Country: Japan  Program: Keio University  Term & Year Abroad: Fall 2010
Gender: Female  Major/Minor: Global Studies/Japanese

Instructors
- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?
  About the same as UCSB. Some instructors were amazing, others were uninteresting.

- Could you call them by their first names?
  I’m not sure—I think it depends on their culture. I had both American and Japanese professors, as well
  as professors from other countries.

- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?
  About the same. In fact, I think it might even be less formal than UCSB because the classes at Keio
  were smaller than some discussions sections I’ve had at UCSB. I had face-to-face time with the
  professors on a daily basis.

- Were they available for help during office hours?
  Of course.

Courses
- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?
  I think they were about the same.

- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?
  About the same.

- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?
  I just had a few assignments here and there, and only one final. I had more papers to write than actual
  final exams.

- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
  Only Written exams.

- Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?
  About the same as UCSB—it was inflexible just as they are inflexible at UCSB.

- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
  I felt like if I ever needed any help, I could go to my professors and they would be really
  accommodating and approachable in helping me solve whatever conflict I encountered. Also, the
  Tokyo study center and Keio international center were great resources. I felt a lot of support not only
  academically, but in other aspects to my study abroad trip.

- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?
  Yes. You are in a different country, and have to get used to the daily way of life as well as keep up
  with school. The act of studying abroad in itself is not passive, but an active thing to do.

- Was classroom participation expected?
  Yes. Attendance and participation was emphasized as a large part of our grades according to the
  syllabus.
- How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?
They differed in the content as well as the way it was taught. One of my classes was called “Learning From Life Abroad” and it was a great class because the topic was different than other classes I’ve taken, and the class as a whole was conducted like a discussion forum. It was very interesting and challenging, as well as eye-opening.

- Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?
Classes were usually once or twice a week, and for about 1.5 hours to 2 hours. My intensive Japanese language class was 3 hours.

- What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?
In Japan, the culture revolves around being punctual and having perfect attendance. I tried not to eat/drink in class because the classes were small and I wanted to respect my professors by not disrupting the class with eating noises.

Language
- In which languages were the courses offered?
English and Japanese

- What language did you take your courses in?
English, but my Japanese language classes were conducted entirely in Japanese.

- If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.
I really enjoyed the summer ILP program organized by the UC Tokyo Study Center. They were helpful and fast-paced, and the material I was learning really helped me adjust to life in Japan. However, the classes at Keio were really boring and I didn’t learn much at all. The learning environment was too culturally different—Japanese students learn by accepting information and memorizing it without questions asked, versus American students who always have questions and need a more interactive learning environment.

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?
My campus was just one of four, and each campus was about the same size as UCSB, or slightly smaller.

- Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?
They live off campus or at home. The dorms themselves were off-campus dorms.

- If not located in the city center,
  - How far or close is it to the city?
    20 minutes by train, but with walking and everything, a total of about 30-40 minutes.
  - What type of public transportation could you take – cost?
    I took the train and taxi which were extremely expensive!!
Could students take cabs -cost?
Taxis were extremely expensive—just getting on the taxi costs 8 USD, and for every few km it was an additional dollar or two.

How long would it take to get to the city center?
About 30-40 minutes.

Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?
Yes. There are clubs and circles. Circles are social “clubs” and clubs were like sports teams or other interests that required vigorous commitment.

Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?
Yes there was a bookstore on every campus, and you could get pretty much everything there, like the UCSB bookstore. Also, the bookstore doubled as a convenience store, where you could buy snacks and drinks, as well as “bentos” which were pre-packaged lunch boxes.

Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?
There were two labs on campus—one in the library and one called the IC center. Students could also bring their laptops.

What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)
The campus was located in the city’s business district as well as near a rich international area called Roppongi. There were restaurants and stores everywhere.

Housing
What types of accommodations are available to UC students?
UC students could choose to live in the dorms or find other housing on their own such as homestay or private apartment. Many of my friends lived in boarding houses rented out by the Sakura House company.

How close are they to campus?
Honestly, the dorms were very far away from campus and in rather inconvenient or “boring” locations that made it troublesome to go out. It was 20 minutes walking distance from either train station. After Fall, my friends and I planned to move out of the dorms to find our own apartments through Sakura Housing.

How did you find your housing?
See previous answer.

Where did you live and with whom?
I lived in Hiyoshi, just outside of Tokyo and with fellow dorm members. We all lived in tiny, fully furnished singles.

If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?
No. Once you gain confidence about your living situation, it was easy to go online and look for a new place to live, as well as meet people who are interested in living with you. Same as at UCSB—you have to take an active and aggressive approach in finding housing.
- Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?
They were certainly smaller, but a lot cleaner than IV houses, but not nearly as nice as UCSB dorms.

- Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?
Because it was subsidized by the government, the dorms were about the same price as UCSB. Apartments as well. I would say it was about 400-1000 USD a month depending on where you live, so pretty much the same price as UCSB.

- How/who did you pay for housing?
It was automatically deducted from our bank accounts every month.

Food
- What was the food like?
It was a lot healthier and in smaller portions than American food, but also extremely expensive.

- Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?
I ate in the cafeteria, convenience stores, restaurants, street vendors, pretty much anywhere.

- How much was an average meal?
About 10 USD

- What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?
Around noon.

- Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?
Vegetarians, not really, but vegans YES. I had a vegan friend who had to cook her own meals and had a very hard time finding things to eat. It’s possible though, and after a while we discovered a few vegan places where she could eat.

Travel/Safety
- If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?
The public transportation system in Japan is the most efficient system I’ve ever used, even though I spent a lot of money getting around. There are buses, the metro, taxis, and many people just bike and walk to their destinations.

- Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?
Tokyo is one of the safest cities I’ve ever been to, but one should always remain cautious and alert, especially while abroad.

- Describe the public transportation in your host country?
See above questions.

- Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?
Plane tickets to Taiwan and Korea were easy to obtain, cheap, and the flights themselves were very short—three hours at the most.
Host City/Country
- What was the weather like?
Hot and humid in the summer, cool in the fall, very cold during the winter, and sunny and bright in the spring with a tinge of winter coolness. Pretty much, there are all four seasons.

- Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?
Tokyo is the New York of Japan. It’s busy and international, and very urban.

- What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?
There is so much to do and so much going on in Tokyo, all you have to do is step outside and you’re in for an adventure.

- How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?
Many people encounter English in Tokyo, but honestly there is definitely a culture that needs to be understood. Japanese harness the English language and foreign products but adjust them to satisfy the needs of the average Japanese consumer. So there is a lot of English in Tokyo, but it’s not the same English as in America, and one must just assume that everyone in Tokyo speaks ONLY Japanese.

Culture
- Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.
  o Time & punctuality
    ▪ Being on time/punctual is the most important thing. If you are late, for an appointment, assume that your appointment was canceled.
  o Eye contact & staring
    ▪ Japanese people will blatently stare at anyone who is caucasian/of anglo-saxon descent—especially those who are blond haired and blue eyed.
  o Relationships
    ▪ Be aware of cultural differences such as “rejection.” Usually in American culture, when someone is being rejected there are cue words such as “we need to talk.” Some of my friends experienced Japanese rejection, in which the person would just stop responding to emails or texts or phone calls, and generally dissapear from your life without another word.
  o More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?
    ▪ People in Tokyo dress up to go to school. Everyone wears suits and high heels, and make up.
  o Alcohol consumption
    ▪ Drinking is a big part of Japanese social culture. Be expected to up your alchohol tolerance while abroad!
  o What culture shock did you go through?
    ▪ As an asian-american, it was really hard for me because it seems like the only important/popular people were the ones who were NOT Asian.
  o Other?

Banking
- Were credit cards widely accepted?
No. credit cards are used for large purchases like hospital bills or cars. It is a cash flow society.

- Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?
Yes. It was one of the hardest things I had to do in Japan, because they really discriminated against foreigners when it came to official things such as getting a cellphone, going to the post office, signing up for national health insurance, and especially at the bank. I had a particularly rude incident at a bank in Japan that really added to my culture shock in the beginning.

- 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, right by the center court yard.