

Global China Studies

An Elite undergraduate program

NEWSLETTER, FALL 2014

I have always agreed with our former Associate Dean, Professor Agnes Ku, that the university is there not only to impart knowledge, but also to provide an environment for students to cultivate their personhood. I hope that through studying in our Global China Studies Program, our students can develop a critical and independent mind, can have a passionate heart, can be an ethical person and a concerned citizen locally and globally. With the publication of this newsletter, I hope to share with all people some co-curricular activities that our students have engaged in besides their learning in classrooms and lecture theatres. I trust that these activities are essential for them in developing their own personalities and characteristics that I have just described. I am also sure these activities constitute a significant part of their life memories.

Professor Simon Wong,
Associate Dean (UG), SHSS

Global Internship @ U.S. Congress

In fall 2013, two students from the Global China studies program – Vanessa Lau and Matthew Tang – became the first students from Hong Kong to participate in the “global exchange + internship program” offered by the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. Both students partook in an unforgettable and immensely rewarding internship opportunity at the U.S. Congress in their spring semester.



The Buffalo Head from Above: An Internship Experience in Washington D.C. – Matthew Tang

In August 2013, I embarked on a life-changing journey to Washington D.C. I participated in a one-year exchange and internship program jointly organized by the School of Humanities and Social Science of the HKUST and the Catholic University of America. I spent the first semester in the Catholic University of America to take courses related to the American political system. During the second half of my stay, I worked as an intern in the office of Congressman Don Young (R-AK). Like all exchange students, I also spent quite a lot of time wandering around in the United States. I visited various cities including New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Austin, and Portland. I am always amazed by the diversity of this country. Each state has its unique traditions and identity and yet they are (most of the time) all united under the same banner.

I worked as an intern in the office of Congressman Young, who is the only representative of the State of Alaska in the US House of Representatives. His office in Washington D.C., like all of his colleagues, is located in Capitol Hill which is the very center of American politics. One special thing about the Congressman's office is that he likes to hang animal trophies on the wall. Most animals were hunted by him.

The responsibilities of the interns are related to all aspects of the office. Quoting my intern coordinator, the office tries to strike a balance between intern's work and legislative assistant's work. As interns, we had to answer the phone, to distribute mails and to fold letters. Sometimes we also acted as a buffer: we dealt with random calls from angry people and allowed the staff to handle the really important calls. We looked into each and every mail so that the staff would not be bothered by a thousand strange letters which might consist of nothing but conspiracy theories. We were also responsible for leading tours in the Capitol. It was actually a very good chance for me to understand the various issues the Alaskans care about.

I cannot think of a better way to understand the American political system other than working inside it, and that was the main goal of my time as an intern. Being a part in the American political system offered me a unique opportunity for cultural exchange and also allowed me to understand the American system and its rationales thoroughly. One of the main reasons for me to study in the US was to meet people with different world views. It is always fascinating to observe different ideas emerging from people with a completely different background. People behave differently when they are brought up in different cultures. One of my American friends told me that I came to America in an interesting time. The Federal Government was shut down in October 2013 due to the two parties' disagreement over Obamacare. It was a time when many Americans were reflecting on the ideals of their nation. Everybody realizes that the American political system is not perfect, but it is still the best way to include voices from all walks of life into the decision making process. The one-year exchange program allowed me to fully immerse in the American Culture and to reflect on my own identity as a Hongkonger. It's a bold adventure and it would transform you. I am starting to miss the buffalo head that stared at me all the time in the office.

An American Experience in the Capital – Vanessa Lau

Washington D.C. is a historically vibrant city. The opportunity to study at Catholic University of America placed me in the heart of the capital, only thirty minutes away on metro from the U.S. Congress, the National Mall, and numerous museums and monuments. I like to think that I have made the best use of this proximity. Other than allowing me to sightsee the magnificent monuments of the American capital, this proximity also enabled me to partake in my congressional internship without a long commute to work everyday!

Working and studying in an American setting is the greatest experience that I gained through this exchange opportunity. From everyday culture to the level of exposure in the Congress, I truly learned to reach beyond my limit by constantly having my self-expectations, time management skills, and cross-cultural working capacity challenged. Speaking English is not an issue for me. Rather, I had to cope with the cultural shock of a new country and work ethics in America. From my experience, I learned that individualism and collectivism do play a large role in different cultures. Americans appreciate a warm greeting when you bump into each other. Politeness and friendliness are also important traits of communicating with an American counterpart. It shows that you respect and you enjoy their company. For instance, a good old “Hello” and “Good Morning” with a smile whenever you meet someone is most welcomed with warm appreciation. But that is not to say you should say “Hi” to everyone you meet on the train. In contrast, Chinese people are generally more reserved and less outspoken. Traditionally, Chinese are used to operate in a group than in an individual setting. In other words, Americans celebrate individualism while the Chinese are more attached to collectivism. Of course, there are always exceptions in every assumption, and perhaps language barriers play a role in my perception of America. But from my experience so far, I believe this is generally true.

Another major gain that I had during this exchange experience was learning how to balance between school and work. The clash between the school environment and expectations at work was very large. It greatly helped me to improve on my time management skills and the ability to shift roles. You are expected to turn in your assignments and do your readings as a student. But simultaneously, you uphold the role of an intern in one of the most prestigious governments in the world and are expected to make the best of your time. I found that prioritizing my tasks really helped me to stay focused. Meanwhile, learning to relax and have fun in Washington D.C. was also a highlight for me!

Internship

City Magazine

Media



At the moment when I'm writing this, I have just finished the last task given by the editor of City Magazine. I feel so bad that I won't be receiving emails from the editors anymore. With this internship experience, I have really "earned" A LOT. Inside the "City Magazine" folder on my desktop, there are my writings, transcripts and research ... I can feel that my mind has been filled with a ton of skills, words and feelings towards a million things. I believe time will help me digest more of what I have learnt and been inspired in these three fruitful months. I am so lucky to have City Magazine as my first internship in life. What I have learnt and experienced is far more than what I have contributed. I was able to participate in the entire production of the magazine, starting from the editorial meeting that decides the content of the upcoming issue, to the preparation of interviews and transcriptions afterwards, as well as to the writing of the final passages. I received guidance from the editors on how to write and conduct interviews professionally. I can assure you that being an editor is definitely a tiring yet rewarding career. But they are still so willing to teach and give us interns a lot of opportunities to try. All the interviews I participated in, for example those with Ivana Wong, Jennifer Liu and Ada Wong, were very rewarding to me. These successful interviewees have become my target of learning. How confident they are when sharing their life experiences and how devoted they are in their fields! The happiest thing is that I have become friends with the editors and other colleagues there. They love to listen to our ideas and have discussions with us, which further increases my passion for this internship. I really have to thank GCS for granting me such a fantastic learning experience. THANK YOU!

– Canaan Fong



Hong Kong Maritime Museum

It was such a rewarding experience to have an internship at the Hong Kong Maritime Museum. One of the most interesting things during the internship was that I got to know how to prepare for a project on oral history. I have only seen the finished version of oral history before in video format. Although I was only given the chance to revise the transcript of one oral history project, the most impressive part was to witness how the museum staff prepare and record it. Another interesting experience was learning about the skills of how to handle exhibits. I learnt how to wrap an exhibition object, such as a picture. In conclusion, this internship enriched me with lots of new experience and I enjoyed it very much.

– Ng Kai Sze



Ocean Park

Joyful, Exciting, Memorable are the words that most people think of after spending a day in Ocean Park, the really local theme park. These words also apply to my internship experience in Ocean Park too, but only for the latter half. In the first month of the internship, it was so tough. We have to be physically fit, as we have to stay outdoor most of the time. During that month, we faced a lot of stress and difficulty; luckily, things changed in the second month. What I did in the second month was totally different. I had a chance to explore different parts of the park and did various tasks. What I enjoy doing most is holding an animal show, with trainers, snowy owl and spotted seals. It was an exciting experience, as I was given a chance to stay so close with the animals and learn to make immediate response. Though the rundown is supposed to be the same, you can never imagine what the animals will do during the show. Thus, I have to act and response as quickly as possible when situations change. Every time the situation is different, that's why every time it's like a new challenge to me. I would never forget such a great and memorable experience during my internship, as it may be the only chance in my life.

– Kwok Oi In

Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC)

Since I was small, I have always loved trying new things. After finishing my sophomore year in the university, I decided to take a year-long internship in the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC).

Being part of the Retail Banking & Wealth Management (RBWM) Asia Pacific division, I am involved in assisting the HSBC retail operations' sales monitoring, planning and execution across 16 markets in the Asia Pacific region.

As a Co-op trainee I feel privileged to witness the major shifts in tactics that are made at a managerial level. Noticing the importance of being detail-oriented, and meeting others' expectations in a demanding business context, I am now on a sharp learning curve in my role.

While HSBC has great expectations of their trainees, it provides strong ample development opportunities to its people. Through the mentorship program, networking events and forums, I was given great exposure to both the commercial and operational aspect of the business.

I am very thankful for being a GCSer - Not only for having the School's full support in taking the unconventional sandwich year, but the GCS Program also equips me with many important skills, especially the communication skills and interpersonal skills, which are transferable in this internship and all areas of my life.

– Clare Wong

LegCo

Being a student intern at the Legislative Council Secretariat was an unexpected and fruitful learning experience. The internship programme which was comprised of division attachment, observation of meetings as well as meeting sessions with members, provided an environment for me to explore the functions and relationships of legislative and executive branches. I was attached to two divisions during the internship programme, for instance, Public Complaints Office and Supplies and General Registry.

Public Complaints Office provided me with firsthand experience observing and understanding the negotiations among members and

government over specific issues via the Public Redress System. Several writing tasks had been assigned to me which enabled me to learn and practice through real cases. It was an inspiring and valuable experience which have definitely enriched my understanding of the legislature.

I felt grateful to my supervisors and colleagues who have guided me a lot and shared their work experience with me during the programme.

– Iris Lu

Global China Cultural Salon

The "Global China Cultural Salon" is a new initiative launched in September 2013 with the aim to foster a greater liberal arts spirit on HKUST campus. Held approximately once a month during the school year by students and faculty members of the GCS program, the salon invites prominent speakers in the academia

as well as culture, arts, media and creative industry in the Greater China region to engage in discussions on key cultural and social issues related to Greater China and the global community.

The kick-off event took place in September 2013 with a discussion on *The Way We Dance*, an award-winning local film that had been the talk of the town, and its impact on the local film industry. We had the honor of having Director Adam Wong, producer Saville Chan, leading actress Cherry Ngan, and cultural critic Tang Siu Wa joining us on a dialogue on the current challenges and prospects of Hong Kong local film production and what that means to the shaping and influencing of Hong Kong cultural identity.

Throughout the rest of the school year, the salon also hosted five other events on topics ranging from Hong Kong's indie spirit, the talent and innovation market, creativity and its social impact, the development of civic education and society in Greater China, as well as the role of literature in the increasingly market-driven world that we are living in.

Besides the opening event, the March event on the issue of civic education and society in Greater China had a house full of student audience from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China. Three guest speakers – Professor He Ming-sho from National Taiwan University, Professor Chen Yun Chung from Hong Kong Baptist University, and Ms. Gu Ting from the Co-China Forum – engaged in a lively discussion on the history and current development of civic education in Greater China and received an enthusiastic array of questions from the audience on how university students may play a greater role in major civic events or social movements.

In May, the salon also collaborated with "Pass the Pen" campaign, a student-led, collaborative writing contest that features poems and short stories created by HKUST students. Our guest speakers – Ms. Huang Jing, the Chief Editor of Hong Kong's Chinese literary magazine *Fleurs des Lettres*, and Stella Tse, the organizer of the "House of Hong Kong Literature" – shared about the prospects of literature and literary culture in Hong Kong and gave comments on the winning poetry and short story entries in the contest. The event closed with both a surprising and amusing reading of the winning entries as the participants of each entry finally got to hear the whole poem or short story for the first time in full!

– Prof. Shaw May-yi

GCS Exchange

@ UCLA, 2013

I was an exchange student at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in Fall 2013. UCLA is a great university not only in academic aspects but also in sports. UCLA enrolls a bulk of top students from the state of California and also from other states in the U.S. Hence, UCLA is a highly competitive, top-tiered university. Before the quarter started, I joined a California coastal trip organized by the International Student Center of UCLA. It was a great chance for a new student to meet new friends. The trip was well organized. We saw the most beautiful coastal view of the Pacific Ocean, and because the staff members were warm-hearted and helpful, we did not feel lonely in this new place. Moreover, I realized that UCLA is a highly internationalized institution with undergraduates and postgraduates from all over the world like India, Germany, Pakistan, Turkey, Chile and so on. With such great student diversity, I learned a lot about different cultures and how to respect different races and traditions.

– Yip Chun Ho



@ York University, 2014

Exchanging to Canada was a truly international experience. Canada itself is a multinational country with people from various countries, such as the U.S., Iran, Israel, etc. Most people I met are not local Canadians, and quite a lot of them have dual nationalities. Some of them even have triple nationalities (namely they were born, raised and have lived in different countries). York University in Toronto is where I stayed for 4 months during last fall semester. This is definitely a valuable experience in my university life, as it was the first time for me to live in North America, stay a semester away from UST, meet friends from other countries and experience life in a new country. Moreover, this is the first time for me to experience ice storms in Toronto (trees and grass were actually "frozen" and looked so funny!) and extreme weather in the U.S. Lectures, friends and culture all varied a lot when compared with those in Hong Kong.

– Janus Kwok



@ Sciences Po, 2014

Both the learning environment and teaching style I experienced in Sciences Po were quite different from that in HKUST. Sciences Po has more than forty percent of its students coming from overseas. Such high percentage of exchange students provides a truly international learning environment. And comparatively, Sciences Po adopts a much more interactive orientated teaching approach. Professors highly emphasize input from students. They encourage student to participate in class and even let students dominate the discussion. But such kind of teaching style requires students to do a lot of reading and research before class; it is quite demanding, yet the benefit is huge.

As Hemingway once said, "If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast." I am glad that I have got the chance to stay in Paris at a young age, and I believe the memorable of this experience will stay with me for the rest of my life.

– Ng Man Ching



@ UCLA, 2014

Apart from studying, I also enjoyed living in LA. Living here sharpened my communication skills, especially English, since I needed to use this host language to communicate in daily life. Although I still cannot speak very fluent English, I am more confident in the mastery of this language now. Now I am not afraid to speak up even if the grammar is not correct.

I also tried something new in this exchange experience. For the first time I tried skiing, camping at the foothill of the Snow Mountain and walking in the desert. These activities were just amazing as I have never had a chance for these experiences in Hong Kong even though I am a lover of nature!

– Jessica Ng



@ SNU, 2014

Annyeong-haseyo! In Seoul National University, I experienced a very motivated and active learning environment. Students' participation was strongly encouraged in classes. Between students, we commented on each other's opinions; listening to other's perspectives was also very insightful and thought provoking. I found this way of learning more simulative and nurtures a higher incentive and initiative to learn. I was so happy to be in the Korean language class, which taught me about how to communicate in Korean generally and also the local practices and culture. The University offers a wide range of courses in Humanities, covering Western studies, Southeast Asian studies and many others. I therefore got the chance to be introduced to many new topics and to develop a wider academic interest. It is said that "travel makes a wise man better". I was so happy to have met so many people and experienced the culture by myself.

– Clarice Tsang



@ National Taiwan University, 2014

It is really a precious opportunity for me to have the exchange experience at the National Taiwan University in spring semester, 2014. Apart from helping me to explore more about the world outside Hong Kong, the exchange experience also helps me to be more independent. This precious experience is definitely one of the most wonderful things that I have gained from university life. Although travel with new friends is always fun, I think that exchange overseas helps me to become more mature and independent. I once traveled alone in the middle of May, and I enjoyed it so much. In that trip, I traveled to one of the most beautiful islands of Taiwan – xiaoliuqi (小琉球). Although it is very small, it is really a wonderful island. I had my first diving experience there. The world under the sea was stunning! Traveling alone is really a good experience that helps me to think more about myself and become more independent. In addition, travelling alone allows me to follow my own mind and do whatever I want.

– Sung Wing Ting



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