several centuries, Tai O was made one of the major coastal towns at the mouth of the Pearl River with its fishing and trading activities. Although the vibrant economic and social activities are gone, they have left Tai O a rich inventory of cultural heritage. We visited temples and historical buildings, and met local residents. Students had the opportunity to learn about the history and culture of the region, the impact of globalization on marginal communities, and to reconsider the value and meaning of economic development.

--Prof. Liu Tik Sang



FIELD TRIP TO SAI KUNG

The GCS initiates descended upon the burgeoning cosmopolis of Sai Kung. As a reflection of a microcosm of Hong Kong, the students toured the streets taking in the revival of local tradition and architecture counterbalanced with an increasing international presence. They experienced the contradictions of globalization and growth--escalating tourism and the entry and generation of multinational companies, but increasing congestion and gentrification of the old town.

--Prof. Gerald Patchell

SETTING UP THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDENTS' UNION



With support from the School, the students have set up a society of their own called Humanities and Social Science Students' Union. As the founding class of GCS, they are doing this with courage, conviction and passion. "We aim to enhance students' awareness of cultural, social and global issues and to promote humanities and social science perspectives within HKUST. As the inaugural cabinet of HSSU, we will devote ourselves wholeheartedly to create a rewarding campus experience for all." (Crystal Lam, President of HSSU) Time is working wonders that our GCS students are growing more mature and shining more brightly day by day.