Major/Minor: English Major, Education Minor

Country: Hong Kong  Program: CUHK  Term & Year Abroad: Spring 2010

Instructors
- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?
  They were less strict with deadlines. Lectures were very Powerpoint based and less student participation in class

- Could you call them by their first names?
  No

- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?
  Yes

- Were they available for help during office hours?
  No office hours, just email

Courses
- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?
  No, because I took English literature courses

- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?
  No, the grading scale was lower in that an A would be between 80-100 points

- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?
  No, it was similar to UCSB: two papers, or one paper and one final

- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
  I had an oral exam for my oral Chinese class, and written exams for English classes

- Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?
  It was inflexible because they would fit hundreds of students in a gym and seat us by numbers that they assigned to us online.

- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
  None

- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?
  Yes, because I had to make new friends and start a whole new life in a different countries and I couldn’t maintain the same lifestyle as I did in the States.

- Was classroom participation expected? Not in English courses, yes in language courses
- **How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?**
  The courses were based on different topics of literature and cultural differences played a large role in understanding the points professors made.

- **Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?**
  My classes were only once a week for about 3 hours, so I only had classes Mon-Wed

- **What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?**
  The classroom environment was very relaxed and people walked in sometimes an hour late. Students eat and drink during class, and the professors don’t mind.

**Language**

- **In which languages were the courses offered?**
  English, Putonghua (Mandarin), Cantonese or a mix of all three in some courses

- **What language did you take your courses in?**
  English and Putonghua

- **If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.**
  My Chinese language course was pretty similar to the Chinese courses at UCSB. The level I was in was higher than my language skill, but I worked hard and learned the extra material in my spare time. I took a placement exam before I went and they sent me a list of courses I could take, so I decided on 3rd level grammar and oral courses.

**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?**
  The university is located on a hill, split into three levels. The student population is a bit smaller than UCSB’s but there are still a lot of people on campus, and the shuttle bus is always packed during school hours. It is an urban campus with several tall buildings and structures over looking the water.

- **Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?**
  Most local students live on campus but go home on the weekends.

- **If not located in the city center,**
  - **How far or close is it to the city?**
30 min by MTR (metro) to Kowloon downtown, and 45 min to Hong Kong Island Central

- **What type of public transportation could you take – cost?**
  MTR: student discount is 50% off and very affordable, efficient and practical. Also buses, ferries, trolleys, and taxis are available.

- **Could students take cabs -cost?**
  Yes, depending on where you are in Hong Kong, the fare changes (different prices on different islands). The only time that students usually took cabs was when coming back from LKF in Central. A cab from Central to CUHK campus is about $150 HKD ($20USD)

- **How long would it take to get to the city center?**
  30 min by MTR (metro) to Kowloon downtown, and 45 min to Hong Kong Island Central

- **Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?**
  Yes

- **Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?**
  Yes, but I got most of my books from the library.

- **Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?**
  Yes, there is a 24 hour computer lab on campus, and computers at the libraries. Students should bring their own laptops for personal convenience.

- **What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)**
  There is an Ikea, a wet market, several malls, restaurants, and stores in the city of Shatin. You can find anything you need nearby.

**Housing**

- **What types of accommodations are available to UC students?**
  Campus dorms in CUHK’s different colleges are like UCSB’s residence halls with a roommate. I lived in the International House which is apartment-style accommodations. I lived in a flat with 16 girls, 7 rooms, a kitchen, and living room. I knew one girl who lived off-campus and the housing was a lot more expensive, so living on campus is more convenient.

- **How close are they to campus?**
  The campus is very large, so the dorms are on the other side of the mountain. Getting to classes can be a pain because you have to take a bus shuttle or walk up and down hills to get to classrooms.

- **How did you find your housing?**
OAL (Office of Academic Links) helped me with everything and I selected a preference to live in I-house. You can choose which college dorms you want to live in before you leave for HK, and then they will let you know you’re housing by email.

- **Where did you live and with whom?**
I lived in I-house with 2 other girls, another exchange student from Canada, and a mainland Chinese student from Beijing. I-house is not affiliated with a college, so there are no hall activities.

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

- **Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?**
They were not as nice as IV/UCSB dorms because they were quite small in space and fairly old buildings.

- **Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?**
It was a lot cheaper than IV. One month of rent in SB equals a whole semester’s cost at CUHK’s campus housing. I paid about $530USD for a semester in the dorms.

- **How/who did you pay for housing?**
I paid the whole amount to OAL during the first few weeks I was at CUHK by cash.

**Food**

- **What was the food like?**
The canteen food at CUHK was acceptable, but compared to the food you’ll find in the city, it sucks.

- **Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?**
I mainly cooked for myself during the week and went out to eat on the weekends. There is a lot of good, cheap food in Hong Kong ranging from high class dining, to dai pai dongs (outdoor night restaurants), and street food (fish balls, stinky tofu, desserts). There is a grocery store on campus so it was easy for me to shop and cook at school.

- **How much was an average meal?**
A decent meal which includes a main dish and a drink costs anywhere between $20HKD to $50HKD ($3-6).

- **What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?**
Same time as people in America. Younger people like to eat late at night when restaurants have special deals, and old people wake up really early (4AM) for dim sum so there are restaurants open at all hours of the day.
- Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?
No, there are many vegetarian options on campus and in restaurants.

Travel/Safety
- If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?
At CUHK, it’s easiest to take the shuttle bus to get around campus and down to the MTR station. The MTR is the most efficient way of transportation around Hong Kong.

- Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?
Yes, I felt safe in Hong Kong because there are so many people around. Be careful at night when the buses stop running and you have to walk up from the MTR station. No crime occurs, but the campus is dark and big so just keep an eye out and be conscience of your surrounds, and walk with a friend!
- Describe the public transportation in your host country?
Refer to above

- Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?
It was very easy to travel to China and Macau by taking a train or ferry. The international airport is conveniently available with cheap flights that go everywhere in Asia.

Host City/Country
- What was the weather like?
The weather was similar to Southern California in the winter, and was not extreme. It rained more often in HK and got humid and hot in the summer.

- Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?
Hong Kong is like a cleaner New York City/San Francisco.

- What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?
I visited different islands in Hong Kong, went hiking in New Territories, went to the horse races in Wan Chai, visited Big Buddah, went shopping and many more fun things. The possibilities are endless!

- How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?
Hong Kong is very international and all sorts of people from different backgrounds live there. Tourism and finance are popular and the cultural diversity is very dynamic.

Culture
- Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.
  - Time & punctuality
People are usually late to assigned meeting times and classes

- **Eye contact & staring**
  No one makes eye contact with you, if you catch someone staring at you, they look away immediately

- **Relationships**
  There are many young couples who show PDA, but older couples are reserved

- **More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?**
  K-12 wear uniforms no matter public or private schools, college students wear what they want. Club members dress up for presentations and rallies.

- **Alcohol consumption**
  Social drinking, no binge drinking

- **What culture shock did you go through?**
  Locals thought I was a local and assumed I spoke Cantonese so there was a language barrier/confusion a lot at first.

- **Other?**

**Banking**

- **Were credit cards widely accepted?**
  Only in big businesses and restaurants and with international fees

- **Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?**
  Yes, and yes. I opened an account with Heng Seng Bank

- **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?**

- **Were there ATMs on campus? Yes**