



China Reflection Paper





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China

The People's Republic of China is the world's most populous country and the fastest growing economy. China is a single party state governed by the Communist Party of China, although it has two self-governing regions, which are Hong Kong and Macau. It also has a vast diversity of people, regions, and culture. China's history is rich, but since the introduction of market based economic reforms in 1978, China has shown the world what they are capable despite the current issues that they face (poverty, human rights, corruption just to name a few). I can keep writing about China but the purpose of this paper is to record my experience in this fascinating Asian country.

My Experience

China has been an interesting country to visit. I have traveled to a few countries in the world but I have never had such a culture shock in any other country compared to China. Everything was different from the language to the restrooms. During my stay in China I experienced a lot of differences in comparison to Venezuela and the US. This study abroad experience was enriching academically, socially, and culturally not only to my undergraduate experience but also for my professional development and employment opportunities.

Professors

The professors involved in the program were:

- Professor Jean Pratt, Information Systems Department, University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire
- Professor Scott Swanson, Marketing Department, University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire --
- Professor Shuzhi Liu, Oral Chinese, Jinan University (Zuhai, China)
- Professor Gangyi Qian, International Transportation and Distribution, Jinan University
- Professor Bu Guoqin, International Trade: Global Production Networks, Jinan University
- Professor Zhaobin Fan, International Investment, Jinan University
- Professor Yan Wu, International Investment, Jinan University
- Professor Shangguo Huang, Financial Investment, Jinan University
- Professor Ting Fang Yang, International Production and Management, Jinan University
- Professor Liqun Jiang, Oral Chinese, Jinan University (Zuhai, China)
- Professor Juan Tian, Chinese Culture, Jinan University (Zuhai, China)
- Professor Xiaoyan Su, led our GREE Electric tour, Jinan University (Zuhai, China)

Throughout the study abroad program we had classes with each of the professors from the Jinan University. Most of these professors were very helpful when I had questions about the class or China in general. The University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire professors facilitated the trip and were there for support when needed.

My Buddies

During the stay in Zuhai, I was assigned two buddies:

- Xue Lian
- Zhao Shuyin (Abby)

Xue Lian was studying for her TOEFL exam so I only had a chance to meet her once. On the other hand, Abby was there for me every day. Even, when I was assigned two buddies, I spent time with classmates and their buddies as well in a group.

My buddy was always there to assist me and I was there to help as well. Having a buddy really helped me for a smooth transition into the Chinese culture. I could ask all the questions I had to my buddies and they would provide me with answers or explain why

the Chinese culture thought in a certain way (principles). Ultimately, having a buddy helped me a lot during our stay in China.

Companies Visited

The companies visited were:

- Gree Electric Appliances (Zhuhai)
- Print-Rite (Zhuhai)
- Reminda (Zhuhai)
- WSM Fashion Co. (Zhuhai)
- H&T International Transportation (Shenzhen)
- Independent Commission Against Corruption (Hong Kong)
- Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC)
- Hengqin New Area (Zhuhai)

My Study Abroad Goals

For this study abroad program the three specific goals I created for myself were as follows:

1. I will learn from the Chinese culture in order to participate in activities with the buddies
 - a. Learn about history from the visits to museums
 - b. Learn about food and its traditions
 - c. Learn about what they think about their politics
 - d. Learn about the Chinese education system
2. I will learn from about the current business practices in China
 - a. Within manufacturing facilities
 - b. Within service companies
3. I will assist the buddies in any inquiry they have about the United States or Venezuela
 - a. Help my buddies understand other cultures

Goals Reflection

My reflection over my goals and what I learned from the study abroad program are as follow:

Goal 1

Museum Visits: I learned that China has been improving economically since the Economic Revolution in the 1980s. Also, I learned a lot about Sun Yat-sen. Sun Yat-sen was a Chinese revolutionary and the first president of the Republic of China. In the museums we visited, and the English readings available to us in the museums, he is considered the "Father of the Nation" when it comes to the Republic of China. He also created a political philosophy known as the Three Principles of the People: nationalism, democracy, and the people's livelihood.

Food and Traditions: I learned that the west side of the world doesn't really know about Chinese food. We are used to a type of westernized Chinese food that is nonexistent in China. It was interesting to see and learn what they eat and the manners they use when eating. I learned that you are supposed to clean the bowl and the chopstick with the same tea you drink. Obviously, the tea with which you clean the bowls and the chopstick is thrown out in a bigger bowl.

I also learned that Chinese don't waste their food, they would eat any animal that moves (including the head of the animal).

I noticed that they drink tea at every meal and eat the same food for lunch and dinner. When it comes to food China is very different from this side of the world.

Politics: Prior to traveling to China, I thought that Chinese people were content with their current government. Interestingly enough, that wasn't the case. Chinese students and even professors dislike Mao Zedong and weren't happy with their current president Hu Jintao. When I saw that, I couldn't help but compare that viewpoint with my home country, Venezuela. People from outside my country believe that Venezuelan people love the revolution and Chavez's socialism, but when you talk to educated people you find out that that's not the case. I guess my point here is that the media has a lot of influence on how the realities of a country are portrayed even when the reality is different.

Education System: I learned that the Chinese universities, even when they are public, require the students to pay for their education (similar to the US). What impressed me is that the Chinese government is considered socialist, being fair and equal to people, yet students are charged for their education. Normally in socialist countries education is free (e.g. France). I noticed that the students were afraid of correcting the professors even when they were wrong. I had the opportunity to attend a finance class in Chinese and the students didn't ask a single question. So I asked my buddies how that worked. "What if you have questions?" They said that when they have questions they ask the teaching assistance for help. This is because if they make the professor look unknowledgeable about the subject by a student ask something that the professor don't know, the professor would probably lie to answer the question and avoid to losing face.

Goal 2

Manufacturing Facilities: The facilities visited during our time abroad were:

- [Gree Electric Appliances](#)
- [Print-Rite](#)
- [Reminda](#)

I learned a lot from these companies and how they have succeeded in their struggles. I learned that these companies work harder than any American or European brand to enter in the international market given the fact of the quality of Chinese products. To overcome that, these companies do their best to afford international standards such as ISO and six sigma approaches. Aside from that issue, they face a lot of other issues such as transparency issues in their accounting books and how they treat their personnel.

I was amazed to see how workers perform their job in such limited spaces. The job that these workers do is extremely monotonous and not just that but they have their manager walking around them to observe how they perform their job. In my opinion, this is not humane at all having someone looking at you while you work. The freedom of these workers is very limited or nonexistent but even so these workers are thankful of their job to support their families.

Service Companies: The companies visited during our time abroad were:

- [Independent Commission Against Corruption \(ICAC\)](#)
- [Hong Kong Trade Development Council \(HKTDC\)](#)

These two companies visited were located in Hong Kong, which makes the difference in how business is conducted. In Hong Kong there are laws and they are respected. Not only that, but the local government has different views toward corruption and doing things right when it comes to business.

During the ICAC visit we learned about the corruption problems that Hong Kong was having in the 1970s, when the island was controlled by corruption and how this organization transformed the southern island to rank today in the top 20 cleanest countries in the world, according to Transparency International.

On the other hand, the HKTDC is a service company that tries to get businesses from all over the world to invest in Hong Kong. HKTDC provides a facility with a large variety of books and computer software to be used by the potential investors. Finally, I would say that the way Hong Kong conducts business is very similar to the US.

In another note, the service companies that we visited in Mainland China were:

- [H&T International Transportation](#)
- [Hengqin New Area](#)

These two services are very opposite. The H&T International Transportation is a logistic and transportation company that performs business in a way that doesn't necessarily abide to the international laws. An example of this would be changing the name of one of their boats to avoid getting caught by the coast guards of various countries. However, the Hengqin New Area is a very westernized approach to attracting investors from all over the world to invest in this Hengqin plan.

Goal 3

Help my buddies understand other cultures: I helped my buddies with any question they had. But nowadays the Internet answers many questions for them. Even when China has restricted access for their users, people figure out ways to access information via virtual private networks (VPN) or utilizing proxy servers in another country. It was interesting to see that even when a person doesn't know a lot about computers they can still use these ways and many others to access the information needed. However, when they had any question about the US or Venezuela I answered them what I knew and if I didn't know the answer to a question I would let them know that I wasn't familiar with their question.

Overall Reflection

Based on my goals I learned a lot about China and realize that I know so little about this giant country. There is a lot to learn of this economic power, I want to keep learning about their constraints and successes in every aspect of their economy and culture. Thanks to this experience, I learned a lot about Sun Yat-sen and Chinese culture. I also had the great opportunity of spending time with Chinese buddies throughout our stay in Zuhai. This experience was an invaluable portion of the program, I learned more from them than I learned in any class taken in China. In the same way that the Chinese buddies helped me, I helped them with any inquiries they had about the US or Venezuela.

With regards to the food, it was a different experience than expected. I was expecting what we know of Chinese food, but that wasn't the case. However, we manage to eat American food thanks to globalization. On the other hand, the education system is quite different than the US and Venezuela. The fact that students cannot correct a professor when he or she is mistaken is just a hard thing to understand for me. This is all because their concept of face (dignity, integrity) and hierarchy in society. In China, age and status are seen as a mark in their society more than in any other country that I have visited thus far.

Finally, Chinese manufacturing and Hong Kong service companies were the highlight of the trip for my future. This was a great opportunity to get to know how companies conduct business in another country. The most amazing part of visiting the companies was how seeing how Chinese manufacturing works and

how they treat their employees. The treatment of the employees is not the best, the manufacturing workers work for an extended amount of hours (around 60 - 80 hours a week, most of the time not by choice) and with little to no benefits. Also, their job is highly monotonous and the possibilities to advance their careers are extremely limited. But these workers have no choice but to abide by these Chinese manufacturing standards because the demand for any job is so high, that companies don't worry about finding a replacement for any worker. In conclusion, China was a great experience that deserves to be repeated.

Value of the Study Abroad Program

The value of this study abroad for me is immeasurable because I am an International Business major and this firsthand experience has convinced me that I am on the right track. I learned a lot of information about China that I probably wouldn't have learned if I had not traveled to the country. I also got the experience of visiting in a corporate environment and learning new things everyday without being in a classroom. I believe that this trip has helped me value the Chinese culture and what I have at home. Also, the university prepared us on campus a lot for this trip, the only thing I wish we could have done was to spend one more day in Shenzhen and Guangdong. Aside from that, I strongly believe that our curriculum is super strong for an entry-level international career position.

Conclusion

I strongly believe that the China study abroad curriculum at the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire prepared me for this time in the ancient Asiatic country. I put into action all the knowledge learned in different classes held on our campus. Furthermore, the help of UWEC students from Jinan University helped me a lot when I arrived in China. Overall, the experience that I had in China has made me change as a person and learn to appreciate diversity and globalization even more. Diversity and globalization are central in our society and intellectual experience; this experience helped me broaden my diversity horizon. This immersion experience has also changed my perspectives on how unimportant Mao Zedong is for the younger generations and that China is a more modern country than what I was expecting. Finally, I expect to go back to China at some point in my life and keep seeing the growth that this country has been having for the last two decades.