

Daily Journal Entries

May 18th by Jonathan Sarfin

Our first full day in Shanghai was very cool. We had a delicious breakfast with dumplings and congee, tofu and fried dough and then we went off to our first seminar at Shanghai University. I didn't know exactly what to expect, what the format would be or how formal the conversation was, but we were all very pleased and a little surprised to be engaged in a casual but lively conversation with our 10 counterparts from Shanghai U. It took us a little while to get acclimated, but all of us were very curious and had many questions to ask, not necessarily about politics or economics (although those did come up) but mostly about our lives in general, about our schooling and our thoughts about university. Some of our group was amazed that it only costs 6000 kuai per year to go to such a well-renowned university. On the other hand, Eric and Lynn (two of the Shanghai U students) were similarly shocked that tuition is so expensive in the United States. They expressed this sentiment again at lunch, which I really quite enjoyed. All 20 of us had lunch together, intermingling at tables with our food before us and getting to know each other. The lunch, even more casual than the seminar (for we were not separated by a long table as at the seminar) was probably my favorite part. Unfortunately we had to depart sooner than I would have liked, but it made me happy that we could exchange contact information like email addresses and even WeChat or WhatsApp numbers, and I look forward to staying in contact with my new friends.

We spent the afternoon at the free trade zone in Shanghai, which was also very interesting. The Chinese government, as I understand it, is conducting an experiment of sorts by letting businesses trade without any restriction or much oversight, which seems like quite a departure from what one might expect from China. We saw three "exhibitions" from different countries: Italy, Australia, and Russia, as well as the Factory to Consumer (F2C) wine zone. The exhibitions, which showcased all sorts of different products one could buy from each country, were very artfully constructed and displayed: Russia's sold matryoshka dolls, Australia's sold kangaroo skin rugs, and Italy's had some very expensive clothes from the fashion houses in Milan. The F2C was also very aesthetically pleasing in its construction and full of wine from hundreds of countries. We had a very informative tour and saw lots of very expensive wine (too expensive for me!) but what I thought was most interesting was the idea behind the F2C: it is to combat fraud and counterfeit or inferior wine, which is apparently a problem here. It was a little odd to me that one could not inherently trust the source from which one buys one's products, but I think it is better that the government is attempting to solve the problem rather than ignore it.

In the evening we took the metro into the heart of the city and went to Jing'an temple, which was so beautiful in the cool night air, surrounded by flashing lights and skyscrapers. We spent several hours strolling in the area and watching the people go by, which was so pleasant, and going into stores with brands we recognized and brands we

did not. I really enjoyed seeing "traditional" Chinese architecture juxtaposed with modern architecture.

May 19th by Stephen Parsons

We began the day with a visit to the Shanghai Institute of Technology. The sun came out in the morning for a great view of their beautiful campus. While UK has expanded and adapted over many years, this much newer campus was essentially built all at once and as a result has a very unified style in the construction and landscaping. Following our arrival, we first had the honor of meeting the Chancellor of the university, Mr. Song Wu.

Next we had the opportunity to meet with the students of the university, which I believe was a highlight for all of us. Our seminar focused on economic development and environmental protection. There is a lot to cover with this topic, and I believe as a result we felt that it was difficult to really dig down on any one discussion within the larger subject. Nonetheless, it was a great experience to meet the students at SIT and learn more about them. After the discussion we had lunch with the students, which was perhaps more educational for us than the seminar, and was also a great deal of fun.

Today our "adults" ate in another room to discuss what I am sure were important business matters. Meanwhile, our students and those from SIT had a room to themselves to laugh with each other. We learned that we share comical opinions regarding some pop stars, and we were honored when one of the students from SIT read a poem from the great Chinese poet Li Bai, which was a farewell to a dear friend. Once again we exchanged WeChat contact information with the students and we have already been in touch with them in a large group message after leaving the campus.

After a campus tour we left in order to go to a bottling facility of Nestle. At the facility they begin with PET granules and manufacture the bottles for various sizes up to five liters. After the onsite bottle manufacturing, they are of course filled and capped. Almost half of the water in their recipe comes from an onsite well, 235 meters deep. I was astounded that the well had the capacity to keep up with their production in the plant (much of the rest of the water comes from tap water which is also purified before bottling). We were able to don steel-toed shoe caps, hair nets, and white jackets for a fascinating tour of the facility. We got up close and personal with some impressive machinery and were able to gain an appreciation of the scale of production at the plant. Despite its size on the outside, the facility was quite compact as we learned square meters do not come cheap in the middle of Shanghai.

Even given these successes, the day was far from over. Our naps on the bus ride ended when we woke up in the stunning financial district of Shanghai, Lujiazui. The skyline was far and away the best many of us had ever seen, highlighted by buildings such as the Oriental Pearl Tower, the Shanghai World Financial Center, and the Shanghai Tower. The view only improved as we boarded a river cruise along the Huangpu. We watched the sun set over the skyline as we ate a tasty regional meal (rice with many small servings of a variety of foods) and then climbed to the upper deck from which we could watch the

lights of the city go by. The famous buildings downtown were gorgeous, but it was also great to see the staggering number of other beautiful buildings showcasing light shows and unique architectural styles. The evening was capped by a visit to the Oriental Pearl Tower. We were surprised that we were ushered past the long line for the elevators and were able to immediately ascend 263 meters to the observation deck. The perspective from this height was once again beautiful, and it was a great end to a very busy and enjoyable day.

May 20th by Sarah Wagner

After breakfast in the hotel (by now we all know our favorite Chinese breakfast dishes and pile those on buffet plates practically in bulk), we set out for what might be considered one of our more "touristy" days—taking in the city of Shanghai through the various museums and famous shopping areas.

We began at the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibit, home to an incredible scale model of the city, complete with its own nighttime skyline (a different view, even from the view we had at the top of the Pearl Tower last night).

This trip was followed by the Shanghai Museum, a fantastic collection of Chinese art I wish we could have spent more time in (although, honestly, on this trip, I wish we had more time for everything—I can't get enough of this city).

For lunch we were around the City God Temple, getting a taste of some of the more touristy shops and vendors that are also so crucial to Shanghai culture. The local dumplings were incredible (with the exception of the ones that fell on the ground, as we still occasionally struggle with chopsticks), and the vendors gave some of us a fun first experience with haggling prices.

Following this excursion, we visited the Yu Garden, a fantastic and also drastic change from its surrounding environment. Beautiful traditional Chinese architecture still exists within the center of Shanghai—the traditional upward lifting red roofs with glass skyscrapers as a backdrop. Plus, it provided the perfect scene for Phillip to pull out his newly purchased mahjong set.

After this we took a trip to the Bund to take photographs of the city, but I think more people took photographs of us. As an American group in a Chinese city, we were certainly entertained by all the tourists that were taking photos of us, and made some friends along the way.

May 21st by Philip Barnett

This trip has been an incredible whirlwind of firsts for me personally. Before coming to China with the Gaines Center and the Confucius Institute, I had never left North America, I had never flown, and I had never ridden a train. My first experience outside of North

America is just about as far away from the continent as possible, my first flight was longer than most people have ever flown, and this morning, my first train ride was on a train that travels at over 300km/h.

The morning started bright and early as we left the hotel at 5:30am to catch our train travelling from Shanghai to Qufu. We arrived at the airport in time for some of us to get a taste of Chinese fast food breakfast, which consisted of spicy noodles. Once aboard the train, I was astounded at how smooth the ride was despite being so much faster than a normal train. On the train, Grace taught a small group of us how to play Mahjong, a traditional Chinese game played with tiles that have different symbols and Chinese characters carved into them.

Once we arrived in Qufu, our awesome new tour guide Albert took us to the Queli hotel while giving us a brief history of the town and its favorite son, Confucius. Confucius, who Albert informed us is an ancestor of one-sixth of the Qufu population, was a Chinese philosopher and teacher whose many disciples copied down his wise sayings, which were eventually compiled into a book known as the *Analects of Confucius*. Before lunch, we were given free time that we used to briefly explore the area immediately surrounding the hotel. We discovered that the city was extremely tourist friendly as it is filled with hundreds of street vendors selling trinkets and artwork and food that all harkened back to Chinese culture, especially Confucius. At lunch, we noted that a few of the dishes more strongly resembled the Americanized Chinese cuisine we were familiar with back home and we saw this again later at dinner.

After lunch, we toured the Confucius mansion and the Confucius cemetery with Albert as our well-informed tour guide. We learned an abundance of history about our surroundings and Chinese culture. The Confucius mansion was not in fact the residence of Confucius, but rather, it was built as a home for his direct descendants hundreds of years later. The vast campus and elegant traditional architecture of the mansion made it clear that the Confucius family was treated as royalty. The cemetery, which is called a forest in Chinese culture, housed many of Confucius' direct descendants as well as Confucius himself. Confucius, his son, and his grandson were all placed very close together and each grave had a stone stele that was shaped like a small well and was used for ceremonial purposes. At both sites, there were many statues of dragons. As we saw both today and earlier this week, houses of nobility in China feature a male and female dragon statue at their entrance. The male holds a ball, while the female holds a baby. All in all, today's adventures were very informative and very intriguing and I believe we all had a great time learning about the history of Qufu and thus about the history and culture of China.

May 22nd by Jonathan Elliott

Friday morning was spent visiting the Confucius Temple, an expansive setting with countless buildings dedicated to memorializing Confucius, Confucian ideals, or Confucius's family. The tour guide provided a detailed description of the history behind many of these buildings, taking care to emphasize the cultural significance of their

construction. In addition to the intricate buildings in the temple, it was interesting as a foreign observer to consider the actions of those for whom Confucianism plays a large role in their daily lives. Around 11 in the morning, a ceremony took place in traditional dress near one of the main buildings in the temple, giving an added human layer to the experience.

After visiting the Confucius Temple, we went to Qufu Normal University to meet with a group of students to discuss Confucianism. The discussion was structured very differently from previous discussions we had had at prior universities. Rather than sitting in long rows and having a large discussion, we split into small groups. Because there were more Qufu Normal University students than University of Kentucky students, many of us ended up with several Qufu Normal University students. The students were quick to emphasize the role of Confucius both in their city and also in the daily lives of many Chinese people in providing a moral code by which to live. The conversation concerning differences between Western and Eastern philosophy was an especially productive one.

Following this discussion, these student groups provided a tour of their university, covering buildings as varied as the library, student dormitories, and their science building. While the campus tour was certainly interesting, conversations with the students were even more insightful in giving a glimpse into the lives of university students in Shandong Province. As with other student groups in Shanghai, conversations concerning similarities and differences in daily life ensued, and conversations regarding TV shows, movies, and music were quickly adopted. The students were all very kind and welcoming, and they all seemed to really enjoy showing our group their university, of which they appeared very proud.

Following our time at Qufu Normal University, we boarded a bus in order to make the 1.5-hour drive to Tai'an, where we were spending the night. We checked into our hotel in the city, which was certainly larger than Qufu, although nowhere near the scale of Shanghai. We had a fantastic dinner with some local foods on the menu. There were no late evening plans, and, as we all seemed quite tired, we all seemed to fall asleep quite early in order to get sufficient rest for our upcoming hike the next day.

May 23rd by Rachel Jang

The word "hiking" does not do justice for the experiences that took place today. We have been anticipating climbing up Mount Tai, the most famous mountain in China. Having heard that it would be a long and difficult hike, I, as an inexperienced hiker, was nervous about whether I would be able to complete the journey or not. But I was also excited to challenge myself and to be a part of this very unique experience.

The weather was absolutely beautiful. Even though the sun was out, it wasn't so strong, and we could enjoy the occasional breeze under the shade. After some of us equipped ourselves with hats, bottled water, and very affordable and stylish climbing sticks, we separated into several small groups and began our journey to the top.

The first half was relaxing. There were a lot of steps, but having some flat ground to walk on helped to keep up the pace. It was interesting to see how other people dressed for the hike. Some people wore long-sleeved shirts, long jeans, windbreakers, high heels, and even dresses with purses. We were very impressed that despite their outfits, they seemed at ease hiking up. After gathering at the halfway point, we continued the second part of the hike at a much slower pace.

That was when it became very difficult to keep up the previous pace on the hike. The steps were slick and narrow, and it was so steep that I worried about falling down sometimes when I had chances to look back. The scenery was incredibly beautiful from the height, though, and I think it helped me to move myself to the next steps.

While continuing the climb, I saw several inscriptions on the boulders that were ordered by emperors thousands of years ago, or quoted Chairman Mao after the Cultural Revolution. Being able to appreciate and learn the culture and the history made the climb quite meaningful and educational.

The climb itself was also a character-building experience. I personally had a chance to think a lot while I climbed the stairs, and one of the many thoughts that occurred to me was the similarity between climbing such a great mountain and life. As I thought to move my feet from one step to another, I thought about how applicable that thought and motion are to getting through difficulties as we live. When we regrouped for lunch, I think many of us had come to a similar realization.

There were impressive Buddhist and Confucian temples at the top. It was fascinating to see so many people still keeping their faith and paying respect to the statues, praying for the health and well-being of their families.

The view was amazing, and it was completely worth hiking up 6000+ steps. Thankfully, though, we didn't have to repeat the workout, and instead took the cable car down to the midway point and then the bus.

Looking back up at the mountain, we were all proud of ourselves for having accomplished an amazing feat and having had the opportunity to complete the challenge.

May 24th by Jacob Mattingly

On Sunday, May 24, the Gaines Center's trip to China began its final leg. The morning began with a short bus trip from the hotel in Tai'an to the city's train station, followed by a two-hour train ride to the country's capital, Beijing. Upon arrival in Beijing, the group ate a quick (and delicious) lunch before making its way to the hotel to check in for the final time before returning to the United States.

After checking in at the hotel, the group made its way to the Temple of Heaven, a centuries-old site within the city. Originally constructed for use by the Emperor in performing worship services to ensure good harvests, the Temple of Heaven is an

example of the grandeur of Chinese traditional architecture. Since the days of its use as a religious site, it has been repurposed as a public park. It was interesting to see buildings hundreds of years of age juxtaposed against contemporary scenes. We saw several people dancing and playing music as well as many individuals and groups exploring and observing the architecture. The site appeared to be an interesting fusion of new and old scenes; for example, a large television screen sits in front of a massive ancient building, and modern tunes can be heard playing among trees that have grown for generations. My impression of the Temple was that it was a successful preservation of the site's history while still managing to be inviting and encourage community. Additionally, learning about the site's long history and important architectural style was enjoyable and edifying.

After visiting the Temple of Heaven, the group returned to the bus to drive to the Beijing Pearl Market for some shopping time. The market and its particular style highlight some of the cultural differences between China and the United States. In the U.S., bargaining for lower prices at shops seems to be less common, but it appears to be quite widespread in China. The experience of interacting with shopkeepers more intimately than I would in my home country was interesting, if not a bit uncomfortable at first. By the end of the visit, I was proud of many of the prices I had earned from bargaining, as well as some of the gifts I had purchased for friends and family back home. I have noticed an interesting difference in my shopping attitudes between China and the United States, with my sense of ownership and investment in my shopping experience being greater in China. The trip to the Pearl Market, though a bit shocking at first, was an enjoyable experience that helped me better understand parts of the Chinese commercial culture.

Once the group had finished shopping at the Pearl Market, we found food for dinner before returning to our hotel. After a short period to unwind after eating, we loaded back into the bus before heading to Houhai, a lake in the middle of Beijing. The lake was lined with bars, lounges, restaurants, and other nightlife venues. We wandered around the lake for a few hours, stopping at a bar to grab drinks and take in the vibrant atmosphere of Beijing after dark. While I personally took little interest in the great number of bars around Houhai, I can certainly see the appeal of live music and an active night culture. After our time at Houhai, we split into smaller groups and returned to the hotel by taxi. This brought an end to our first day in Beijing and set the stage for a positive, enjoyable, and educational rest of our trip in China's capital.

May 25th by Kalin Wilson

Today, our second day in Beijing, a brief bus ride through busy morning traffic brought us to Beijing Language and Culture University. In the morning we practiced our Mandarin with a counting game and then continued to learn about the language through a lecture on the history of Chinese characters. It was very interesting to learn about the development of the language and the symbolic importance of particular characters.

The afternoon was primarily a sampling of the life of a student; lunch in the bustling canteen was followed by personal mini-tours of the campus and surrounding areas. As always, the students were very welcoming and it was a pleasure to spend time with them.

Next, we participated in a seminar on the differences between Chinese and American higher education. Although there may be minor differences, it seems to me that there is at least one major similarity: both groups of students are doing their best to negotiate a balance between the perceived demands of a competitive job market and their own personal desires and passions.

Overall, today was another great opportunity to experience Beijing and get a small sample of the lives of students much like ourselves.

May 26th by Shannon Newberry

The first item on our itinerary for Tuesday was Tienanmen Square. I didn't quite know what to expect due to the history associated with the plaza, but it proved to be an interesting architectural experience. I have noticed that the public spaces in China have proven to be carefully laid out and usually impressive in size. They are unlike anything I have seen in the United States, with important buildings being framed by both a flat ground plane and a vast blue sky. Tienanmen Square was bustling with activity from tourists and Beijing natives. The energy was contagious and added to my excitement for the National Museum.

While visiting the National Museum, my group and I became mesmerized by the gallery that focused on International relations with China. The gifts exchanged between past presidents sparked many conversations within the group. This gallery had me reflecting on international conflict and resolution, and how expansive China's history is. Although we were given crash courses of China's history at many of the Universities we visited, very few touched on the impact that other countries have had on China. This gallery and the crash courses have done nothing but fuel my budding interest in China and its rich history. I look forward to reading and learning more.

After the National Museum, we enjoyed a delectable lunch (per usual) and then we headed to BNU. The students were incredibly friendly and very curious about American culture and how it differs with that of Chinese culture. One student in particular bonded with me over our similar dress style and that we both lived close to the longest rivers found in our countries. Although the differences between China and America never fail to astound me, sometimes it is the surprising similarities that are the most enjoyable. Once the seminar concluded, we were invited to partake in a campus tour. Once again, I was blown away by how beautiful the campus was. There seems to be a greater focus on gardens and public spaces, which I really admire. We also happened upon a basketball game where we watched a few children learn the foundations of the sport. Their enthusiasm and excitement was adorable as they mastered the art of the free throw, perhaps one day I will watch them play for UK.

It was sad to say goodbye to the last group of students, but I was grateful for having met them, and I hope I had at least half the positive impact on them that they had on me. The college students in China are both impressive and charming. Our day ended with a

tasty dinner. The food never disappoints me, and I am sold on the idea of having a lazy susan at my table in America. I will miss authentic Chinese food in America. Today was a great day, and I am so very grateful for this trip!

May 27th by Jordan Keeton

We have had a two week trip full of unforgettable experiences. Even still, today was a highlight. We left Beijing early this morning and battled the still baffling traffic of this city. After a couple hours in the bus, we arrived at an entry point for the Great Wall. We took a shuttle up part of the mountain and then disembarked on a winding walk up the steep landscape. This journey was no Mount Tai, but being only a few days removed from this previous expedition, my fatigued legs felt heavy on the hundreds of steps. After making what was supposed to be a 30-60 minute walk in 14 minutes, Jonathan, Stephen, and I arrived proudly at the Great Wall. The scope and antiquity of the landmark was truly astounding.

We strategized as we caught our breath and planned to cover as much of the wall as we could in our three hours there. We took off with alacrity in one direction, bounding up and down many more steps to my chagrin. The sheer excitement of the afternoon provided the second wind that we all needed. After covering a significant amount of ground, we noticed a section of the wall that was blocked off to tourists and was overgrown by the surrounding landscape. We cleverly climbed out of a window in a guard tower to access this path off of the beaten trail, and though skeptical of the adventure initially, it proved to be a great decision. Navigating our own trail gave us an added sense of independence and thrill, but also opened up views of the landscape and wall that few people get to see. Along the way, we met a Romanian couple, ate some wild mulberries, and saw the occasional salamander.

We returned to the tourist-friendly section of the wall with enough time to grab an ice cream, water, and beer. We relaxed with our snacks, and discussed our goals for the future. Our trip to the Great Wall had reminded us how much opportunity there is in the world and how much we want to do with our lives. We met back up with the rest of the group and boarded the shuttle the rest of the way down the mountain.

We left the Great Wall and headed for a late lunch in a restaurant reminiscent of a greenhouse. Though it was a little hot and humid, the atmosphere was pleasing and the food was good. The special dish of the lunch was a trout, and I got to try fish eyes for the first time (which were much tastier than I expected). We returned to Beijing and after cleaning up we left for a karaoke club.

We couldn't have had more fun with karaoke. Our group had our own room at a club within walking distance of our hotel. I think we were all surprised at how willing everyone was to participate. There were certainly no long pauses or awkward silences between songs. If anything, we didn't have enough microphones or spotlights to go around. Some of the crowd favorites were Bruno Mars, Katy Perry, and Cascada. There were a couple of ill-conceived attempts at Eminem to boot. Our karaoke experience was a

couple of hours long, but many of us could have stayed even longer. I couldn't have asked for a better first karaoke experience, and it made for a great memory as our trip sadly draws to a close.

May 28th by Dr. Lisa Broome

We began our last day in Beijing with breakfast at the Dongfang Hotel, which had been our home for the past week, and then we headed to the Forbidden City, the Imperial Palace of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Along the way, our excellent guide Demi gave us an overview of the history of its construction and occupation. Building began in 1406 at the behest of the Yongle Emperor Zhu Di, the third emperor of the Ming Dynasty, who had moved the capital from Nanjing to Beijing; construction lasted 14 years and required the labor of over a million workers. The Forbidden City was home to 24 emperors, their wives and concubines, and palace eunuchs for over 500 years; with last emperor Puyi's abdication in 1912, the Forbidden City ceased to be the seat of political government. The palace complex, which includes 980 buildings, is a 72-hectare rectangle, laid out on a north-south axis, surrounded by a red-painted wall 10 meters high and a moat 52 meters wide and six meters deep (with the soil excavated from the moat trench forming Jingshan, or "Prospect Hill," just north of the Forbidden City). Talk of the size of the Forbidden City and its environs did little to prepare us for experiencing it; upon entering the Meridian Gate, it was fair to say we were all stunned by the vastness of the City—its many yellow-tiled roofs, its elaborate marble carvings, the enormous bronze cauldrons (for storing water in case of fire) – and its throng of visitors. We queued to see inside, but not to enter, the Halls of Supreme, Central, and Preserving Harmony, and we bustled around the beautiful garden and admired the towering pile of stones known as the Temple of Accumulated Elegance. It would be hard to fathom the size of the crowd on a weekend, or on National Day, a fall holiday when many Chinese people travel and visit sites of national and cultural significance.

After visiting the Forbidden City, we had dim sum for lunch, including some dishes we hadn't tried before such as braised chicken feet, and some of the fellows found dessert—more ice cream!—across the street. Then we headed to the headquarters of the Confucius Institute.

At the Confucius Institute, we were warmly greeted by Hanban Director General Xu Lin and Confucius Institute (CI) staff members who talked with us about our experiences in China and gave us a tour of the interactive exhibits in the CI museum. We viewed the many gifts to CI headquarters from the Confucius Institutes across the world, given in 2014 in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the founding of Confucius Institutes, and watched a video featuring the stellar "I Sing Beijing" concert held at UK's Singletary Center in commemoration of that anniversary. We expressed our deep gratitude for the unforgettable experiences we'd had on the Young Leaders' trip to the Director General, took a formal group photo, and then took our leave.

We stopped by the CI bookstore and coffee shop on the way to the bus, which took us to Beijing's Olympic Park. At the Olympic Park, we viewed the architectural showpieces

built for the 2008 Olympics, the Bird's Nest (Beijing National Stadium) and the Water Cube (Beijing National Aquatics Center) and in the spirit of athleticism, took our last jumping group photo in the plaza. From this vantage point we could see Pangu Park not far away, a complex of modern buildings designed in the shape of a dragon; a high-rise with a curvilinear top (the dragon's head) houses IBM China, three block buildings (its undulating body) house private luxury apartments and offices, and a narrow building (its upright tail) houses restaurants and a shopping mall. As we walked through the plaza, we reflected on having seen architectural masterpieces from the 15th to 21st centuries representing imperial grandeur, modern ingenuity, and conceptual design, and on having experienced the transformation of urban spaces from imperial and private to international and public in Beijing in one afternoon. We ended the night with a final, lavish, delicious dinner that included, among many delicacies, fish and dumplings, roast chicken, and Beijing noodles.