

## Tung Scholars Reflections – Spring 2016



### **Personal Information -**

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**Home Country:** Colorado, USA

**University Attending:** High Point University in North Carolina, USA

**Courses on SAS:** Sino American Relations, Anthropology of Food, International Marketing, and Business Ethics

### **Highlight of the Voyage –**

These past three months on Semester at Sea have helped me to learn, experience, and grow as a person more than any other event in my life. I have had incredible experiences on the ship and in every single port, both pleasure and education wise, and every person I have met, including fellow students, professors, staff on the ship, and locals have left lasting impressions on me. I cannot stress enough how lucky I feel to have had this opportunity.

### **Evaluation –**

I feel that SAS does a lot of things really well but one thing is particular is their ability to relate everything we learn in the classroom to the real world, particularly the countries we are visiting. Every field lab that I went on really solidified what we were learning in class, something that I do not experience at my home university. This was definitely a selling factor for me and something that I will stress to anyone considering a voyage in the future.

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**Personal Information -****Name:** Lester Johnson**Current Email Address:** lesterjjr@yahoo.com**Home Country:** United States**University Attending:** Bradley University**Courses on SAS:** International Finance, Conservation Biology, Environmental Science, International Relations, Sino American Relations**Highlight of the Voyage –**

A real highlight of the journey for me was the opportunity to interact with the students from China. At my home university there are very few opportunities for me to speak to students from China. Speaking with the students on the ship and learning about their views on topics has allowed me to reevaluate some of my own thoughts on things.

**Evaluation -**

The countries that we visited on the voyage were great choices for the voyage and have allowed me to experience a wide variety of cultures that differ very much from my own. I really enjoyed nearly every place that we went in some way, so I am glad that I chose to attend this voyage. The people that I met both on the ship and off have made this voyage one of the best experiences of my life. I have no complaints about the students that I spent time with on the ship, as the vast majority of them were open minded and kind. The people in the countries we visited at times were pushy in some regards however; I have had almost no bad experiences interacting with locals in the ports. Ship life has its ups and downs due to the fact that at times things can be a bit boring however; I truly enjoyed the time that I spent on the ship for the most part. I am extremely happy with my experiences on the ship overall and despite a few exceptions I would not change a thing.

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### **Personal Information -**

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**Home Country:** Hong Kong

**University Attending:** Hong Kong Baptist University

**Courses on SAS:** Contemporary World Literature, Travel Writing, Introduction to Environmental Science, Sino-American Relations

### **Highlights of the Voyage –**

1. The Pencil of Promise field program: the program allows me to take a deeper look into the education system and the school situations in Ghana. I realize that a lot of children in the rural villages lack the opportunity to formal education. Getting involved in the school construction made me more humble and grateful for the education that I have been able to receive. That day I had great interactions with the school children and got to know their culture, family background and lifestyle. It was a great experience of understanding and cultural exchange
2. Desmond Tutu's visit on board enlightened me with the struggle of the people of Africa. It was also amazing to get to know Mandela as a person from his perspective. He talked about how they used to talk about politics and life when the well-respected Mandela was still alive.
3. One of my favorite field programs was visiting the Ile aux Aigrettes in Mauritius where I got to witness the conservation of the formerly threatened fruit bats. It was stimulating to discover how enthusiastic scientists and volunteers worked together to create the ecological setting 400 years ago so as to create an optimal environment to reintroduce the endemic Mauritian flora and fauna after being destroyed centuries ago. I learnt a lot about conservation programs such as captive breeding and the reintroduction of similar species to replace the extinct species so that the former can play the ecological role of the latter to enhance the thriving of the remaining endemic species.

## **Evaluation -**

### Things that I like most / Semester at Sea has done well:

1. The shipboard activities are diverse, such as the ship family program that connects students and other members on the ship, the talent show that entertains the ship and provides a platform for students to show their strengths, cultural pre-ports that enhance cultural understanding, student organizations that bring students with similar visions together, Chinese New Year celebration dinner that promote cultural understanding and help Chinese students build a sense of belonging and many more activities that make Semester at Sea meaningful and fruitful. The activities ensure that students can always find something that they find comfortable or interested to get involved in.
2. Most students onboard have a great sense of acceptance of various cultures. As an international student among the majority of American students, I felt welcomed by the community as they showed interest in getting to know more about my culture and they showed understanding when I don't understand their culture or some words that they use.

### Thoughts on countries:

1. South Africa is one of the most amazing ports in witnessing the fruits of conservation. There were a lot of zealous volunteers from both South Africa and around the world who spent great effort in helping with the captive breeding programme in Cheetah Outreach.
2. The China field programme (Hiking on Great Wall) was amazing that a great amount of time was actually spent on hiking on the Great Wall.



## **Personal Information -**

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**University Attending:** Fudan University

**Courses on SAS:** International Mass Media; Sino-American relations; Intercultural Communication; Global Music

### **Highlights of the Voyage –**

On this voyage, both the trip in the countries and the life on the ship were amazing. On the ship, several activities and different themes of days were funny and created the chances of deeper communication with whole shipboard community for Chinese students like me. Besides, I really appreciated that SAS invited so many awesome inter-port visitors! The students of the countries were helpful and interesting. Other guests have their insight into things happening around the world. For example, Desmond TuTu made several speeches on the ship even during the days when the ship was pretty rocky. The chance to talk to such an amazing person had been beyond my wildest dream before I got the chance to participate in the program of SAS.

Besides, the trip in the country can not only give me different insight into the current affairs around the world, but make the connection with what I learn in the textbook of the courses taken on the ship. Since I always make the plan with my friends and travel independently, I found it really challenging but interesting to communicate with local people, especially with traveling in a non-English-speaking country. Furthermore, after the reflection of some of the “culture shocks”, I have better understanding of the process of intercultural communication and the diversity between different cultures and, which is more important, how can we deal with the diverse cultural “salad bowl” and be a positive communicator. It is hard, to be honest, because people really varies from country to country and seem to have no possibility to reach a consensus. This is a question I will be always thinking about. Thanks to SAS, I realize how important this issue is.

### **Evaluation -**

**Countries:** For the countries I have been to, say, from the United State to Ghana, I personally have very few culture shocks because of the pre-port we have before we got off the ship.

**People:** The faculties, Crews, and students are amazing!

**Ship Life:** The activities are really fantastic! For me, ship life can be perfect and I never feel bored on the ship!

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### **Personal Information**

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**Home Country:** Hong Kong

**University Attending:** The University of Hong Kong

**Courses on SAS:** Sino-American Relations, Civil Rights Movement and Education in Global Context, Introduction to Social Psychology, Gender and Society

### **Highlights of the Voyage -**

Cape Town (South Africa) was definitely one of the best ports of call I have visited. It was the epitome of both education and new experience. For my gender and society class, we got to visit the Blikkiesdorp township just 30 minutes away from downtown. It was a place where we obtained extensive insight about HIV/AIDS, poverty and crime among the grass root class as it was plagued with problems as such. This posed as a drastic contrast to the façade of Cape Town's prosperity, especially when compared to what we have seen at the Waterfront area close to where we docked, a district that radiates a sense of development and prosperity.

Apart from the knowledge (Apartheid and South Africa's current development) which this country had to offer, it had also proved itself to be one diverse, thrilling and incredibly hospitable destination. To begin with, I have had the privilege to go on an amazing safari trip organized by Semester at Sea to observe some of Africa's wildlife, skydive out of an airplane at an altitude of 9000 feet and finally, I got to sample some of South Africa's native game meats such as ostrich, kudu (a type of antelope), Springbok (another type of antelope), and warthog (an African wild bore).

Intriguingly, the other country that I would like to evaluate is also in Africa. Ghana was a mesmerizing country due to its intricate relations with China and the US, making it highly relevant to our Sino-American Relations course. Therefore I could find many interesting connections from my observations with our course readings. For example, the problem of corruption was highly apparent. In our 4-hour drives to and from the Kakum National Park, we stopped at 6 police checkpoints and every time the driver would find an excuse to shake the policemen's hands and pay them 1 cedi each time (about HKD\$2).

Even though we still have the port of Morocco before calling it the end of the Spring 2016 voyage, I already feel as though I'm a changed person; in a sense that I have become more determined, independent and courageous. Additionally, it has largely eliminated some of the views and misconceptions I have before this trip e.g. I was very reluctant to interact with Mainland students due to all the negative publicity and conflicts as advertised in Hong Kong about Mainlanders. But this is the result of lack of understanding and prejudice against one group towards another. Who would have thought that some of my best friends on the ship turned out to be 10 Mainland students?

On a final note, I would like to thank the Tung family with all of my heart because given the financial constraints of my family, it would be impossible for me to take part in this life-changing experience had I not been awarded with the CY Tung Scholarship. Thank you very much!

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**University Attending:** Fudan University

**Courses on SAS:** Intercultural Communication, Introduction to Anthropology, Anthropology of Food, Sino-American Relations

#### **Highlights of the Voyage -**

##### **Evaluation -**

Before the announcement of Semester at Sea Program on my school website, I knew nothing about it. And now, I feel so lucky to get the scholarship and the chance to be a SASer, traveling around all those countries and enriching my experience as well. I think it is the best study program. According to one of my professors on the ship, the best education is the education through experience. On the first day of this voyage, we were told to be sight thinkers instead of sight seers. For me, this voyage is like a practice. I am practicing to be more flexible and

responsible, trying to practice what we learn on the ship while we are in ports, thinking what is a good traveler and learning to be better.

### **Ship life**

Leaving home and families for over one hundred days is a challenge for me. Before I embarked, I was worried about the ship life without Internet. However, the colorful activities and nice crew members make me feel like it is home. Though the ship life is totally different from my life on my home campus, I got used to it soon and really enjoyed it. One thing impresses me most is the special new year dinner that ISE prepared for Chinese students on our way to Vietnam, which is so sweet. Though the dumplings were different from what we usually eat at home, it was the best meal. In the shipboard community, people are so close to each other, which is totally different in China, even in the U.S, according to an American professor on the ship. I am very glad to have opportunities to exchange ideas with students from different countries and cultures. The shipboard community is like a big warm family.

### **In-port Experience**

One of the most exciting parts on the ship is the pre-port before each country, which helps us more prepared for in-port experience. All the countries of this voyage are wonderful and there are a lot of things for us to explore, no matter the history, the present and the future. What's more, I like to go to independent trips and interact with local people to know more about the country. Meanwhile, I really enjoy every impact program I attended. The impact program is also the most impressive thing I've done in this voyage. It provided me with a different view of the country we've been to, making me think of my own country. The in-port experience always gives me a new view of what's going on in the world and let me reflect what I can do as a Chinese and a global citizen as well.

Overall, I learned a lot from the faculty, lifelong learners and students at Semester at Sea, from all the local people I met in those countries. This is the fantastic program and I feel highly honored to have this opportunity, which will be a life changing experience for me.