Instructors
- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?
  The professors at Thammasat University were very comparable to the professors at UCSB. They were all very knowledgeable about the subjects they were teaching and approachable. For example, my Buddhism in Thailand class and Traditional Thai Medicine class were taught by the leading experts in the field from Thailand.

- Could you call them by their first names?
  They would prefer to be called by their last names.

- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?
  This really depended on the age and status of the professors. The older and more established professors maintained a formal relationship with the students. The younger and newer instructors were much less formal.

- Were they available for help during office hours?
  I never went to office hours but I know they were available by e-mail.

Courses
- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?
  Classes were a little less difficult than here at UCSB. You have to keep in mind that many of the other students do not have English as their first language. If English is your first language, the classes are going to be much easier for you. As for the material, almost everything you are tested on comes from lectures.

- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?
  The grading system was similar to UCSB but there were no pluses or minuses.

- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?
  The course structure was pretty similar to here at UCSB. Professors used powerpoints for their lectures as well as films. There weren’t many small assignments but we did have midterms, papers, and finals. Great aspects of the courses were the field trips we took. For example, for my Art and Architecture class we took a trip to the old capital Ayuttayah to see the classic architecture.

- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
  Exams were written or multiple choice. Some classes also required oral presentations.

- Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?
  I did not have any conflict with my finals so I did not have to change them around at all.

- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
I did not seek any academic support. The classes were straightforward and friends in the class can help if needed.

- **Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?**
  The time you have abroad is extremely valuable and I highly recommend taking as much initiative as possible. Join clubs, go on school trips, and try to participate in any opportunity possible. I myself did muay thai and taught English as a part of an internship offered by the EAP liaison officer Thanet. I also went on a number of school sponsored school trips that were extremely fun and a good way to meet people.

- **Was classroom participation expected?**
  Many classes were discussion based and participation was expected.

- **How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?**
  I only took classes in the Thai Studies faculty which were generally culture based classes that could be comparable to some liberal arts classes offered at UCSB. There were economic and British/American studies classes that are more rigorous.

- **Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?**
  Language classes were everyday. Other classes would meet for 3 hours once a week.

- **What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?**
  Eating in drinking was allowed in class. In the Thai Studies faculty, punctuality was never an issue. However, other faculties were stricter and required punctuality as well as formal dress.

**Language**

- **In which languages were the courses offered?**
  Courses were offered in English and Thai.

- **What language did you take your courses in?**
  All the classes I took were instructed in English.

- **If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.**

**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?**
  Thammasat University has a large student body with about 30,000 students. The campus is smaller than UCBS and more compact. It is a very urban campus that is in the heart of Bangkok. Finding your way around campus is not very difficult. Most of my classes were taught in one building.

- **Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?**
  Most of the students I met lived at home or in apartments off campus.
- **If not located in the city center,**
  - **How far or close is it to the city?**
    The school is located in the middle of the city. It was about a ten minute walk to Khaosan Road which is a world famous street where many foreign visitors can be found along with bars, clubs, and western style restaurants. It is also about a ten minute walk from cultural sites such as the Grand Palace and many temples.
  - **What type of public transportation could you take – cost?**
    I would usually take the ferry to get to school which was 3 baht one way. The exchange rate is about 30 baht to 1 dollar by the way. Walking to school was also an option but the heat in combination with a school uniform deterred me from walking most of the time.
  - **Could students take cabs -cost?**
    You could take a cab but it would probably be slower and more expensive to get to school due to the traffic.
  - **How long would it take to get to the city center?**
    Bangkok is so large that it really depends on where you want to go. However, to get to cultural sites near Thammasat University I recommend walking or taking a cheap Tuk Tuk ride.

- **Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?**
  Yes. I joined the Muay Thai club. For about 80 dollars, I was supplied with all the gear and training for my time there.

- **Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?**
  There is a bookstore on campus where you get textbooks and any other school supplies you need. Furthermore, there is an equivalent of AS where you would get your class readers.

- **Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?**
  I brought my laptop to Thailand but I wouldn’t bring it to class. There were plenty of computers in the library to use.

- **What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)**
  There are many street vendors serving delicious foods from pad thai to fried meats and exotic fruits. There are also many sit down restaurants and a few clothing shops.

**Housing**

- **What types of accommodations are available to UC students?**
  Most UC students stay in apartments. The three that are recommended are 3J, Amarin, and Rattanakosin

- **How close are they to campus?**
  3J is the closest to campus at about a 10 minute walk. Amarin and Rattanaosin are a little further away at about a 15 to 20 minute walk.

- **How did you find your housing?**
  My housing was recommended by EAP.

- **Where did you live and with whom?**
I lived at the 3J apartment complex. I had one roommate whom I had roomed with freshman year. We made the arrangements before departure to live together.

- **If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?**
  Finding a place to live off campus was very easy. I highly recommend living at one of the places recommended by EAP. Those would be Amarin, 3J, and Rattanaosin.

- **Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?**
  The rooms were a little nicer than the UCSB dorms. They were bigger and had multiple rooms. There was a living room, bedroom, bathroom, and a balcony.

- **Was it more expensive than living in I.V.?  How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?**
  Living in Thailand is much cheaper than living in I.V. I was paid about $220 a month which included rent, water, and electricity for a double. The rooms were furnished with a TV, beds, dressers, desks, couches, and fridge.

- **How/who did you pay for housing?**
  I paid for housing with my credit card. There was an office in the lobby where rent would be collected.

**Food**

- **What was the food like?**
  If you do not like spicy food, Thailand may not be the right place for you. Many of the traditional dishes are flaming hot, yet very delicious. It is possible to get food that is not spicy or you could ask for less spice. However, the majority of it is quite hot. Basic Thai food such as pad thai and pad see ew are noodle based dishes that are delicious and filling. They usually have some vegetables mixed in and a choice of meat. Higher end meals usually consist of some sort of seafood stew such as tom yum or grilled meats. One of my favorite dishes is som tam which is a spicy shredded papaya salad. It goes really well with rice but watch out, you will need multiple bottles of water to put the fire out. There are also many western chains and other western themed restaurants if you’re craving something other than Thai food. A burger with fries is never a hard thing to find in Bangkok.

- **Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?**
  The vast majority of my meals came from street vendors. Because of the cheap prices and quick service, I would usually eat 4 to 5 smalls meals throughout the day.

- **How much was an average meal?**
  An average meal was usually no more than 1 to 2 dollars.

- **What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?**
  People would eat all throughout the day. Whenever I would go to dinner at a sit down restaurant, I would arrive around 7 or 8 and the restaurant would be relatively full. However, you could show up at 9 or 10 and the restaurant would still be packed. People in Bangkok are so busy that they eat whenever they have time.

- **Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?**
  It would be relatively difficult for vegetarians to find meals in Thailand. Most of the meals I ate had meat in them or were made with some sort of animal product. One of the only truly vegetarian meals I could find was papaya salad. Finding vegetarian meals in Bangkok would
definitely be easier than outside of the city. In Bangkok there are many western style restaurants that serve salads and other vegetarian friendly foods.

**Travel/Safety**

- **If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?**
  Public transportation is a cheap and easy way to get around Bangkok. Buses are frequently used but you might need help from a Thai friend to figure out the schedules. Keep in mind, traffic in Bangkok is very heavy and buses are probably the slowest form of transportation. There is also a tram system called the BTS. This is a very effective way of getting across the city. It is easy to use and also very cheap.

- **Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?**
  I did feel relatively safe in Bangkok. The people are very friendly and helpful. However, watch out for hustlers that usually congregate around the main tourist areas. Tourism is a very big business in Thailand and a lot of people try to get advantage of foreigners. Going out with Thai friends is very helpful in avoiding getting ripped off or other uncomfortable situations.

- **Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?**
  Traveling to neighboring countries was very simple. Some countries required a travel visa which necessitates some pre-departure planning. However, Bangkok is the central hub of South East Asia and it all neighboring countries are very accessible from there. Buses and trains run daily to neighboring countries. Furthermore, airlines such as air asia offer great ticket prices for countries that are a little further away such as Vietnam.

**Host City/Country**

- **What was the weather like?**
  The weather in Thailand is extremely hot and humid. The northern part of the country is a little cooler but generally it is nearly impossible to escape the heat. Relief from the heat usually comes from rainfall which can be expected everyday in the rainy season and once every few days in the other season.

- **Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?**
  Bangkok is really nothing like any city in California. However, the closest thing that would come to it would probably be Los Angeles mainly because of the traffic. Bangkok is one of the wildest cities in the world and has a lot to offer for all types of people. The cultural sites such as the Grand Palace and Wat Pho are magnificent. The nightlife in Bangkok is also unreal. There are many different clubs and bars that are packed every weekend. Royal City Avenue is where most of the big clubs are located. The clubs draw in major crowds and famous DJs. Bangkok also has the best food out of any other city in Bangkok. Because of its importance to the country, Bangkok has a very diverse population. Different foods from all around the country can be found in Bangkok.

- **What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?**
  Clubbing was one of the most fun things to do in Bangkok. It has a nightlife that is unparalleled in other parts of the country. If partying isn’t your thing, there are plenty of other activities to do. One of the coolest places I went to was the snake farm in Bangkok. The snake farm is actually a research institute where they create antivenom. They have displays with the deadliest snakes in the country. Amazingly skilled snake handlers bring cobras out
and give a heart pounding show. Attending a Muay Thai fight is also great fun. It is the national sport of Thailand and people are very passionate about it.

- **How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?**
  Bangkok is a very international city. People from all over the world come to invest and visit Bangkok. When visiting famous cultural sites, you are bound to see thousands of foreign visitors. Again, Bangkok is the central hub of South East Asia so many people stop in Bangkok before moving onto their next destination. Bangkok is also very culturally diverse. There are many African, Indian and European communities throughout the city.

**Culture**

- **Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.**
  - **Time & punctuality**
    Thai time is one thing that you will have to get used to. People move at a little slower pace in Thailand which may get frustrating at times. You just have to be patient and learn to live as the Thais do. For example, one of my professors was 20 minutes late to our first two classes. Punctuality and the concept of time are definitely more loosely abided in Thailand.
  
  - **Eye contact & staring**
    Making eye contact with someone while speaking to them is fine. However, I would not stare. Someone could interpret in the wrong way. No matter what country you’re in staring probably is not a good idea.
  
  - **Relationships**
    My roommate had a Thai girlfriend while we were there and she was great. It was really nice having a Thai friend who could show you around the city, order lesser known dishes and teach you a little Thai. His relationship with her was much like any western relationship.
  
  - **More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?**
    I dressed pretty casually throughout my trip but there were times when more formal dress was required. For school we had to buy uniforms which consisted of a button up shirt, tie, and slacks. Women had to wear skirts and a button up shirt.
  
  - **Alcohol consumption**
    Thai people like to drink. Every night you will see people at restaurants drinking whiskey which is one of the preferred beverages. Drinking in Thailand is very fun but you have to know your limits because it is a large and wild city. You do not want to find yourself uncontrollably drunk in a city where most of the populous does not speak English. When drinking, stay with a group of friends and keep an eye on each other.
  
  - **What culture shock did you go through?**
    The thing that is most striking in Thailand and the rest of South East Asia is ubiquitous poverty. These countries are still developing and there are a lot of very poor people which is painful and emotionally taxing to witness. There really is not much you can do about it. It is a reality that one must get used to.
  
  - **Other?**
Banking

- **Were credit cards widely accepted?**
  The only time I used my credit card was at places meant for tourism such as paying for scuba diving, hotels, treks, etc. Credit cards were not accepted at most restaurants and shops. It really depends if the place is more upscale/commercial or not. Chain restaurants are obviously going to accept them while street vendors are not.

- **Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?**
  I opened an account at Bangkok Bank which was located on campus. It was very simple. All you needed to bring was your passport and one other form of ID.

- **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 very easy to withdraw from ATMs but the fee was pretty expensive—usually around 5 dollars. I highly recommend bringing a large amount of cash and depositing it into a bank account. If not, withdraw the largest amount possible whenever you go to the ATM.

- **Were there ATMs on campus?**
  Yes, there were ATMs located on campus. 7/11s are on almost every block and they usually have ATMs.