

PACIFIC RIM/ASIA STUDY-TRAVEL PROGRAM

UNIVERSITY OF PUGET SOUND

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The Pacific Rim/Asia Study-Travel Program (hereafter PRAST Program or PRASTP) emerged as an important component of the Asian Studies Program in the early 1970s. The program promotes the liberal educational mission of the university, extends curricular opportunities for significant encounters with Asian life and thought, and advances the co-curricular objectives of the university.

Beyond these institutional pursuits are the important personal experiences of each student in the PRASTP group of study-travelers: involvement in a significant community, cultivation of qualities of tolerance and sound judgment, and a heightened sense of cultural diversity.

Intellectual autonomy

The PRAST Program serves students in the development of their intellectual autonomy, for learning occurs both inside the classroom and in the various cultural settings of the enroute curriculum. Students must tie work on campus before the study-travel year with their academic program in Asia, developing an understanding of the interrelationships of knowledge as well as familiarity with diverse fields of knowledge.

The Asian Studies 370 independent research project course, which runs throughout the entire study-travel route, allows each student to focus on a topic of special interest in the discipline of the PRASTP director. Students reflect on their own values as they identify universals and particulars, and invariably confront American cultural provincialism.

Comparative values

The PRASTP objectives are cognitive and affective, providing both academic and personal experiences for the students. Less focused students have returned from the experience intellectually motivated, responsible, and mature. Modular study units and the constant alternation of reflective study and field work force students to become intellectually autonomous and personally responsible. Problems of competing value systems and be-

havioral expectations, as well as struggles with communication, health, and transportation, challenge students to recognize and clarify their own values. Students encounter critical political and economic problems in the Asian countries, while at the same time they make friends there.

In these situations, "comparative values" (a rubric in the Puget Sound core curriculum) has special meaning. When PRASTP students return to the Puget Sound campus, they have a considerable impact on the multicultural perceptions of their peers.

The rigors of travel and length of time spent in Asia force students to function as a community. PRASTP students learn to handle challenges both in the classroom and in the field, to get along with each other, and to face new situations head-on. They experience both frustration when things do not go as expected and euphoria when things meet or surpass their expectations. Working out this full range of feelings is a valuable process of maturation contributing to self-esteem and leadership opportunities.

The PRAST Program is a multicultural experience from the outset. A student's initial application rests on the willingness to broaden an understanding of different cultures. Once admitted, a student immediately confronts cultural diversity. There is a three-stage pattern of development at the conclusion of which PRASTP students are likely to have a better understanding of different cultures than do other students at the university.

Group dynamics

First, prior to the year in Asia, students meet formally in prerequisite classes and informally in a non-credit course which introduces them to Asian cultures. The students begin to develop a community during weekly sessions in which they discuss common readings, share their research on the countries included in their upcoming travel, and examine cultural barriers anticipated in Asia. The non-credit preparation course includes participation in field trips and activities designed to pro-

mote skills in group dynamics and building trust. The students learn to respect, like, work with, and perhaps most important, trust one another. Their ability to take advantage of multicultural opportunities in Asia depends heavily on their willingness to share expertise and take care of each other.

Academics

Second, in the year in Asia, the students are exposed to a number of cultures including Korea, Japan, Vietnam, People's Republic of China, India, Nepal, and sites chosen in conjunction with the expertise of the director. They take courses in a logical flow beginning with a month-long study of Korean politics, a month in Japan, and so on through the remainder of the itinerary and enroute curriculum. This meshing of itinerary and course work fulfills the academic objectives of the university. The chal-

lenges of the moveable classroom and changing faculty within a general context of novelty meet co-curricular objectives.

Continuity

Third, PRASTP students remain friends and stay in communication with one another and the university. The Asian Studies director and PRASTP director organize reunions of former groups, using events such as Asia Week or Commencement as opportunities for reassembly. Former students are important mentors for upcoming participants. Prospective applicants or selected students can enrich their multicultural awareness well before the next program in Asia.

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THE 1996-1997 PRAST PROGRAM

Twenty-four students, two support staff, and Elisabeth Benard, PRASTP Director, left in August on the 1996-1997 PRAST Program.

Seven of the courses in this year's program are taught for one month each in Asia and the eighth, Asian Studies 370, began in the orientation year and continues with student research, writing, and oral presentations in Asia.

1. Korean Government and Politics

The course is taught by Sookmyung Women's University faculty, some of whom have been active in contemporary Korean politics. Centrally located in Seoul, Sookmyung provides easy access to significant sites in the city.

Students live with Korean roommates, and many will be invited to the Autumn Harvest Festival at their roommates' homes. Field trips to Kyongju (Korea's ancient cultural capital) and Kwangju complement the emphasis on politics.

2. Political and Cultural History of Japan, with an emphasis on the Kansai encompassing the ancient capitals of Asuka, Nara, and Kyoto

During three weeks in Kyoto, students live with Japanese families and visit shrines, temples, and palaces which reflect the rich history of art and literature in the Kansai. Field trips include a hike up Mt. Hiei to visit the Tendai Buddhist temple complex of Enryakuji and a bicycle trip through the archaeological sites of Asuka.

During the fourth week in Japan, students travel wherever they like, exploring the land and encountering the heterogeneity of the Japanese.

3. Culture and History of Vietnam

The faculty of Hanoi National University present the majority of the lectures which will examine major facets of Vietnamese culture in historical perspective, especially its colonial and post-colonial experiences and current social, political, and economic situations.

Field trips to the Temple of Literature and Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum supplement the lectures. Following the month in Hanoi, students take a week's study tour from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City, including a visit to the ancient capital of Hue.

Scattering and Gathering

By now, students are ready for a holiday break, what we fondly call "scattering and gathering." This important dimension of the program allows the students to learn about a culture in a non-structured way by traveling independently, alone or in small groups. After the "scattering," we gather in Bangkok to share the adventures of being a foreign "other" on the road.

4. Tibetan Buddhism

Since the early 1960s, large communities of exiled Tibetans have lived in India. In this course, taught by the program director, students examine

the religious and philosophical theories of early Indian Buddhism that reached Tibet from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries C.E., the subsequent development of these theories, and the resultant formation and expansion of four major Tibetan Buddhist schools from the eighth to the twentieth century.

Students observe how these theories find expression in practices and institutions. The group visits Tibetan monasteries in India and Nepal, and lives among exiled Tibetans in Dharamsala, India, where the Dalai Lama resides.

5. Spiritual Landscapes of India

The course is taught in the state of Karnataka by the program director with guest lectures by Dr. Nagaraja Rao, former Director of Archaeology in India, who will accompany the group to the archaeological sites. Karnataka is replete with stone monuments and temples, including the site of the medieval Hindu capital of Vijayanagara.

The students learn how religion, literature, and politics intersect in Indian architecture, for these structures reflect religious and political power and ideology.

6. Principles and Practices of Conservation Biology

Taught by Professor Lee Metzger of the University of Montana, the course examines flora and fauna of the Himalayan region by applying scientific methods and teaching students how to be aware of potential environmental problems.

The course utilizes the Annapurna Conservation Area as a case study for bio-regional preservation and contrasts the methods of preservation there with the techniques applied in Chitwan National Park in south Nepal.

The course begins in Kathmandu, continues with a hike in the Annapurna area and a visit to Chitwan before concluding again in Kathmandu.

Second scattering and gathering

Spring break is a test of a student's ability to travel alone or in a small group and to handle situations "beyond her/his control." By now the students are confident and able to undertake more demanding explorations. In the past, students have visited the rain forests of Malaysia, explored the Mount Everest region, or been alone on a deserted island in Indonesia.

7. Ethnic Minorities in China

The course is taught by Dr. Michael Saso, Director of the Institute of Asian Studies in Beijing, with guests lectures by faculty at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the National Minorities Institute, and Peking University.

The course explores issues of minorities and the Han Chinese including polarization, marginality, and the consequences of providing the majority with a seemingly monolithic cohesion.

Field trips include the Lama Temple in Beijing, the Great Wall, Inner Mongolia, and Xian, an ancient capital of China.

STUDY ABROAD

Butler University

Has developed a liaison with the Valparaiso University Study Abroad program in Hangzhou.

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CET Academic Programs

China: Chinese Language Programs in Beijing and Harbin

January Term, 1997: December 31, 1996-February 1, 1997

Spring Term, 1997: February 4, 1997-June 1, 1997 (est.)

CET's January Term in Beijing is an intensive four-week introduction to learning Chinese in

China. Classes emphasize interactive learning by combining classroom study with structured field trips to nearby historical and cultural sites and language practica. The curriculum stresses development of a pragmatic competence in Mandarin Chinese. A minimum of three semesters of college Chinese or its equivalent is necessary to apply for this program.

CET's 1997 Spring Term offers students several opportunities to study Mandarin Chinese in two excellent environments, Beijing or Harbin. CET's Beijing program accepts beginning through advanced students. CET's Harbin program is specifically designed for students who have had at least two years of college Chinese or its equivalent.

Both programs include such opportunities as Chinese roommates, 1:1 tutorials in a topic of the stu-