

Intensive Chinese Language + Culture

October 2012

Mid-Semester Update, Fall Semester

Chinese Language Classes and Language Commitment

This semester, 13 students at Nanjing program enrolled in two levels of Chinese language classes: intermediate and intermediate advanced level. From Monday to Thursday, students are in classes from 8am to 12pm. Besides the accelerated pace of the classes, teachers have high requirements and expectations for them. For example, in the intermediate advanced level spoken Chinese class, Professor Guo requires each student to make a 10-minute presentation all in Chinese each week. Although it is very challenging, students make a lot of preparation by making PowerPoint slides in Chinese and doing multiple practices before presenting in class. Professor Guo said as this was the 8th week, students had made substantial progress in terms of the number of words they spoke per minute and the new vocabulary they used in speech. Some students even presented in Chinese close to 15 minutes.

During the orientation meetings, students made a group language commitment to speak Chinese Monday through Friday from 8am to 8pm. It is difficult because the length of students' Chinese language learning ranges from two to six semesters in the U.S. However, students try very hard and manage to communicate in Chinese. They often learn from each other in conversation. When one hears others' mistakes and hesitations, one pays more attention when he/she talks. They learn to talk very creatively using the vocabulary they know with a lot of facial expressions and body language. They even develop inside jokes in Chinese. Although sometimes conversations are not very thorough, students deserve applause for their great efforts to keep the commitment!



In the stone boat at the Presidential Palace

Study Trips to Jiming Temple and a Primary School

When learning about religion practices in China in the Contemporary Chinese Studies course, students visited a renowned Buddhist Temple in Nanjing—Ji Ming (Cock Crowing) Temple. We had the opportunity to meet the abet and heard from a senior nun the historical significance of the temple and the current practice of Buddhists. We were invited to have lunch with the nuns and monks in their dining hall and watched the rituals they do before every meal.

We had a very quiet lunch because it was forbidden to talk during meals and the food was pure vegetarian and simple as required by Buddhist practice traditions. We felt very privileged because normally no visitors would be allowed in the dining hall, let alone to have lunch together with the nuns and monks.



Teaching at the school with migrant children

When the class learned about migration in China, we visited Yuhua Primary School with over 60% of its student body from migrant families. Principal Ye gave us an introduction about the school's operation and the policy of Nanjing municipal government towards the education of migrant children. Then students went into the classrooms to have some interactions with the primary children and were warmly welcomed by the kids. At the end of the visit, some students decided to volunteer teaching at this school accepting migrant children.

Field trips in Nanjing The weather has been nice and enjoyable in September and October and we visited various historical and cultural sites in Nanjing. We went to the Presidential Palace where Dr. Sun Yat-sen was sworn as the provincial president of the Republic of China (1912-1949) and where Chiang Kai-shek held his office. It was also the palace of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace (1850-1864), one of the greatest rebellions in the world in history. We also visited the Purple Mountain where lays Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Mausoleum and Xiaoling Tomb of the Ming Dynasty, a World Cultural Heritage credited by UNESCO. Coming up soon is our weeklong trip to Xi'an and the Silk Road at the end of October. Stay tuned!

