

## Tung Scholars Reflections



Name: Mason Enloe

Email: [mason.enloe.fa18@semesteratsea.org](mailto:mason.enloe.fa18@semesteratsea.org)

Home Country: U.S.A.

Home University: Elon University

Courses Taken:

HIST 466: U.S. China Relations

PHIL 372: Meaning and Truth in

Religion IE 300: Global Studies

AA 100: Introduction to Astronomy

## My SAS Experience:

Before coming on the voyage, I expected all the best moments of the semester to be in port. However, I quickly learned that my shipboard experience would be just as significant as any of the amazing moments I had while exploring all the beautiful countries on our itinerary. It's hard to put into words just how transformative this semester has been. Even though I have learned so much about the world in my classes, I have learned so much more about myself and the rest of humanity from the people I have met and the places I have been in the last several months. The relationships I have made on the voyage are unlike ones I have had before, and I feel like I am re-entering the world as a global citizen and as a part of a new Semester at Sea family.

It feels like I have had too many meaningful experiences to count, but I would like to re-tell one of them and explain just how monumental it has been. Having rarely traveled outside the U.S. before SAS, almost everything I did in-port were things that I had never done before. Even the more familiar experiences, like having a drink around the dinner table with friends seemed exciting and different. I remember in Valencia, when several friends and I wanted to commemorate our last day in Spain by going out for one last round of Sangria. The only problem was that we had no idea where to go, so we decided to take a bus to the city center and get off when it "felt right". We sat and watched as people got on and off the bus on their way home from work, unable to communicate with anyone. Normally, in this type of situation, the language barrier that existed between the locals and I would have kept me from trying to interact with anyone. But this time, I decided to take a chance. I turned to an old woman sitting next to me and in a mix of broken Spanish, Google translated sentences, and confusing hand gestures, asked her where my friends and I could find the best sangria in Valencia. At first, it was obvious that the women could not understand my question, which made me feel embarrassed, but I kept trying. After a minute or two of my charades, a hint of understanding started to appear on the old woman's face until finally she burst into excitement, having fully understood my request. The women turned to her traveling companion, another old woman, and started speaking in rapid Spanish. At the next stop, she got off the bus with my friends and I and led us down narrow streets and through discrete alley ways until finally the space opened and revealed one of the most beautiful outdoor restaurants I had ever seen. Our new friend proceeded to explain our situation to the dining staff, made sure that we were seated, and even ordered our sangria for us. After she saw that we had been situated and we had thanked her profusely for her generosity, she simply walked across the street and into the apartment building where she lived. For the next several hours my friends and I ate and laughed and enjoyed each other's presence. We talked about how grateful we were for the amazing opportunity Semester at Sea was offering us and offered complements to one another. Meanwhile, we were all mindful of the fact that none of this would have happened if I had not been brave enough to step outside my comfort zone and engage with a local. It was this experience that inspired and motivated me to create countless others by constantly pushing myself to connect with local communities and be okay with vague situations.

My intention of retelling this story is not simply to relive a fun night out eating and drinking with friends, but rather to highlight a key theme that has become the cornerstone of my Semester at Sea experience: Strangers are just friends I haven't met yet.

Everyone came onto the voyage with various levels of comfort when it came to international travel. Personally, I was nervous and my tolerance for ambiguous situations was low. I preferred to be surrounded by people who spoke the same language as me and to be near places I considered to be modern. It wasn't until after the night in Valencia that I began to realize how limiting my mindset was at the beginning of the voyage. I don't mean to suggest that I had articulated every part of this revelation to myself in Spain, but it was a turning point in the voyage for me. In the ports following Spain, I felt myself beginning to open up and I made a conscious effort to communicate with as many locals as I could. Through these interactions, I feel like I have had an infinitely more enriching cultural experience and can honestly say that I got to know each country on a more than surface level. I learned that many places in the world share the same struggles and, in the end, everyone just wants to live a prosperous and happy life. Once I realized this, the world began to get a little smaller every week and I became more empathetic with the people I interacted with. I wanted to know about what their lives were like and learn about their aspirations. It's amazing how much you can learn about a culture and its people simply by having the bravery to say "Hi" to a stranger. It has made all the difference for me.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the C.Y. Tung foundation. Without your aid, none of the amazing experiences I have had would have been possible, and I will be grateful for this semester for the rest of my life. I hope that one day, I can contribute to someone else's educational journey, just as the C.Y. Tung foundation has contributed to mine. I am looking forward to re-entering life back home as a better son to my parents, a better brother to my siblings, and an overall more empathetic person thanks to my time on Semester at Sea.



Name: Dang Sen

Email address: [sen.dang.fal8@semesteratsea.org](mailto:sen.dang.fal8@semesteratsea.org)

Home country: China

University attending: Fudan University

Courses taken during Semester at Sea: U.S-China relations since 1800; Comparative government and politics; U.S foreign policy; Global Study;

Highlights of SAS experience:

To be honest, I think I can write a book to describe my highlights of SAS experience, for there are so many highlights. My first day in Africa is maybe one of the highlights I want to tell about. On that day I attended a field program called “Young entrepreneurs in Ghana”, in which we met four young entrepreneurs in that country. All of them are very innovative, energetic and patriotic, with open mind and passion to help the poor people. One of them found a dry food company after studying in Stanford University. After researching on the market, they found it would be great if they can add value to their product. Therefore, they make their food very eco-friendly and delicious, with very nice package, targeting on middle-class of Ghana. Through adding value to their product, they can make more profit, which is shared by the boss, the staffs and those peasants who supply their food. What’s more, they aim at hiring more women, in order to increase the status of women. Their commercial activity really brings wellbeing to local community.

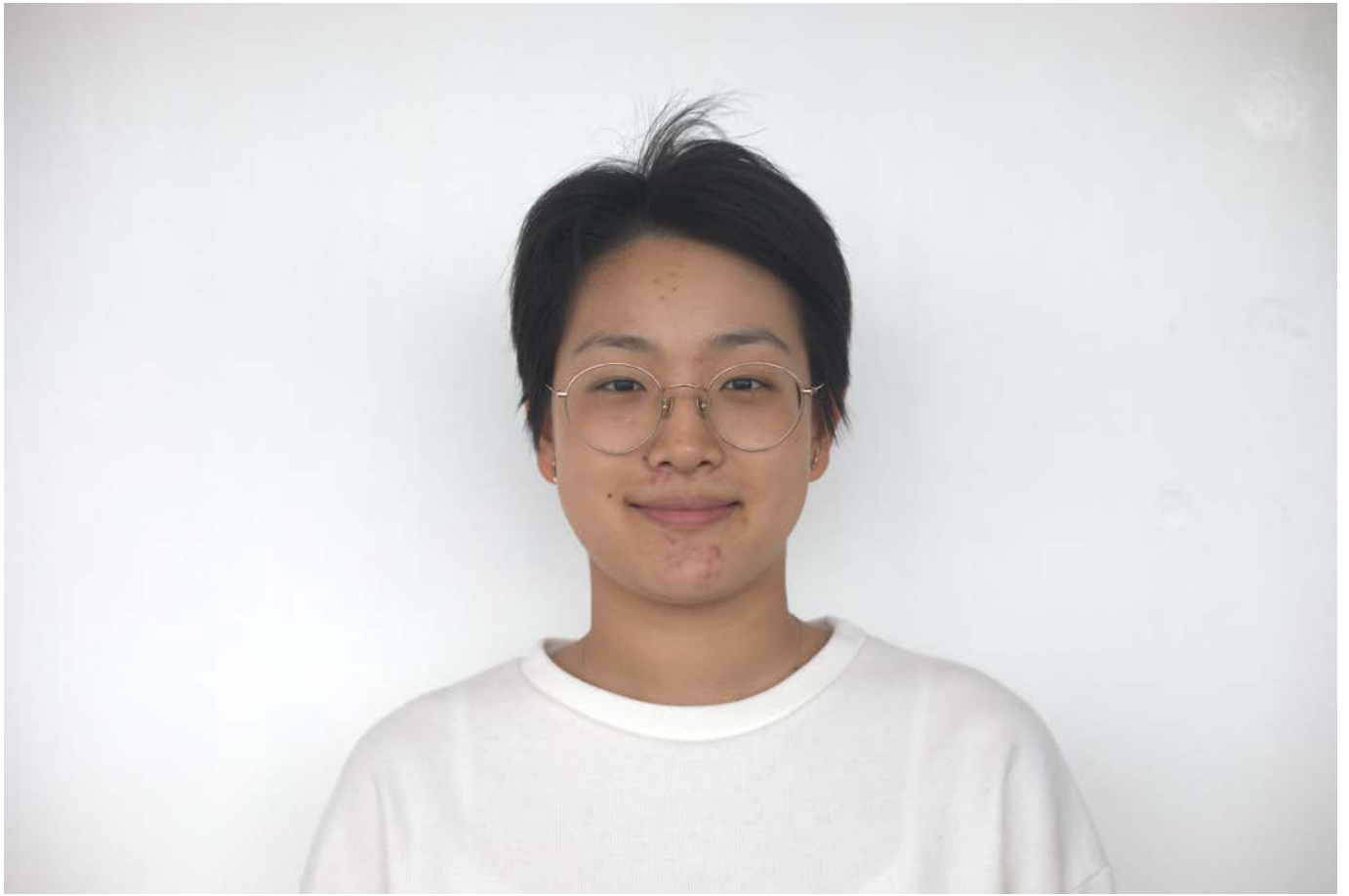
So many amazing things happened after that fancy day. In South Africa, I had the opportunity to get so close to penguins in their wild colony, which is far beyond my expectation. This experience inspired me to do more things for the environment protection and sustainable development.

Lately we had just left China, my home country. It is such a special and meaningful experience to play with our SASers in my home country. Through telling them things about China, I myself also deepened my insight over our own country. On November 28th, I had a deep talk about China and America with a girl from USA. We exchanged our views over lots of issues concerning US-China relations and so on. We even forgot the time. Our talk began at 10.pm and ended at 3.am.

Evaluate the SAS experience:

As a Chinese saying goes, ”read books and read books without words.” SAS experience gives me a precious opportunity to visit so many countries with broad range of culture background, political system and trouble. Besides that, the curriculum content of those courses on SAS is organically associated with our field trips. Before every port we would learn and research about these country, based on our own choice of courses. Post-port reflection session also encourages us to reflect more about those experiences. However, sometimes I think 4 or 5 days is too short for exploring one country which I was not familiar with at all. Maybe I think it would be better if we can have more time on each country.

---



Name: Zhirong Chen

Email: [zhirong.chen.fal8@semesteratsea.org](mailto:zhirong.chen.fal8@semesteratsea.org) University:

Fudan University, China

SAS Courses Taken: Global Studies, U.S.–China Relations

Since 1800, Psychology of Human Sexuality, Art History

(Experiencing World Architecture)

As the ship cruises ahead, travelling around the world keeps inspiring me in a romantic way. Naturally, it arouses my curiosity to explore all the human culture which deeply exists in every corner of the world. Without stereotype of any “single story”, every in-port experience can be highlight to me. They are just different from my culture, but charming and deserve respect.

To describe chronologically, I experienced Gaudi’s architecture and Picasso’s cubism in aesthetic Spain. People enjoy their life, pursuing love and beauty. Meanwhile, I saw the stagnant age in Europe, lacking motivation to move forward. In Africa, Ghana is making great efforts to develop quickly, but it’s still hard to avoid “resource curse”. Cape Town is such a complicated corner which holds black and white people, wild nature and man-made sites, wealthy waterfront and poor townships. In Mauritius, colonization results in its culture of fusion. Then it's civilized Asia! In India, one of my favourite places, I spent an overnight in the desert of Jaisalmer near the border with Pakistan and experienced Indian train in crowded Bombay (actually there is no people hanging outside). Myanmar is a holy land of Buddhism where pogodas are thickly dotted among the bush. Viewing the sunrise in Pagan on top of the pogoda brought me spiritual calmness. I embraced nature in Vietnam and trekking in the Paradise Cave is the most unique experience I’ve ever had. What’s more, I met a couple from Canada in our farmstay, who are authentic “global citizens”, free and thoughtful souls. That’s why I love independent travelling, a great opportunity to meet really nice people, to have honest and deep conversation and most importantly, to let stories begin!

Thanks for the idea of global education of SAS, I could at least cast a glimpse of the world and more important, knowing where to come back later on. The experience of culture learning through travelling makes me believe that wherever you are, people are good. Conflicts between the countries are only problems of politicians pursuing interest. Started from learning how the world’s situation is now, I began to think about how the world should be in idealism and also what we young generations can do to make it close to realize, which leads to my lifetime dream!

Education has the deepest power to improve the world. So thanks for the sponsorship of my SAS experience!



Name: Yin Siwei

Country: China

University: Fudan University

Email: 16307090212@fudan.edu.cn

Courses taken in SAS:

U.S.-China Relations Since 1800, Global Studies,

Marketing, Psychology of Human Sexuality



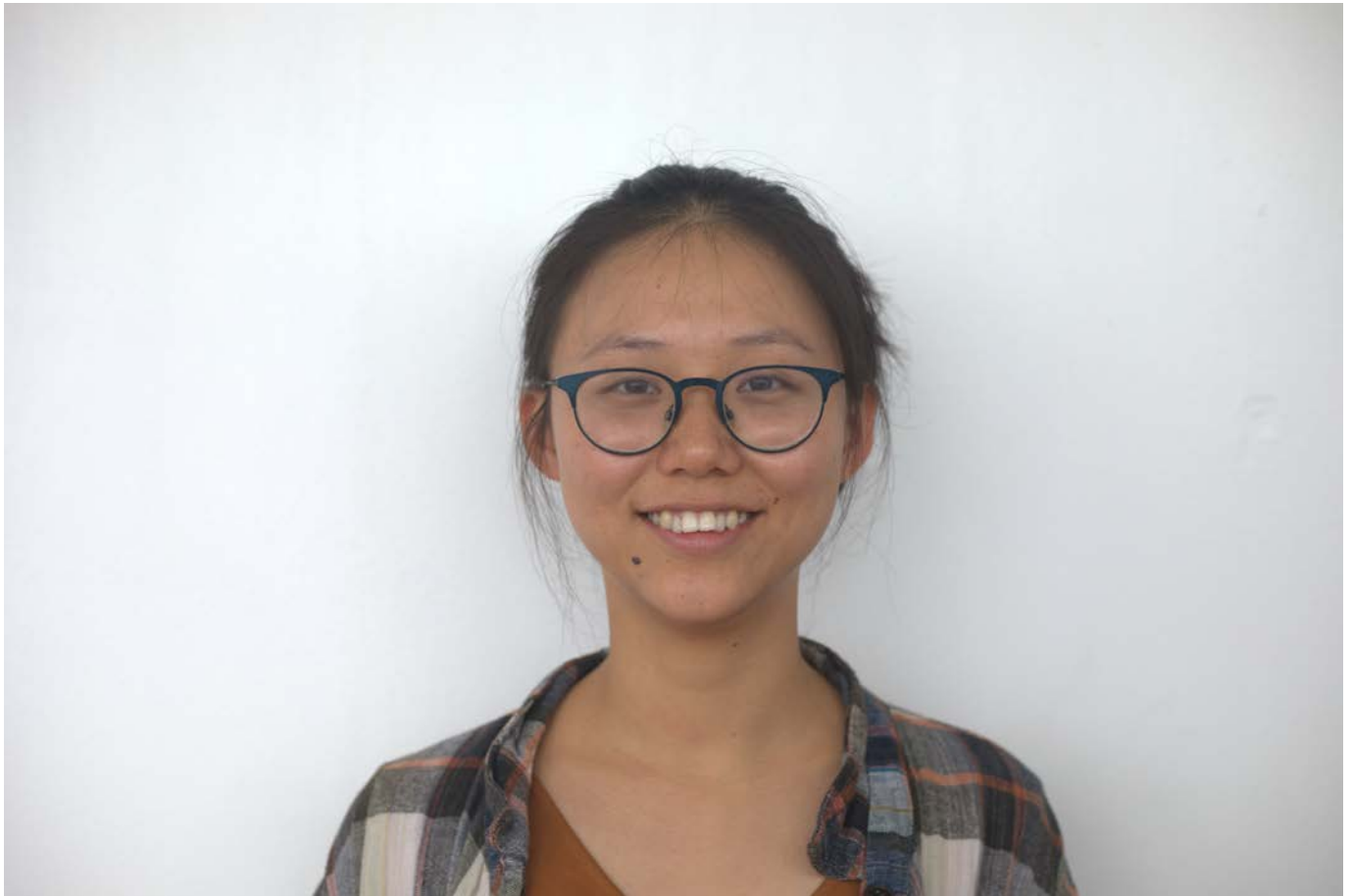
I am Yin Siwei from China. Now I am majoring in sociology at Fudan University. It is my great honor to get the CY Tung scholarship and come to this ship World Oddysey for 107 days' sea study and life. For me, this is not only an opportunity to get in touch with western education system, but also an opportunity to embrace multi-culture. In the past three months, I have benefited a lot from both professional knowledge and cultural exchanges.

Of the four courses I took, psychology of human sexuality inspired me the most. On the one hand, students can share their interesting life stories and personal insights in a free and relaxed classroom discussion atmosphere. On the other hand, they can learn professional knowledge through structured and scientific textbooks. In fact, sex itself is a hidden and sensitive topic in Chinese culture. Although it provides a loose platform for discussion on campus, gradual and professional learning enables people to view this issue rationally. In addition, the course of Global Studies also gives me a clear and organized understanding of each country from the basic country profile. Under the general trend of globalization, the significance of global education becomes more and more prominent, which is exactly the concept and mission advocated by our voyage. There is a famous Chinese saying that it is better to travel ten thousand miles than to read ten thousand books. I think all the teachers and students on this ship are lucky. We can not only increase our knowledge by reading but also increase our wisdom by walking. We had the opportunity to go to Barcelona and ask local people what they really thought about ethnic issues, and we also had the opportunity to go into South African families and listen to their attitudes towards Mandalay. All of these experiences will become our lifetime treasure and influence our life choices and value judgments.

Of all the countries I have visited so far, India is the one that impressed me the most. In the desert of northern India, my friends and I went to a camel safari. We rode our camels into the desert and set up some simple bed boards on the open sand dunes. As night fell, we sat around the fire, listening to the guides tapping on the pumps and the music from the pots and pans, eating the curry and watching the full moon rise. We talked a lot with our guide, Jitu, who has worked for 6 years. He has a cute puppy named Tony. Every day he provides 6 to 8 travelers from all over the world with friendly and careful service. For him, touching with different people is lucky to learn a lot. Even though he didn't graduate from high school, I think he knows more than all of us. He can exactly differentiate the geological direction in wide desert, and tell kinds of animals' tracks on the surface of sands. He told me that he was satisfied with current life style and enjoyed it. His words make me think about what we really want or like in real life. In fact, most of us are following the routine to do something boring and repeated which we don't love. The feeling is bad but few of us have courage to break it. To live a happy life is not easy but everyone deserves it with confidence.

In this journey of globalization, the concept of global education has deeply affected the way I think and act, which is one of the lucky points for me. There are many differences between different cultures, but there is no distinction between noble culture and humble culture. At the same time, everyone has the right to choose to follow and believe in a certain culture, of course, more generally, he or she just comes from a certain culture itself. Therefore, although sometimes we can't integrate well into other cultures, at least we should learn to

respect and understand. I think one of the most valuable aspects of this SAS experience is that it enabled me to see the bright spots of different cultures and the possibilities of different lifestyles. These insights will make me think about the significance of my own culture and provide multiple perspectives for seeking a better cultural development path. In my opinion, the communication between cultures not only broadens my horizon, but more importantly, makes me see clearly the responsibility and obligation to regain cultural confidence and revitalize cultural prosperity borne by myself.



Name: Rong Gao,

Current email address: [rong\\_gao@outlook.com](mailto:rong_gao@outlook.com)

Home country: China

College/university attended: Baylor University (post-graduate student)

List of courses taken during their Semester at Sea:

Cultural Anthropology, Explore the World through Music, U.S. and China

Relationship since 1800, Global Studies.

SAS experience I met some marvelous, interesting people while on this voyage. The conversations we've had and the relationships we've built together are treasurable. As a post-graduate student, I learned about and explored so much of the world through the courses, traveling, and people.

The SAS community is friendly and open. I am starting my own business after I finish this voyage, so I audited the entrepreneurship class. Through the class, I learned some useful, practical knowledge and had the opportunity to network with some of the guest speakers from lifelong learners group.

While on board, I started a tea club—over 100 people signed up on organization night. 15 tea club meetings later, I feel I've planted a cultural tea seed in this ship community. I usually do two meetings before each port so that people have the opportunity for an intimate and authentic experience. The tea meetings have been specifically curated based on the weather of each port that we're approaching, because people eat and drink differently based on the weather in Chinese culture.

Not only have I shared tea and my culture with students on the ship, I also did cultural tea tasting for the dependent children, professors, inter-port lecturers, and guests, including my anthropology professor Janet Six, Sylvia Vollenhoven, and Shelby Davis. Sylvia is an award-winning journalist and playwright as well as a filmmaker from South Africa, and Shelby Davis, a generous philanthropist who has sponsored a lot of my friends on this voyage for college. They have so much wisdom and I felt very lucky to be able to build a close relationship with them. Sylvia, specifically, has impacted me so much. She's very spiritual, intuitive and inspiring. Hearing her stories about life and career encourages me to follow my intuition and passion to start my career in tea and culture sharing after I finish this voyage.

The concept and vision of SAS is great, and SAS did have proved to create a lot of memorable and meaningful experiences in the past 55 years. However, I believe that there are other things that SAS can do to make it better. Below is a list of things matter that I want to share my point of view.

1. Awarding Scholarships
2. Diversity vs. Inclusion
3. Learning or consuming? And how can we do better?
4. Interport lecturers and students?
5. Auction, Donation?
6. Field programs? Mauritius and Hawaii, why do we have to pay to get off the ship?
7. Drinking water quality
8. Transparency on why student have been mandated to leave the ship early

1. Awarding Scholarships - I developed friendships with a lot of great people on the ship, including Davis scholar and Bill Gates' scholarship awardees, but I still think that SAS could scrutinize their candidate selections. For instance, the GPA requirement for this voyage is 2.5. Based on what I've heard, whoever reaches that standard and applies would get in. I understand that GPA is only one of the elements when it comes to see the eligibility of a candidate, but perhaps this could be accompanied with an interview to factor in a wider variety of merits.

2. Diversity vs. Inclusion - Excited to meet people from all around the world, I was surprised that over half of students are from the U.S.. Not just the students, some classes and the food, student activities here, everything is pretty much U.S. centered. Though this voyage has the most diverse student bodies of any previous voyage, diversity is still very limited. International students are considered minority groups on the ship. When U.S. centered point of view is pervasive in everyday life on the ship, international students get offended and started to be very nationalistic. There's an effort being put from the administration team and some faculty members to emphasize that how diverse the current student body is. For example, when it comes to each port of each country, some students would be invited on the stage to talk about the culture of the port country, labeled as or represented x country. However, this might trigger more complex feelings from other students, because culture is fluid. For example, when one student claimed some customs from his/her home country, but it's actually an influence of a different culture long time ago. A student from the other culture would feel weird.

Instead of saying how diverse the student body is, guiding students to think how similar we are to each other would be more beneficial to the harmony of the shipboard community and understanding. We can all get very ethnocentric, but if we see that we as a group – human beings- we all share similar emotions such as joy, fear, frustration, excitement, then we know we are no difference than the others. I believe that the administration and faculty team has great capacity to guide and impact the students – what to present and how to lead the thoughts of mind from the student body will determine students' overall SAS experiences and even help them become a more understanding and inquisitive global citizen.

SAS could also utilize the international students from past voyage to help recruit more international students. There are 11 people from China on the ship. Three of the students are from FuDan University, main land China. If SAS can have students from different universities of China, it would be better when it comes to the story and pictures of China, because that way people can learn how complex China really is.

### 3. Learning or consuming? What to consume? And how can we do better?

What I mentioned last in the previous point continues here. Learning or consuming – why people chose to come SAS? Why do I even ask this question? This goes back to point number 1 – the candidates. I have a close friend from China who's on ship sailing with SAS. She had mentioned it before that she doesn't want THESE PEOPLE go to our country, because all they do is to take advantages of the currency exchange rate and do damages to the country.

Back to point number 1, one reason I put that first because three months down the road, I see it myself that A LOT OF people on the ship just want to get drunk in every single country. After I came back from Vietnam, I heard people got injured and police were involved in several incidents, which was not the first time I've heard similar things. I was concerned. I was so excited for everyone who's never been to China. On the other hand, I was also concerned because it'd be such a pity if these people were drunk in one of the most ancient countries in the world.

Before I came to this voyage, as a post-graduate student, my mum asked me – what is that for? I said – I'm going to see the world to learn about life, and share my culture, which I have been committed fully during my time on the ship and in the port countries. When I'm in port, I'd visit teahouses or tea farm in each port to learn and exchange.

What about the other people on the ship? What is their incentive or motive? Seeing the world sounds so cool. Plus, SAS already has been advertised it everywhere that this is a world classroom. However, not everyone is aware of this his or her own goal of this trip. SAS has the “conscious traveller” values or guidelines, and there was a “conscious traveller” panel for the Asian countries to prepare students to respect different cultures and political environment of each country, which is great. It would be better if there were more “conscious traveller” panels to address the challenges that all human beings face nowadays such as global warming, climate change, overpopulation, etc. Through addressing such questions to ask the students why are they here.

We are all here to consume, fairly speaking, for learning is also consuming, except for some of us consume differently. What to consume is a question to ask everyone including the students, the faculty, and the administration team. Another question to ask is what can we create or what can we solve. The awareness that everyone's capacity and thoughts can do something better to the world is going to have greater influence on everyone sailing with SAS. Besides of strengthening learning and consuming, guiding students and everyone from the community to

give, to create, and to produce will trigger bigger ripples in people's life and really make this world a better place.

4. Interport lecturers and students? I noticed that there weren't any interport lecturers or students from China at preport of Vietnam November 13, which was disappointing. After back from Vietnam, I went ask the academic dean why. She said efforts have been put to get an interport lecturer, but something happened so it ended up no one's coming. Usually interport students are invited in pre-port to talk about traffic and living in a country. It was known that 9i there weren't any interport students from China on Nov 13. The student life office didn't try to contact any of Chinese students until the last minute on Nov 23 about 4-5 pm in the afternoon to ask them if they'd like to talk about Shanghai's traffic and life on preport, which is not acceptable. Other Chinese on the ship and I all felt that this shipboard community doesn't really respect and care about our culture.

#### 5. Auction, Donation?

I was very excited for the charity auction. In fact, I donated a tea tasting experience for it. However, it made me feel very sick after I went to the auction night. I wasn't the only student feeling that. One Davis Scholar from Germany and another student from Canada were also shocked for what happened that night, which became known as the night of crazy rich Americans the next day. It was great that a lot of funds were raised for the future students, but the way that the money was raised was not appropriate. The auctioneer (Matt) created a lot of peer pressure for people to raise the price. Students could not normally pay for some items with that amount of money, but the environment made them feel they should. Alcohol was served during the live auction with the intent of removing people's critical thinking skills or inhibition. Some friends of mine shared with me the next day that they were so happy that they didn't win the auction.

There were two parts of the auction: a silent auction and live auction. Some items got to go to live auction and others didn't. I talked with Kevin, who's in charge of cooperating and organizing the auction. He told me he and Matt (Executive dean of student life) were the two people selecting the items. The factors that they took into considerations were how popular items could be and a lot of guessing. Last but not least, students want transparency for the use of the fund. Based on it's been said from the administration team (Kevin), the fund goes to financial aid of the future SAS students. However, only tax documents from the future would tell.

#### 6. Field programs?

Mauritius and Hawaii, why do we have to pay to get off the ship? It became a public wonder that why the SAS's field programs are so expensive. Is there any way to cut the cost? Some day field programs would cost at least over 100 dollars, which is a lot of money to some students. Students have been wondered why do we have to pay to get off the ship in Mauritius and Hawaii. It seems like to be what students from previous voyages have done. The problem is

previous students have done very bad damages to these two islands (rumors said they got drunk and trashed the island, and some students came back to the ship very late), and the solution that SAS offers right now is to limit students' access and activity in the islands through purchasing field programs with SAS. This is an indirect way of punishment to students from current voyage. The punishment is that one should either pay the "fine" to get off the boat or one should just stay on the ship. The logic behind this solution is not reasonable. It has shown that some students also have alcoholic drinks in other field programs. Second, it is an over-generalization to apply this rule to all the students. Back to point number 1, SAS needs to be better at picking the candidates.

#### 7. Drinking water quality

The potable water available from the tap has a high level of contaminants. Water on the ship has a very strong weird taste. I've used a water meter to test the Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) in the water on the ship, which is used to determine the general quality of the water. I happened to get to talk with the water guy when I was in Mauritius, who told me the water is not drinkable. Though the EPA's recommended maximum level of TDS in water is 500 ppm, the ppm level falls between 300 – 500 might be negative for kidneys. And once the TDS of the water I've tested from the hot water bucket in Berlin restaurant was 500. It is considered that people who have kidney problem have better have water level below 100 ppm. I asked water guy from Mauritius then what should we drink. He said bottle water. However, the one bottle of water costs \$3, which would be \$189 if one drinks one bottle of water a day on the ship. Everyone was charged of over \$6000 for boarding (food and room, service) on the ship, why do we have to pay extra to get clean and healthy water when 70 % of human beings body is water. Each room has someone to tidy and organize the bed every day, but that's not as necessary as the water. I personally really want to bring water from port country, because the water on the ship either sucks or is too expensive to afford. However, we are not permitted buy bottled water off the ship and bring it on board.

8. Transparency on why student have been mandated to leave the ship early I had no idea that some of the students left the ship early at the beginning of this semester. Only rumors started to go around and several students and even faculties assured that I knew it was reality that students were asked to leave early for various kinds of reasons. This point can tie back to point number 1 – please be better at picking the candidates. Some of the students got drunk in Spain and hit people, which was not acceptable. Back to this point, I understand that disciplinary act or notice could be something personal. Proper disclosure is a way to show SAS's attitudes and values. For example, the information that one of the students who insulted girls was asked to leave early could have been released by SAS and mentioned that they don't tolerate such behaviors.

I enjoyed SAS a lot and I have become friends with a lot of great souls on this ship. Above are my honest opinions about this voyage. SAS is a great idea to change a lot of people's lives, but I believe that it can be better.

---





Name: Lun Wai Lam, William

Email: ky002915@gmail.com

Home Country: Hong Kong

School: Hong Kong Baptist University, Applied Economics

Course taken: U.S – China relation since 1800, Oceanography, Architecture  
history, Global Studies

Thank you for making it happening

First of all, I would like to express my humblest gratitude for your support, especially financially, which manifested this voyage into a reality for me. Waking up every morning in the cabin, in the middle of the ocean, is still a wild realization for me. There is no doubt that I won't be able to embark my voyage with Semester at Sea (SAS), had it not been the generous support from ISE and the Tung Foundation.

Life changing experience

I want to shed light on some of the experiences that I have had so far, and how did they have already profoundly impacted my world-view and values. I wrote those words while I was in South Africa and Ghana, places that have taught me a lesson of a lifetime.

“I never know what to expect from South Africa, though it has always been my most-anticipated port at the SAS voyage. I guess the reason being my chances of visiting there, had I not done SAS, is fairly low, and so I was fairly excited when the MV World Odyssey finally has made its way into the terminal. (I had simply rejected Ghana because, frankly, I didn't even think I would like it there. But I loved my time in Ghana, that's another story.)

Cape Town is a modern, developed city in the southern part of the country. It has an outrageously beautiful landscape and coastal line, making itself pretty much a natural paradise. Witnessing the ship sailing closer to Cape Town was a balm to my eyes, the companion of the seals was a bonus. But my genuine appreciation for South Africa didn't really grow until I have embarked on my field program – the cradle of humankind.

We flew into Johannesburg where we have visited, on a brief note, the Apartheid Museum, Constitution Hill, and the Cradle of Humankind. The entrance of the Apartheid was peculiar yet apt for its name. On our tickets, we were assigned white or non-white, and we will have to go through different entrance for contrasted experiences. The history and the exhibition of the apartheid period pieced my heart, and in the name of heaven, how could such aberration actually happen. I was in tears watching a movie annotating the injustice and pain brought to humanity and the coloured people of South Africa. In the war of right against might, racial segregation ruthlessly striped the freedom and rights of the coloured people in South Africa. It was beyond doubt a low-point in human history.

The Cradle of humankind was declared a world heritage site By UNSECO in 1999. It is the world richest hominin site, home to around 40% of the world's human ancestor fossils. Anthropologists and Archaeologists work hand in hand there to retrace the life and history of our ancestors. We were given rich and informed lectures by one of the leading paleoanthropologist that engaged in the rising star expedition. The talks were scholarly and educating, and I certainly enjoyed every part of it. One of the biggest take away was not just the knowledge but understanding that we are all the same. Generically speaking, we possess DNA that is more than 99% the same. Races, social classes are all essentially social constructed. Researches have suggested that humankind was originated at Africa - it is home to all of us. Maropeng, the museum we visited, in fact, means welcome home. In today's world of history, we see protectionism over openness, burning down bridges instead building one, there is a lesson that we should all learn about. My experience at the cradle of humankind echoed with that in the apartheid museum. My time in South Africa would have been so different had it not been my time spent at the field program.

I am certain that I will be back one day. Thank you South Africa. Until next time. “

Learn and grow

“Ghana has taught me a lesson that the purest form of happiness is deeply rooted in simplicity, and it is built upon the very bonding between individuals regardless of races, social-economic and culture backgrounds. We all live in an affluent community, and perhaps sometime we forget to live simple and feel more as a human. My experience at Ghana has no doubt broadened my definition for happiness. It is true that money, to some degree, can buy happiness, but we have to also bear in mind that there are also some form of joy that are priceless. Kids in Ghana never stop the smiling on their face, a simple high-five can bring them the best laughter. We don't always need “likes” on social media to feel joy, it is the genuine interconnection between people that nurture our daily lives.

I met Fred on a field program with SAS in Ghana, and Fred is probably the most inspiration human being that I have met. He succeeded beyond all the limits and won himself scholarships to pursuit education in the United States and London. Yet, upon finishing his studies, unlike many other international students, he decided to return to Ghana and devote himself in charity/ education. He could have easily become a member of the elite class in Ghana, but he instead chose to fall so that he could raise the others up. He quitted his job at Uber as a high-rank official, and pumped all of his saving into building a school for his own community - so that kids in his village could have a platform to grow and shine one day. “

Talking to Fred and others on the ship makes me realized that there is a bigger part of me in this world. I don't know exactly how I am going to contribute to the world, but I am sure I am on my way. As the voyage is already half done at the time I am writing this report. I hope to learn as much as possible and to continue cherish my remaining time at SAS. I forward to going back to Hong Kong with everything that I have learned, contributing a bigger part of me to the community.

---



Name: Finn Nixdorf –

Email: [finnixdorf@gmail.com](mailto:finnixdorf@gmail.com)

University: Pennsylvania State University,

Home Country: United States of America

Classes taken during Semester at Sea: ART-320-81191 - Global Encounters in Art (Focus: Sacred Spaces) HIST-466-81248-U.S. - China Relations Since 1800 IE-300-77165 - Global Studies (Section 1) MU-132-81242-Exploring World Music (Section 2)

My Semester at Sea experience has been everything I could have hoped it would be and more. When I first found out that I would be able to attend the fall 2018 voyage, I ran around my house with excitement. More specifically, the moment that I received the news that I had been awarded the C.Y. Tung Scholarship, I absolutely lost it. Until I got that news, my future with Semester at Sea was uncertain. I knew that it would be extremely difficult for me to raise the funds on my own. Being awarded this scholarship was, without a doubt, the most impactful moment of my SAS experience. Now, I could not wait to participate in this amazing opportunity. However, nothing could have prepared me for the journey or the adventures that were to come. I feel that above all else, the people that I met and the friends that I have made are the greatest part of this semester. As the journey draws to a close, my new friends and I have already begun to make plans to visit each other in the coming months. I can already feel the life-long relationships starting to form, and I look forward to the many years of friendship with my fellow voyagers who, until September, I had never even met before. The feeling of community that has existed aboard the ship since day one has been a huge contributor to these relationships and another highlight of this semester. Nowhere else in my life have I felt so comfortable so quickly with so many strangers. In a more specific sense, one of my favorite countries visited this semester would have to be China. Ever since I spent the summer before my voyage in Shanghai, I have been yearning to return to the amazing city. Showing my friends how to use the metro and taking them to my favorite hangout spots was definitely a highlight of my trip. Additionally, impressing my fellow voyagers with my Chinese skills was also fun. But most importantly, an experience that I had been looking forward to all voyage occurred in Shanghai. On the last day in port, my U.S.-China Relations class went on our field class to the U.S. consulate. I had the incredible opportunity to meet with an American Foreign Service Officer and discuss the details of his work in China. Becoming an FSO has been a career that I have been considering ever since starting my first Chinese language course. Having the chance to actually interview a current Foreign Service Officer working in the exact same consulate that I one day plan to work at was an experience that very few will ever have. Looking back on these highlights of my voyage, I could not be more pleased with how the semester went. The friends I have made and the experiences that I have had will remain with me far into the future. I eagerly await sharing my many stories with my friends and family once I return home.

When my roommate and I were reminiscing over the events of the voyage, we both agreed that everyone in the world should have this experience. I remember multiple occasions during this semester when I thought about just how incredible it was that I was actually aboard the MV World Odyssey and sailing around the world as a college student. This journey has been nothing less than perfect, and I would rate it as high as I possibly can. The countries that we visited on

the Fall 2018 voyage felt diverse in every aspect of the word. Traveling from Europe, around Africa, through Asia, and across the Pacific provides an unforgettable journey through many of the world's most interesting communities. The field programs that I chose to participate in satisfied my ambitions for the semester and gave me a great introduction to the many countries. I say introduction because although Semester at Sea is an incredible adventure, it is limited my time. Only having the ability to spend a little less than a week in these countries is one of the few weaknesses of the program. However, I understand the reasons behind the shortage of time, which is why I utilized the opportunities provided by the field programs to make the most of my limited time. Each program was a unique adventure that contributed to my overall SAS experience. Once I return to Penn State, I plan on acting as an ambassador for Semester at Sea and attending my school's study abroad fair in order to promote this program. I firmly believe that if any student even has a remote possibility of embarking on a voyage they should take it. The Semester at Sea experience is, in my opinion, the most impactful semester that any university student could ever have.