

Exposing Incoming Students to Asian Studies: The Fortunate Intersection of First Year Seminar and a SIT Faculty Development Program

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Editors' Note: Susan Long and Christopher Hall (whose article follows on page 26) were two members of a 2006 School for International Training-sponsored faculty development study tour in China, focusing on a new study abroad opportunity centering on Traditional Chinese Medicine. The two articles in this issue of ASIANetwork Exchange are based on presentations given at the 2007 ASIANetwork Conference.

For a number of years, members of John Carroll University's East Asian Studies program have been puzzled over how we might better capture the attention and interest of first year students early in their college careers, so as to expose them to Asia and to better prepare them for their futures in the interdependent world in which they will live. Over several years, we explored with the directors of our First Year Seminar program ways in which East Asia could be incorporated into the curriculum.

In 2005-2006, we were fortunate to see several factors come together in a way that benefits our program and, we believe, our students. These included the selection of a theme for the Seminar for which an excellent text on China was available, the offer of a School for International Training (SIT) faculty development program in China in the summer of 2006, and excellent cooperation between the First Year Seminar Committee and the East Asian Studies faculty.

The First Year Seminar is a course required of all incoming first year students at John Carroll University.* Approximately 750 students a year are divided into 40 sections of a course that earns three academic credits. A common theme and three common texts are selected on a two year cycle by a faculty committee. This committee has regularly selected at least one text on an international topic related to the theme of the course. The common readings are supplemented by guest lecture and film options, with each faculty member creating his or her own syllabus from this core of required and optional activities. The course is intended to be strongly interdisciplinary and discussion-focused.

Relating the First Year Seminar to Asian Studies

For the 2006 and 2007 Seminar, the committee chose the theme, "The Human Body in Art, Science and Literature." As a means of incorporating material about the way the human body has been viewed cross-culturally, the East Asian Studies faculty recommended inclusion of perspectives on the body offered by Confucianism and Taoism, a focus on the portrayal of the human body in Chinese art, and the treatment of the body in traditional Chinese medicine.

Inclusion of such material in the First Year Seminar, however, depended on several factors: an appropriate text that would serve as a common reading, the willingness of the East Asian Studies faculty to assist with on-campus faculty development, and the availability of supplemental speakers and films. Since the East Asian Studies faculty were committed to this initiative and numerous films and community resources were available, we recommended David Eisenberg's *Encounters with Qi* (WW Norton & Co., 1995) as a possible text. I had previously used this book in my class, "Health and Healing in East Asia," and knew that students found it engaging and accessible. It is cross-disciplinary, and provides plentiful material for discussion, even for those without background on East Asia.

One drawback to *Encounters with Qi*, however, is that it is over 20 years old. Although I have some background in medical anthropology and Chinese studies, my own research has focused upon biomedicine in Japan, and I had no first-hand experience with what is called Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) in contemporary China. Students, as did my colleagues, wanted to know what is happening in China *now* and how it relates to their own lives.

First-Hand Experience

When I heard about a short faculty development program focused on TCM, I quickly applied to it. It seemed that even with limited first-hand experience, learning about TCM in China would not only be relevant, but also would offer an updated sense of the place of TCM in contemporary Chinese policy and health care. I was fortunate to be accepted into the ASIANetwork program, "Access to Asia—China: Public Health and Traditional Chinese Medicine," organized by SIT and funded by the Freeman Foundation.

At John Carroll University, First Year Seminar faculty development workshops are held for several afternoons in May and are held two additional half-day sessions in August prior to the first time a new theme is introduced. At the May workshop, I gave a presentation about the basic elements of classical Chinese thinking about the body (ideas of balance, humans' place in the universe, etc.) and TCM (forms of diagnosis and treatment). Our colleague and East Asian art



Demonstrating moxibustion on a slice of ginger

historian Diana Chou introduced the FYS faculty to the ways that the human body is depicted (or not) in Chinese art. Together we presented basic information on the Chinese language, including how to read pinyin, and a simple outline of Chinese history. These presentations and substantial bibliographies were posted on the FYS Blackboard site for faculty to review and/or use as they wished.

In late June I met colleagues from a variety of disciplines from colleges and universities around the US for nine days of intensive study of TCM and other health practices in Kunming and Lijiang, in Yunnan province. We were given lectures and demonstrations on such topics as TCM theory, methods of diagnosis, herbal medicine, acupuncture and cupping, massage, and taijiquan from academics and practitioners. We were also able to try our own hands at some of these techniques and learned about balance, diet, and herbs through experiencing delicious meals.

In addition, there were presentations on health policy in China, and on the interface of TCM and biomedicine regarding AIDS and women's health. We learned about health issues for minority populations and traditional Dongba and Tibetan medicine in lectures and demonstrations. This classroom learning was supplemented by field trips that included tours of a TCM hospital, a women's and children's (biomedical) hospital, a Tibetan Buddhist temple, a Daoist temple and herb garden, and a park where we observed popular early morning practices of taiji and other forms of exercise.

Sharing First-Hand Experience

Upon returning home, my problem was how to "translate" the first-hand excitement of such a stimulating adventure into something useful for my colleagues who would be teaching about Chinese perceptions and treatments of the body. I was given about an hour and a half in the August faculty development workshop, for



Learning acupuncture in the classroom

which I prepared a Powerpoint presentation with the goal of updating the Eisenberg text by asking the following questions: How has China changed? How have images of the human body changed? What does TCM look like in China today? How is TCM integrated into contemporary Chinese society?

I tried to convey the dynamism of modern China as well as the rural-urban, large city-regional city, and social class disparities I observed during my time there. I presented images of the human body that I saw on billboards, shop windows, and on the street. I described what I had learned from reading and had observed in my limited time about the place of TCM in contemporary China, discussing continuities and changes in ideas about prevention, treatment modalities, medical education, and use of TCM by the public. I suggested to my colleagues from various departments around the university that TCM could be studied as one of the multiple options for health care, as bodily practice, as part of the Chinese capitalist economy, as political ideology and behavior, as a topic of scientific investigation, and as an alternative world view. I challenged them to question the idea of "tradition" as a cultural relic and see what uses TCM has today for Chinese politics, economics, and for people's lives. This presentation, like the May one, was posted on Blackboard for reference and for possible classroom use, along with an expanded bibliography that included films on TCM.

In other ways, I attempted to share my experience of the SIT program. With First Year Seminar funds, I purchased hands-on materials such as acupuncture models, charts, and needles, glass cups, and moxa sticks to bring back to campus. These were kept in the FYS office and were made available to any of the FYS faculty to use in class. I provided an introduction to the

FYS director of a local American practitioner of TCM who was invited to campus to give a lecture to two groups of 250 FYS students. A colleague helped locate a taijiquan instructor who was willing to work with the students of interested faculty members to teach them some of the basics of the practice. Some faculty also took students on field trips to one of the several herbal pharmacies in our area. In these ways we attempted to duplicate, with the obvious limitations of being in Cleveland, the first-hand experience I had with the study of TCM in China.

Results

The benefits of this collaboration between East Asian Studies and the First Year Seminar have been substantial. It demonstrated the way that area studies can enrich the curriculum and it exposed students to a part of the world about which most knew little. *Encounters with Qi* proved to be popular with both students and faculty. Based on course evaluations, the FYS director concluded, "Students loved it." At a faculty evaluation meeting, one colleague noted, "It was a good exposure to a non-western culture," and another



Shopping in a medical supply store in Kunming

reported that he had begun to explore acupuncture as a complementary treatment for his own health problem. The FYS Committee decided to use the book again this fall.

Of course we are hoping that a positive first experience with East Asian Studies will encourage more students to take additional courses that are part of our East Asian Studies concentration, and consider study abroad opportunities in this part of the world. We have seen increased interest in our Chinese language course and in our China study abroad program at the Beijing Center. Perhaps this interest would have

(continued on page 4)

smooth operation of the consortium. First and foremost, thanks go to the members of the Board for their continued dedication and enthusiasm in executing the numerous responsibilities assigned to them especially the Strategic Planning Committee; to the Past Chairs Advisory Council and to the Council of Advisors for generously sharing their time and giving us their wise counsel, and to my Illinois Wesleyan ASIANetwork team, who continue to assist me in the myriad operations of the headquarters. The

consortium will not be running as effectively without all your contributions. Though space limitation does not allow me to list names of people, I would like to specifically thank deeply **Phyllis Larson** and **Patra Noonan** for all their support this past year and more importantly for stepping up to the plate and taking the rein of the April conference when I had to be away for my mother's funeral. Thanks very much to all of you who pitched in at various points during the conference but most

especially, thanks for your expression of sympathy and support. It is very comforting to be surrounded by such a caring community of friends and colleagues!

We begin this year with a strong membership roster: 138 full members, 24 associate members and 12 affiliate organizations for a total of 174 members. I look forward to another exciting and energizing year as we continue to move toward our vision for the consortium. To all of you, *Maraming Salamat at Mabuhay!*

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ASIANetwork Initiatives



2006 Elon University Student-Faculty fellows experiencing Japanese hospitality.

Student-Faculty Fellows Program funded by the Freeman Foundation

Now in its tenth year, this grant enables individual faculty at liberal arts colleges to take up to five students to East and Southeast Asia to conduct undergraduate research activities. Faculty mentor and students apply as a team. During the past nine years, 429 persons have participated in this program. Funding is available for up to sixty persons (mentors and students combined) to study in Asia during the summer of 2008. **Deadline for application is December 1, 2007** with notification by January 30, 2008. For additional information contact Dr. Van J. Symons, Program Director, Augustana College, 639 – 38th Street, Rock Island, IL 61201-2296, (vanjsymons@augustana.edu, phone 309-794-7413).

The ASIANetwork Consultancy Program

The ASIANetwork Consultancy Program is a service to ASIANetwork member institutions seeking outside advice on ways to strengthen the study of Asia on their campuses. Drawing from a pool of over thirty experienced consultants who have served in the program from 1994 to the present, the ASIANetwork Consultancy Program can recommend a list of possible consultants to interested institutions and help with the planning of the campus visit. ASIANetwork charges no fee for this service, although colleges who wish to make use of it should plan on covering the travel expenses of the consultants selected and provide consultants with a reasonable honorarium. For more information, please contact Professor Phyllis Larson, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN 55057-1098, (larsonph@stolaf.edu; phone 507-646-3744).

For additional details on these programs, visit our website at www.asianetwork.org.

Exposing Incoming Students to Asian Studies (continued from page 25)

happened anyway, with the current media attention focusing upon the increasing impact China has had on the American economy. Yet we continue to believe that with the emphasis of FYS upon discussion and our attempt to incorporate an experiential component to the China part of the course, we have caught the attention of students who might otherwise have paid little attention to media hype. At the very least, we will have 1500 students who feel some connection to East Asia through achieving a better understanding of Chinese

society and culture than when they began college a year ago.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation to the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont, and especially to Asian and Pacific Studies Director, Linda Lewis, to on-site program coordinator Lu Yuan, to our liaison with Kunming TCM Hospital Wen Zheng Zhi, and to the other teachers and my co-participants in the program. I am grateful to the Freeman Foundation for their support of the Access Asia faculty development project at SIT. The opportunity to

turn this personally enriching learning experience into a part of the First Year Seminar curriculum was due to the support of Dean Linda Eisenmann and the efforts of FYS Directors Lauren Bowen, Robert Kolesar, and Sheri Young at John Carroll University.

*This description of the JCU First Year Seminar refers to the way the program was established in 1996 and continues to operate through Fall, 2007. During the 2006-2007 academic year, this program underwent review, and some organizational changes have been recommended for future years.