Major/Minor: Global and Asian Studies
Country: China Program: Language and Culture, Beijing Normal University
Term & Year Abroad: Summer 2008

*What type of student should go on this program (ex: personality traits, major, etc)?
A student willing to try something new. A student who is interested in China, learning Mandarin, going on adventures, globalization, international affairs, and Asian culture.

Instructors
- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?
  They were similar to UCSB instructors because they care about you and your well being. They enjoy talking to foreigners and learning about the American culture. They are extremely friendly and committed people that want you to learn as much as you can while you are abroad.

- Could you call them by their first names?
  I never did. It was just awkward. We always called the teachers “laoshi” because they are in a respectable profession.

- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?
  A little bit because teachers in China are highly respected.

- Were they available for help during office hours?
  They didn’t have office hours but they were more than willing to go to lunch with students after class or even talk to you in between classes.

Courses
- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?
  It was more intense because it was 4 hours of language in every aspect: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?
  The grading system wasn’t difficult but attendance and participation is necessary for language classes.

- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?
  For the reading and writing course, there was dictation everyday and most likely, homework from the workbook. For the listening and speaking class, there were lots of role-playing and conversations with a partner. There were definitely exams and for the speaking final, a scenario was given and you would have to use a certain amount of vocab when talking about that subject.

- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
  We had both oral and written exams. Like I said above, the speaking final is choosing a scenario from a list provided by the teacher and talking about it using vocabs you learned from the book. (Note* the final may differ with each level)

- Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?
  The final exam was during class so it was convenient.

- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
I received support from my tutor who would practice with me once a week. These tutors are assigned to you at the beginning of the program. The liason officer’s office is in the dorm, Lanhui, so they were always available for assistance.

- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad? DEFINITELY, I need to be more confident, assertive and willing to try new things.

- Was classroom participation expected? YES

- How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses? They were longer and focused on a specific area such as reading, writing, listening and speaking

- Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long? Classes were everyday, 5 days a week, from 8am-12pm. It was split to two classes and they were a little less than 2 hours long for each class.

- What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class? It is respectful to be punctual. The teachers did not mind if we eat or drink in class but it would be nice to ask them first.

Language
- In which languages were the courses offered? Mandarin

- What language did you take your courses in? Mandarin

- If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc. It was really informative from a basic level because the classes allowed us to get accustom to the local way of speaking Mandarin. The courses were intense but manageable. The exams were not hard but there is quite a bit of homework. Absence does count against your grade.

Host University
- How large is the university? Student enrollment and approx campus size (smaller than UCSB)? Is it an urban campus with many tall buildings or just a few building? It is smaller than UCSB. The campus is within the city and there are a lot of shops and buildings surrounding the campus.

- Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus? For the summer, the local students lived on campus

- If not located in the city center,
  o How far or close is it to the city?
  o What type of public transportation could you take – cost?
- Could students take cabs -cost?
- How long would it take to get to the city center?

- Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?
  Not really because I went during the summer.

- Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?
  I’m sure there is a bookstore on campus. For our language courses, the textbooks were given in class.
  Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?
  I believe so but all the UC students brought their own laptops. It is just easier and better to have your own computer.

- What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)
  Stores, restaurants, bakery, WuMei (Chinese Walmart), shopping places, other schools. For the most part, transportation is needed to explore the city more.

Housing
- What types of accommodations are available to UC students?
  The only option is dorms. They are really nice and function as a hotel as well.

- How close are they to campus?
  It was within the campus.

- How did you find your housing?
  N/A

- Where did you live and with whom?
  I lived in the dorm with other UC students. It was partially a hotel as well so there were quite a bit of travelers there and different groups from programs all over the country. The rooms were spacious and accommodating. They also had western toilets, which is rare in China.

- If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?
  N/A

- Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?
  The room was bigger than Santa Catalina’s dorm rooms. The room had 2 twin size beds, 2 large desks, two closets, a TV, a refrigerator, and a private bathroom.

- Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?
  Because it was the summer, I think it was a bit more expensive but the dorm/hotel offered turn down service every week and cleaning every other day.

- How/who did you pay for housing?
I paid for housing once I got there. The people that check you in the first day will collect the money so be sure to have enough money.

**Food**
- What was the food like?
  A lot of Sichuan types of food, which is known to be extremely spicy. The food was tasty at times and an adventure at times. Some exotic delicacies were offered. Definitely be open to try new things. There is this great xiao long bao place right across from south gate. This is a must eat place. There are many foreign places to eat but try out the Asian cuisine like fish hotpot.

- Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?
  The cafeteria near the dorm is really cheap and good. Be on time for it because food does run out in there since all the local people eat there as well. Restaurants and street food is a must try. It is good to try different cuisine and there are a bunch of 24hr places.

- How much was an average meal?
  A few dollars.

- What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?
  For lunch, they would eat in the afternoon and for dinner, in the late afternoon and early evening before 8pm for Cafeteria food. But 24hr restaurants are plentiful.

- Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?
  I don’t know but you can always tell the waitress or waiter so they can tell the chef to cook without using meat.

**Travel/Safety**
- If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?
  The bus, underground subway and cabs are super convenient. The subway needs a specific card to get on. For the bus, you would need to find a way to get to the back and pay the fee, which isn’t much. Beware of the bus during rush hours because they can be extremely packed with parents wanting to head back home for dinner. Cabs are really convenient and accessible but don’t rely on it.

- Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?
  I felt safe for the most part because I was always traveling with a group of friends. Always travel with a map and if you do not know how to say it in Chinese, just write it down and show it to people so they can direct you. Always bring a map and be careful when purchasing things. Be careful when going to the shops and try going in the morning to buy things to get the best offer.

- Describe the public transportation in your host country?
  It is super easy and convenient. The bus system is the cheapest way to get around but it can get really crowded especially during rush hours. The subway has no lines so be aggressive and the cabs are endless so be sure to write the place you want to go to in Chinese so they can read it.

- Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?
  It was pretty easy to get around especially with the train system and the plane tickets are reasonably cheap. When purchasing a ticket for the train, ALWAYS choose a soft seat.
**Host City/Country**
- **What was the weather like?**
  During the summer, the weather is humid and hot. It felt like I was sweating all day. Sometimes it would rain but it will still be very sticky and hot.
- **Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?**
  Beijing is like Los Angeles but older and rich with history and historical places. The traffic and population is very much like Los Angeles but Beijing has better public transportation and heavy pollution.
- **What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?**
  Besides going to the major historical sites, my friends and I would use our free weekends to travel outside the city. We used a Lonely Planet book and a local guide to take us to different local places and try new things.
- **How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?**
  Beijing is becoming an international city, especially when I went during the Olympics. The people in the city don’t know that much English but they are slowly learning. Beijing has a balance of bringing tourism to the city and conducting international businesses. Various cultures was represented in the local restaurants.

**Culture**
- **Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.**
  - **Time & punctuality**
    Things usually start on time so don’t be late.
  - **Eye contact & staring**
    The local people would stare, especially if they know you are a foreigner.
  - **Relationships**
    Two words: filial piety. Respect the elders.
  - **More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?**
    Women would dress up by wearing dresses or long skirts. The UC students would simply wear shorts and T-shirt.
  - **Alcohol consumption**
    The drinking age is 18 and above. Clubs and bars are the places to go for drinking and just hanging out. Watch out for fake alcohol, especially at bars. Ask other people for suggestions on where to go.
  - **What culture shock did you go through?**
    When I first arrived, the shock was overwhelming because Beijing was not what I expected. Traffic was horrible and pedestrians are last while everything else had the right of way. The local people would regularly spit on the ground and throw a bucket of water outside the front entrance of their businesses. The toilets are squatty potties and you must provide your own toilet paper. Everything was a culture shock but you get use to it. Just go there with an open mind.
  - **Other?**

**Banking**
- **Were credit cards widely accepted?**
  I don’t know because I never used my credit card. I just used my ATM card
- Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?
  No, I didn’t but my friend did and she didn’t seem to have any trouble opening one. Just bring the appropriate documentation.

- If you did not open a local bank account, was it easy to withdraw money from the ATM? Which banks were popular & had low ATM fees?
  It was extremely easy to withdraw money because I have Bank of America and they work with China Construction Bank and there is no fees if you withdraw using a BoA debit card.

- Were there ATMs on campus?
  Nope, they were off campus but all walking distance.