

The Bronze Mirror

Newsletter of East Asian Studies at Grand Valley State University

2005 Summer Study Abroad!

The 2005 GVSU summer study abroad program in Shanghai was again a success, expanding the previous 6-week program to a 12-week program, where participants had opportunities not only to study at East China Normal University, but also to travel to other parts of China to experience the culture.



No time to waste: During a side trip of the summer program in China, Professor Geling Chang gave a mini-class to students while they were waiting for the next flight at the airport.

Summer China Program Expanded

Last summer, GVSU China philosophy summer study abroad program at East China Normal University was expanded into an interdisciplinary Summer School in China. It offered two six-weeks sessions, each with three courses for students to choose from, ranging from the Chinese language, area studies, and general education courses. Twenty students enrolled in the Spring session and 18 in the Summer session. Of these students, 13 participated in both sessions, and two of them are now staying in China to continue their study of the Chinese language for a whole year. The students took extensive side trips during the three months, including trips to the Great Wall near Beijing, the Gobi desert of the Silk Road, the Terra-Cotta Warriors Museum in Xian, and sacred lakes and temples in Tibet.

Based on the past success, a plan for further expansion of the Summer School was approved at a recent International Education Committee meeting. According to the plan, the Summer School will include more course options representing a broader range of disciplines. For the spring/summer 2006, Professor Sufen Lai, Yan Yu, and Glenda Quarnstrom will bring in three new courses into the program. See inset box for details.

Attention! New Classes Offered for Summer China Program

Professor Sufen Lai: ENG 204: "World Mythology in an East Asian Context"

Professor Yan Yu: SS351: "Gender and Family in Third World Development"

Professor Glenda Quarnstrom: PLS 283: "Chinese Politics and US-China Relations."

For further information, contact the program directors, Peimin Ni nip@gvsu.edu, or Geling Shang shangg@gvsu.edu.

Welcome to New Faculty!

Greg Mahoney joins Grand Valley as a specialist in political ideology of China, with an abiding interest in Marxist studies. He earned his PhD from George Washington University and has taught in the US and China.

Tomomi Emoto, a new member of the Modern Language Department, teaches Japanese language, literature, and culture.

Faculty Scholarly Activities

Joe Helgert, Associate Professor of Communications and a faculty member of East Asian Studies, will have his book entitled *Comparing and Contrasting Marketing Assumptions and Advertising Strategies in Japan and the United States: Case Studies* published by the Edwin Mellen Press this winter. Below is the abstract of the book:

This study explores the practice and dynamics of advertising in the second largest democratic economy in the world, Japan. Japan illustrates many successful adaptations of advertising from around the world in addition to advertising communications that are culturally unique. This work evaluates the development of these advertising prac-

tices through cultural and structural case studies, dramatically illustrated by individual case vignettes. Along with a first hand cultural analysis of Japanese business and marketing practice as influenced by the rise and decline of the bubble economy, the work seeks similarities and differences in a comparative study. The study demonstrates that an understanding of the external and internal influences in visual style and design, positioning themes and execution of advertising in Japan is key to a greater understanding of the social, political and cultural effects of advertising in Japan and that this in turn allows for an original and revealing analysis of the evolution of advertising in modern Japan.

Patrick Shan, Assistant Professor of History, wrote several encyclopedic articles: "China and the Vietnam War," "Mao Zedong," "The Jews in China," "Islam in China," and "Religion and Freedom of Religious Belief", all published in *China Today: An Encyclopedia of Life in the People's Republic* by Greenwood, 2005. Prof. Shan also wrote three book reviews: A review of Chen Hongmin's "Human Relations and Politics within the Correspondence -- Reading Hu Hanmin's Correspondence at the Harvard-Yenching Library," published in *China Review International*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2004; a review of Hideo Fukamachi's "Party, Society and State in Modern Guangdong: An Evolution of the Chinese Nationalist Party and its Party-State System," published in *China Review International*, *ibid.*, and a review of Yoshiki Enatsu's "Banner Legacy: The Rise of the Fengtian Local Elite at the End of the Qing", published in *American Review of China Studies*, vol. 6, No. 1, 2005.

Prof. Shan also presented a paper titled "Were Russians Masters of North Manchuria? A Revisionist Perspective on the Russian Empire in China's Northeast, 1900-1931" at American Historical Association conference in January 2005 at Seattle, Washington, and was the keynote speaker at the Flying Tigers 64th Annual Reunion held in Grand Rapids, June 12, 2005. The title: *A Legacy that Endures*.

Yan Yu, Associate Professor of Sociology, presented a paper entitled "The 'New' Gender Roles of Chinese Immigrant Wives: Reconstructed to Maintain the Quality of Marriages" at the 5th

International Conference on Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations, in Beijing, China, 2005. Based on this presentation, Prof. Yu wrote an article entitled “Globalization, Gender Role Reconstruction, and the Stability of Chinese Immigrant Families,” currently under review by the International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations for publication. Prof. Yu is also working on another article titled “Economic Transitions and Gendered Marriage Experiences in Contemporary Urban China.”

Peimin Ni, Professor of Philosophy, published an article “Reading Zhongyong as a Gongfu Instruction: Comments on Focusing the Familiar,” in *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, Summer 2004. Chinese translation of the article appeared in *Qiu Shi (Seeking Truth)*, a journal in China, in early 2005. Prof. Ni’s scholarly presentations include a paper titled “Learning to be Human,” at the 9th East-West Philosophers Conference in Hawaii and a paper on “Gongfu – A Vital Dimension of Confucian Teaching,” at the 14th International Conference on Chinese Philosophy in Sydney, Australia, both during the summer of 2005. Prof. Ni was also invited to present on “Ethics and Calligraphy” at Michigan State University in Sept. 2004, and was a guest lecturer on Chinese calligraphy at Calvin College in Jan. 2005. He also served as an external examiner for a doctoral thesis for SUNY Buffalo. Based on his achievements, he was listed as “Outstanding Scholar in Chinese Philosophy” by Almanac of Chinese Scholarship, Beijing: Social Sciences Press of

China, 2005. Upon strong recommendations from distinguished scholars around the country, Ni is invited to teach Chinese philosophy and his own gongfu reading of Confucianism at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in the Fall of 2006.



Yosay Wangdi, Assistant Professor of History, wrote an article titled “US Policy for Tibetans: A Reappraisal”, published by the Office of Tibet, New York, in February, 2005. The same article was reprinted

in *Rajdhani*, Sikkim, a newspaper in India in April 2005. Web access: <http://www.tibetoffice.org/en/index.php>

The Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia published an interview titled: “When the Iron Bird Flies, a discussion with Dr Yosay Wangdi” in the December 2004 issue of its triannual journal *Eastern Horizon*. The cover page of this issue features Dr Wangdi in recognition of the honor conferred on her by the Tibetan Government-in-exile as the first Tibetan woman to become a professor in the United States. Prof. Wangdi also delivered three lectures on Mahayana Buddhism in May, 2005 in Malaysia. The topics ranged from Buddhism in the Land of Snows- A Cultural Odyssey; Roar of Snow Lion: Tibetan Buddhism then and now; and Mahasiddhas: the great masters of Tibet. The talks were hosted by the Buddhist Association of Malay-



sia as part of the Wesak celebration. A couple of pictures taken of the celebration are shown.

Why China?

By Michelle Merriman

Last fall I became interested in studying abroad through GVSU. I narrowed my choices down to programs in Florence, Italy and Shanghai, China. As a sophomore I had studied abroad in southern Spain and because Europe was familiar to me, I was initially very drawn to the Italy program. However, as I researched the programs further “The Middle Kingdom” beckoned. I desired to understand more about the Far East: its philosophies, rich history, art & culture, and particularly for me, traditional Chinese medicine.

After I decided to study abroad in China and told my friends and family of my decision, I was not greeted with the enthusiasm

I had hoped. In fact, the most common response was “Why China?” followed by a puzzled facial expression. At that time I could not fully answer that question myself, but I knew studying abroad in China would be an experience unlike any other I had ever known.

While studying in Shanghai, one of my purposes became understanding the phrase “living philosophy” as stated by a former study abroad participant as she had experienced it during the China program. I began

to see philosophy (particularly Taoism), living and interacting, everywhere. I personally became more acutely aware of the importance of my own inner “yin” (female, dark, passive) nature which became a useful way to balance the “yang” (male, light, active) majority of our group.

My other purpose was to directly observe how traditional Chinese medicine is practiced in modern China, which was difficult to do. I found a Chinese medical doctor who spoke English (also Mandarin and German fluently)

and received a few acupuncture treatments. I was often intrigued by the many traditional Chinese medicines, which are rooms filled with large wooden boxes containing traditional Chinese

herbs that we came across in Shanghai and throughout China. During one of the diverse side trips, we made a breathtaking excursion to Mount Huashan (one of the sacred mountains of China), where I met a local farmer selling fresh produce and traditional herbs. I learned from many Chinese university students that they

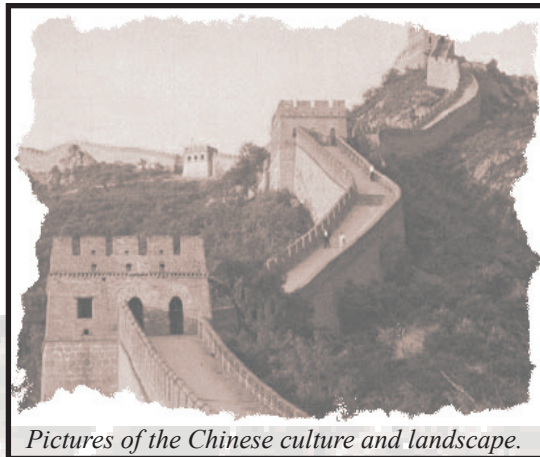
often use traditional Chinese medicine for acute conditions within their families. However, the overall usage of Chinese medicine is not as common as I would have hoped in present day China.

Each of us in the group had the freedom to explore the advantages and disadvantages of being a foreigner. We had the opportunity to make the unknown known and to merge our Western knowledge with modern Eastern society. I knew very little about China before I went and I came home with more questions and more

“After I decided to study abroad... the most common response was “Why China?”



experiences than I ever imagined. I learned more about a completely different culture, fellow group members, and ultimately myself. Now when I am asked the question “Why China?”, I can only answer rhetorically: “Why not?”.



Pictures of the Chinese culture and landscape.



Value of a China Trip By: Nicole Kildau

China is a country of many misconceptions. When my friends and family found out that I wanted to study abroad in China the question they posed to me was, “Why? Why would you ever want to go there?” Well, my answer to them at the time was “Why not?” Now that I have actually been to China and seen all the wonders of the glorious countryside and lived in the hustle and bustle of Shanghai, my answer is not, “Why

would you want to go there?” but “Why would you want to go anywhere else?”

GVSU’s study abroad trip to China is more than your typical study abroad experience. You are getting much more than a roof over your head and a place to study; you actually are given the opportunity to discover and explore the wonders of China. Your professors become more than just your teachers; they become your

friends, your family. To say all that the China trip has to offer would take more time than I have...

“Gvsu’s study abroad trip to China is more than your typical study abroad experience.”

but let me give you this...On what other trip can you say that you climbed one of the ancient wonders of the world?

What other trip offers the opportunity to visit Tibet, and gain an insider’s view on the issues

concerning that region? What other trip allows you to experience all these things and doesn’t cost a lot of money?

If you think any other GVSU study abroad trip does all this or for that matter, any study abroad trip anywhere, think again. I urge you to look into the trip and see what it has to offer and who knows...maybe you will be telling your friends and family, “I’m going to China this summer!”

Voice from Harvard: A Perspective on China Experience

J. P. Sniadecki

(Former GVSU student)

While I was a young boy, my family invited a Vietnamese refugee family into our home, and this early encounter with another culture sparked my interest in East Asia. As a home-school student I pored over the Dao De Jing, and I suspect my appreciation for Eastern thought compelled me to major in philosophy as an undergraduate. But, it was not until mentors in GVSU's Philosophy department encouraged me to study overseas

that I aspired to be a student of China.

The first time I ever left America, a warm May evening in 1999 welcomed me to Shanghai. As the six-week GVSU summer program coincided with the U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, the political and cultural implications of the tragic event led to frank conversations with the Chinese I met. Despite criticism of U.S. foreign policy, our dialogue

remained reflexive; we adjusted to and learned from one another. This experience opened my eyes to the reality of anti-American sentiment and Chinese nationalism. The most salient discovery was indeed alarming: the citizens of both global powers know little about one another! For the rest of the trip, whether absorbing ancient culture in Xi'an or visiting Confucius' temple in Qufu, I listened with an earnest desire to understand my surroundings rather than espouse American pride.

After returning to the U.S., I felt drawn to further exploration of China and Sino-American relations. The next step was natural: to

become better acquainted with China, I had to learn the

me to attend East China Normal University in Shanghai as an exchange student for the 2000-2001 academic year. Through daily



Chinese language. Fortunately, the Padnos scholarship made it possible for

courses as a student and evening work as a teacher, I gradually acquired the basics

"One of the greatest treasures of living overseas is the new perspective one may gain."

of Chinese. Surprisingly, my ability improved the most dur-

fore, and despite the social divide, our lives are constantly

After graduation, I returned to China twice on my own

"I listened with an earnest desire to understand my surroundings rather than espouse American pride."

ing the winter and summer holidays when I traveled to China's hinterlands. On these journeys, I witnessed – not only the vastness of China, but also the startling socioeconomic gap between rural and urban areas. I spoke with farmers and migrant workers and learned about the difficulties the majority of people faced. Often I would ask: given the impressive wealth in Shanghai, how do citizens tolerate poverty in the provincial counties? "Things now are much better than be-

improving," was the frequent response. One of the great treasures of living overseas is the new perspective one may gain on the social structure and cultural heritage of one's native land; therefore, such a reply from Chinese citizens about their own condition led me to contemplate comparative understandings of power, authority, and social justice. These questions guided my senior year work once I was back in America.

accord to teach English. The changes I encountered, both material and cultural, attested to the dynamic nature of China's rise to global prominence. During this period I improved my Chinese and traveled to regions I had previously never been, but I had trouble locating an intellectual community to help refine my questions. So, while still teaching in China, I applied to graduate school and was accepted into Harvard's Regional Studies: East Asia department, an interdisciplinary

program leading to a Master's degree. Despite my suspicion that Harvard amounted only to a prestigious name, I wanted to experience first-hand the supposedly unsurpassed academic resources the institution boasted.

I arrived two weeks before classes, and was thrilled to find that the innovative minds and great works from around the world are all within reach. I have attended seminars and panel discussions featuring leading scholars, passed hours reading obscure texts in the vast library stacks, and enjoyed the collegial environment of my international dormitory. As a new student, anxious about my academic merit, wondering if I am the mistake that was somehow admitted, I nonetheless

get the sense that the university's resources are available for students so that we may discover the right questions for unique research. In this academic "wonderland," I hope to inch closer to contributing to the Sino-American dialogue as I seek for deeper understanding of my own experiences in China.



Laotzu is known as the founder of Daoism.

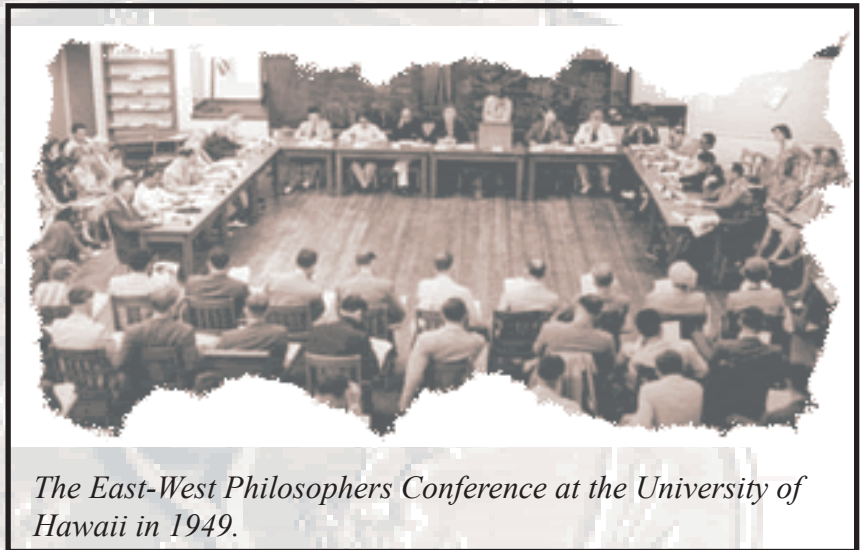
My Trip to the Ninth East-West Philosophers Conference

By: Daniel Stephens

This Spring I was fortunate enough to attend the first week of the Ninth East-West Philosophers Conference, thanks to the generous support of Grand Valley's East Asian Studies department, Philosophy department, and Pew Faculty Teaching and Learning Center. This was an excellent opportunity for me to see first-rate scholarship in the field of philosophy, especially in the area of East-West comparative philosophy. It was indeed a wonderfully enriching experience that I am grateful to have had.

The theme of the conference was "Educations and Their Purposes, with a great number of the papers focusing on different conceptions of education in many of the different Eastern schools of thought, as well as philosophical interpretations and applications of these ideas aimed at resolving many problems that are found in the world of education today. This theme invited a variety of different topics, ranging from education in schools, to moral education, to the idea of education as fully embodied human growth, etc. It was exciting to see how many various stances toward education were brought up, and it helped me to think not only about the path of education that I am currently on, but also about the way in which our societies are currently educating our people. The conference itself was comprised of paper sessions with over 200 presenters from over 35 different countries, many being the

top scholars in their respective fields. A great number of the presenters were noted scholars in Eastern philosophy and religion, drawing from traditions such as Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. The presenters drew upon their knowledge and research in these areas to contribute to an enormous dialogue on what education means, what it should be, how we can go about it, and what we must watch out for. The breadth and depth of the dialogue was unlike anything I have ever seen be-



fore, as essentially thousands of years of wisdom, scholarship, and tradition were brought together into one building.

When the conference first opened, the great tradition of the conference was explained, and I felt very much like I was in the middle something incredibly special. It was the first time I had ever been surrounded by so many great minds from so many different social, cultural, religious, scholastic backgrounds. Being witness to something that enormous that happened so rarely was somewhat overwhelming, yet incredibly exciting at the same time. I felt lucky even to be there, so when Professor Peimin Ni from Grand Valley invited me to go to the reception at the residence of the president of the University of Hawaii, it was an honor that I can not yet begin to explain. Walking around in such a casual setting with people whose books I've read and whose work has so greatly influenced

my own was somewhat surreal, but as the night went on I became more comfortable with the idea that I was about to spend a week surrounded by world famous thinkers.

One of the most interesting things about my experience in Hawaii was the encounter with other cultures. This is inevitable when so many people from all over the world get together. I was particularly interested in the demeanor and mannerisms of many of the established scholars. It was obvious when talking to many of them that their practice of philosophy truly was centered on self-betterment. Rarely have I seen people of such high standing and authority act with such modesty, kindness, and generosity. I never once felt out of place talking to most of the presenters, regardless of the circumstances in which the discussion occurred. The bulk of my experience in Hawaii was centered on going to paper sessions to hear the presenters. In a typical paper session, 3 or 4 people would present papers that were related to each other in some way, whether that meant that they were all tied into Confucianism, or the idea of moral education, or Buddhism, or something else. Typically after each paper, the floor was opened for questioning, and this is where a bulk of the really valuable discourse came in. When people

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were defending, clarifying, or qualifying their ideas, there was a great deal of newly gained insights. The atmosphere of mutual respect seemed to help foster an environment in which growth and creativity thrived, as many people's ideas began to bounce off one another and result in a whole far greater than the parts. There was a sense that everyone there was in some way or another working together, a sense I have not gotten when attending the few other conferences that I have attended so far.

I felt honored to witness such an intercultural dialogue taking place. As an audience member I was not only able to observe the sessions and the questions, but I was also allowed to ask questions myself. I had already gotten into some discussions with some of the presenters after their sessions were over but I wanted to ask at least one during official conference proceedings. It took a while for me to be comfortable enough to ask a question during a session on such a prestigious stage, but I was able to shed my anxiety after a few days and ask a question after one of the papers. As small as it seemed, it was great to be able to contribute



to the session and discussion in some way.

In addition to observing the paper sessions, I was also fortunate enough to have lunch with many of the conference participants. I learned a great deal from these talks, not only about the scholarly subject matter being presented upon, but also on the life of a professional philosopher and scholar. Professor Ni was able to introduce me to many people, including the likes of Roger Ames, Tu Weiming, and Henry Rosemont, Jr, all of whom were exceptionally cordial. I was floored by how open to discussion all of these world famous and exceptionally busy scholars were. I felt greatly encouraged by them to continue along the path toward a career in the field of philosophy, especially considering their reactions to hearing about the recent acceptance of a paper of

mine to the Journal of Chinese Philosophy. It was wonderful to hear so many established scholars telling me that I was well on my way to having a career in philosophy.

Attending the conference was one of the biggest moments in my educational career thus far. I am extremely grateful to everyone at Grand Valley who in some way allowed it to happen, because they have opened doors to me that I never knew existed and have allowed me to truly grow as a student. Between my greater understandings of several schools of Eastern thought, the life of a scholar, and other cultures, as well as the ever-important networking within the comparative philosophy community, my trip to Hawaii is an experience that I am sure to draw on for quite sometime.

Editor's Note: *East Asian Studies Program Newsletter welcomes submissions from faculty and students on a variety of topics related to East Asia: scholarly achievements, travels, cultural experiences, short reflective articles, etc. Please forward submissions to Shinian Wu of the English Department, preferably via e-mail: wus@gvsu.edu.*

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