

Davis Scholars Reflections – Spring 2016



Personal Information –

Name: Rodrigo Luque Espinosa

Current Email Address: ad13rluq@uwcad.it

Home Country: Peru

UWC Attended: UWC Adriatic, Italy

University Attending: New York University in Abu Dhabi.

Courses on SAS: Introduction to Global psychology, Human Sexuality, Fine Art Photography, and Travel Writing.

I had been told by experienced travelers that we would only fully digest the experience of Semester at Sea after time has passed and the memories or ideas are mature and 'distilled'. Then, from day to day, we would look back in awe and we would realize the incredible voyage we made, the people we loved, the anecdotes that were born, and the things that we learned from the world first hand.

Now, near the end, I can relate to this prediction; I think when I am home, doing normal activities and in a normal setting, all the extraordinary experiences in Semester at Sea will return compounded in my mind, and I will be inspired again.

Out of the many different types of inspiration that I had here, I would like to start by one that has defined a big part of my future. When I started SAS, I had not yet decided what I wanted to study at university, not to mention what I wanted to do afterwards. I knew some of my topics of interest, like language or psychology, but there were no majors that I felt truly passionate about. This is until I explored the world, and I saw the way life develops in different countries. First, I decided that I want to spend the rest of my summer volunteering with refugees in the North of Greece, and that is where I will go to in a few weeks. I decided that because of a variety of reasons; inspiration by the great teachers here, who not only know a lot but are also passionate about social change, inspiration by the ports where I got to see the vast and immense struggle of hundreds of people of pretty much every part of the world, great friend with whom I could develop thoughtful projects for the improvement of different social crisis. Now, I think one of the most pressing and urgent social/political crisis today is the refugee

crisis, which is in many ways also related to the constant problem of terrorism. I have thought, due to the inspirations at SAS, that I want to take part in the slow, long-term recovery of this crisis, whether it is by creating projects and NGOs, or simply by going to Greece and showing the refugees that there are many out there willing to work with them and in favor of equality of rights and opportunities.

Then, at university, I have decided that I want to double-major in Literature and Political Science. The first one because since very young I have had a passion for that field and I want to become an expert at it, and the second one because I feel it is imperative to have profound knowledge on politics, economics, and the workings of the world, in order to ultimately generate progress in the variety of crisis affecting the world today. These majors I have chosen now, truly excite me, and I am already in a point of my life where academic growth is the priority. This decision is inspired by, for example, going to Myanmar and seeing how little I do know about such a complex and controversial country, and wanting to learn more. Or inspired by going to Ghana and seeing the slave castles, and going to Cambodia and seeing the killing fields, and realizing how gruesome humanity can become when politics are not handled with maturity and prosocial mindsets. It is also inspired by when I was in Cape Town helping to sort out the dirty recycling materials in a landfill - because then I realized how unhealthy and inhumane that job is, and how millions of people have to do it just because the upper classes like the comfort of consuming a lot of plastic and throwing it away. When it comes to Literature, I chose it because, after all the readings in my Travel Writing class, and all the new literature I have read by myself on my spare time, I know that I want to be surrounded by these kind of texts on an everyday basis, and when it comes to Politics, to deal with all the social issues mentioned before, or to at least have a clear and more educated mind on how to discuss them.

Besides the learning affecting my future, Semester at Sea has been an endless well of joy in innumerable occasions. Some of these I can briefly summarize to give an idea;

- Deciding, after a lot of doubting, to swim in the Ganges. This river in Varanasi (the sacred city of India) happens to be very polluted due to the ashes of the cremated bodies and the general waste of the city. But on the other hand, it is thought to be one of the most holy places on earth, and Hindu belief that swimming there is the path to enlightenment. All of the mysticism around it generated in me a strong desire to swim inside, and after not being sure for a few days, I went and I did it, and I felt more freedom than I had ever felt before. And, ironically, although I was the only one of my group to enter the river, I was the only one who did not have stomachache after coming back from India.
- Riding a bike around Bagan, feeling like I had the world at my feet, and that I could just stand on a peak, look at a Pagoda I really liked, and then just bike there in 10 minutes. And then if I liked another Pagoda from the distance, I would just grab the bike again and go, through land and paths and empty, beautiful fields.
- Getting together with a great group of friends in Cape Town and renting an Airbnb for a couple of days, and exploring the city, hiking Table Mountain at dawn, going to the townships, going to the beach, and just fully enjoying the city for those two days.

All these learnings and harsh realizations summed up with the beauty of diverse landscapes and pleasurable experiences have led me to agree with the prediction presented earlier; when I get off this ship, all these memories will come back to my head and thrill me, excite me, inspire me, and change me, and I will make sure that happens. For this and for the opportunity of seeing the world, I do not have enough words to thank you for the scholarship that was provided to me, and I hope my very brief summary of a few experiences and ideas on Semester at Sea can serve as a reminder of this gratitude that I feel.



Personal Information -

Name: Julian Liebaert

Current Email Address: Julian.liebaert@gmail.com

Home Country: Belgium

UWC Attended: UWC-USA

University Attending: currently on a Gap Year – will be attending Charité Universitätsmedizin - Berlin

Courses on SAS: Marine Biology, World Religions, Water for the World, Drugs in Global History

Highlights of the Voyage –

There have been many highlights to this voyage around the world. Initially, the highlight was to meet people from so many different UWCs around the world. It has been fascinating to discuss the different experiences that everyone has had at each of their UWCs and how they all relate to the overarching mission statement.

A personal highlight for me has been to attend a variety of classes because of the liberal arts system that is followed on the ship. Since I will be studying medicine next semester I decided to choose courses that I will otherwise never be able to do in my life. This has proven to be very interesting as I have been able to learn about new topics such as Marine Biology and drugs. The most fascinating aspect of this is to find the connections between the different courses, even though they might not be obvious at first.

The main highlights of the voyage mostly occur in ports as one is exposed to so many different environments within such a short time span. On one hand this can be annoying as the time in each port is fairly limited and does not allow for intense exploration of the country, but

only acts as an overview to give the students a taste of the location and to make them decide if they want to come back or not. On the other hand, the quick transitions between ports with classes in between allows me to see the world through so many different lenses. It is almost impossible to not compare the countries visited with each other. In my opinion this is where the richness and potential of this program lies.

Evaluation -

Overall Semester at Sea has been a highly enriching experience in that it has shown me the world through a variety of lenses and given me understandings of the many different countries on our voyage on a much more personal level.

In terms of the scholarship I am highly grateful for the shipboard credit that was issued to our account as it has allowed me to have many varied experiences in each port. Sometimes I have had some issues with the IMPACT programs, as it is difficult to understand the actual impact left in the community. The focus of these programs should increasingly be shifted towards the impact left on the participant, so that they can position themselves in a larger global context, and focus less on the community that is visited.

Another issue that I see in Semester at Sea is the difference in academic interest of the students as the transfer of credits is very different depending on someone's university. For example, a student who only receives pass or fail credit does not care as much about their academics on the ship as someone where a letter grade transfers. This leads to a lot of noninvolvement in classes, which makes those that would like to get the most out of the academic program suffer.



Personal Information -

Name- Sneha Mahapatra

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Home Country-India

UWC Attended-Italy

University Attending-Wartburg College

Courses on SAS- International Relations, Development Communication, World Religions, Public Policy

Highlights of the Voyage –

Getting the opportunity to travel to countries that I have always only associated names of friends with and being in more close contact with cultures that I have always wanted to be more immersed in.

Hiking the Great Wall was one of the most memorable experiences that I have had in my life so far because I never thought I would successfully be able to do a hike of the sort we did in Beijing and I enjoyed and learnt a lot about patience and endurance from it.

I also loved traveling in Yangon and Bagan (Myanmar) and traveling through the Pagodas and seeing how people in a country and culture that is so close to mine lived their lives and dealt with the struggles of being a country torn by military influence and civil strife.

Ghana was another country that was extremely educational and taught me a lot about a culture that was always something I read about, but seeing the slave dungeons first hand and living in a small village with no water and toilets was definitely an experience that taught me a lot about privilege and inspired me even more to work harder for the people who need to be uplifted and helped and set up my own non-profit in India.

Evaluation –

Being a Davis Scholar I am extremely grateful to have been given this opportunity. Thank you to Mr. Davis for giving us this incredible opportunity and I will forever be indebted to your graciousness. I feel that traveling with SAS programs are great, but the experiences that we gain from independent travel are invaluable additions to our time at SAS. Having the scholarship money split in a way that allows not only for us to use SAS programs but also use some of the ship board credit to do independent travel was useful to us.



Personal Information

Name: Lloyd Antrobus

Current Email Address: puluh@outlook.com

Home Country: United Kingdom

UWC Attended: Waterford Kamhlaba UWCSA

University Attending: Undecided

Courses on SAS: Conservation Biology, Human Sexuality, Societies and the Sea, Social Psychology

Highlights of the Voyage

There have been so many highlights for me throughout this voyage. However, without doubt the greatest highlight for me was to have been able to visit 12 of the 34 Biodiversity Hotspots from the Mekong Delta in Vietnam, the Cape Floral Kingdom in South Africa, the Guinea Forests of Ghana, to the Western Ghats in India. I applied for Semester at Sea at Waterford Kamhlaba with witnessing these Biodiversity hotspots in mind and it has exceeded my expectations. Although unfortunately these Biodiversity Hotspots were in a poorer shape than I anticipated with evident human impacts on the protected areas (trash, pollution, settlement, encroachment, fragmentation, etc.) it was very humbling to meet some wonderful people in the field of conservation who are working exceptionally hard to maintain these Biodiversity hotspots. Another highlight was to be able to visit several zoos whilst in port. I have spent quite a bit of time in zoos both in the UK and South Africa whilst I was a student at Waterford Kamhlaba in Swaziland and so being able to visit an array of zoos from the mighty San Diego Zoo before embarking on the ship to visiting some slightly more *sketchy* zoos (shall we say) that require a little helping hand. Throughout this voyage I have been able to see how a number of cultures respect and interact with their wild environment and that has been an utter privilege. I have met some of the most wonderful people who work tirelessly to protect their natural heritage and have found a great amount of inspiration from them to seek a career in wildlife conservation. Aside from conservation I have also been able to meet, and become friends, with some truly inspiring people – people I know I will be friends with for the rest of my life.

Evaluation

The itinerary is exceptional – the number of countries is staggering and the only thing I could possibly recommend is to add more –although we are all feeling rather tired in this last port already, but I would definitely not recommend removing any country. The professors, faculty and staff are really very good – they are true experts in their fields and it is a privilege to be able to be a student in their classes. A lot of my professors talk about the countries we visit in the class and integrate topical issues to the curriculum which I appreciate although wish some professors did this a little bit more. What makes ship-life so wonderful is the crew onboard who make our stay on Semester at Sea five-star. The crew are just wonderful – absolutely no complaints and just the utmost praise! Accommodation on this luxurious new ship is amazing. There are a plethora of activities to engage in almost every evening, performances and lectures

of high-quality – it really does feel like a community on the ship because of all these extra activities.



Personal Information -

Name: Søren Djernæs (Soren Djernes)

Current Email Address: sorendjernaes@gmail.com

Home Country: Denmark

UWC Attended: Waterford Kamhlaba - Swaziland

University Attending:

Courses on SAS: Intl. Public Policy, Intl. Mass Media, Social Psychology, Cognitive Psychology

Highlights of the Voyage –

One of the things that I have enjoyed the most on this voyage has been the talent shows/open mic. These events allow for the quietest of students to open up to themselves, but also the shipboard community. Those evenings have brought 95% of the people on the ship to the Kaisersaal (where we all assemble) and many laughs and applause. The main reason why it is one of my highlights on this voyage is because of the feelings it evokes – feelings of one unified community. When everyone is cheering for the “contestant” even though everyone is competing against each other. As a matter of fact, a group of UWC people won the first talent show by doing an Indian dance, which impressed the audience and judges.

I could make a long list of highlights, as this has been a voyage filled with them. One of my in-port highlights was in Ghana. Two other Semester at Sea students and I were visiting a so-called Monkey Forest where we were on a tour with a Ghanaian who lived in a rural village. After talking to “Wise” during the tour he invited us to stay at his house in the village and we were initially hesitant, but ended up following him. It turned out to be one of the highlights of this voyage because it was so authentic an experience. Today, I have a friend in Wawase Village I can visit anytime I want.

Evaluation -

- Ship life: Amazing ship and crew. Professors are engaging and it is noticeable that they are here because they deserve it, at least the professors I have.
 - To be honest, SAS, ISE and Mr. Davis have done a great job in providing for us in every way. From my perspective, I think where the “problems” with Semester at Sea lies is with students. Everyone comes to Semester at Sea with a different motivation. This has led to messages being perceived differently or simply some comments have been, I believe, inappropriate. My reflection on this is to show that the administration is doing a very good job, and that it is up to the students to make SAS even better – well, at least from a UWC student’s perspective.
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Personal Information –

Name: Florence May Hamper

Current Email Address: florence.hamper@gmail.com

Home Country: Norway

UWC Attended: UWC Red Cross Nordic

University Attending: University of Oklahoma

Courses on SAS: Comparative Politics, English Academic Writing Workshop, Environmental Science, Sociology of the Family

Highlights of the Voyage:

One of my favorite parts of this voyage is knowing that we are constantly on the move, going somewhere, awaiting our next journey. New smells, exploding our taste buds and getting those butterflies in your stomach that you get when you arrive in a new and enchanting place. The concept of studying on a ship that is constantly on the move has awoken my inner nomad. Travelling is never a waste of time, but being able to study *and* travel....well, that has simply been amazing. My two favorite locations that I was able to visit, thanks to my Davis Scholarship, were Bagan in Myanmar and The Great Wall of China. The day I was on the Great Wall the sun

was glistening on the frost, and the skies were completely blue. According to our guide, it is very rare to have such a beautiful day there, due to smog. Bagan in Myanmar was a long flat landscape that had Pagodas at every horizon. Other highlights have also been: eating dinner on deck 9 with friends, seeing dolphins come to give us a show in different seas around the world, being in a new country every week, going to classes that you don't ever want to end (Comparative Politics), meeting new inspiring people in country and on the ship, tasting food from all corners of the world, and being able to see the sun set on different horizons every night. I have truly been in my utter most happy place this semester... my parents, siblings and I are truly grateful to you for that. Thank you!

Evaluation -

The countries on the voyage have been incredible and I have felt very safe when travelling. I have never felt in any danger. There is no one on this ship that does a better job than the ship staff. They always know how to brighten my day. They truly are incredible at their jobs, and it is a shame that there is no event on the ship in which we can all mingle together as equals. This is one of the parts of the voyage that I have struggled with the most, since I have never been exposed to this way of living before. This way of life has taught me a lot about who I want to become, and also about who I never want to turn into. I want to be humble and never put myself over others. Other than my personal struggles with the hierarchy on the ship, I would say that my semester at sea could not have been better. Everything has run smoothly, and I have always had the help that I may have needed, may it have been answers to simple questions or a counselling session now and again. I have always felt like I have been in safe hands, and I have enjoyed every bit of my voyage!



Personal Information:

Name: Fabiana Ayala

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Home Country: Bolivia

UWC Attended: Li Po Chun United World College '13

University Attending: University of Richmond

Courses on SAS: Travel Writing, Social Entrepreneurship, Documentary Photography, and International Marketing

Highlights of the Voyage:

When I first heard about Semester at Sea and how Shelby Davis was supporting the program, I couldn't believe it. It was, with no doubt, a dream of mine to come to a program like this. Traveling the world on a ship while taking university courses sounded unimaginable.

By far, the highlights of the voyage include the actual experience of living on a ship and being able to travel to the countries of the people I attended United World College with.

Every day when I wake up, I am thankful for being here.

Evaluation -

I have nothing bad about to say about the program except that more international students should enroll. More of a United World College experience is needed: in terms of diversity and the type of conversations students have with each other.

The ship and the countries visited, all satisfied my expectations.

I would encourage anyone to come to Semester at Sea!



Personal Information

Name: Lisa Ruby

Current Email Address: ad13lrub2@uwcad.it

Home Country: Austria

UWC Attended: UWC Adriatic

University Attending: Gap Year Student

Courses on SAS: Drugs in Global History, Water for the World, Comparative Politics, World Religions

Highlights of the Voyage -

There have been so many highlights on this voyage that surely I'll forget one or the other. But at least I would like to point some out. I think the most beautiful moment was probably when we watched the sun set over thousands of Pagodas on top of a temple with local children and not a single tourist around us. Similarly, watching the stars in the Sahara in complete silence was an incredible experience. Another great encounter was when a group of friends and I got invited by a monastery in Myanmar to eat sticky rice. We had a lovely conversation with them. Hiking the Great Wall of China with 40 other students was definitely a wonderful bonding experience and the scenic beauty cannot be expressed in words. Horseback riding on the beach was unquestionably a personal highlight since this has been my dream ever since I sat on a horse when I was six years old. Our interactions with U-Nan, a Buddhist monk from Myanmar was certainly something, that will make me think about my choices and actions in life forever. And last but not least, lunch with Desmond Tutu. Being able to sit with such a wonderful person who has achieved and done so much for humanity was truly a precious highlight of the voyage.

Evaluation

Before we visited each country, I had one or two faces, my friend's faces from UWC, associated with most of them. Along with facial features, I was familiar with gestures, languages, personalities. But I was not very familiar with the countries' histories. Pre-ports do not do justice to such a rich history, but fortunately many of my courses as well as my shipboard family have given me deeper insight and knowledge about what happened in the past and is currently going on. This enabled me to enter a country with curiosity and determination what I would like to find out in such a limited amount of time. I approached many locals, which always ended up being wonderful conversations. I talked to a lady and her little daughter about her religions in Japan, I was approached by a Buddhist monk in Myanmar because he wanted to practice his English. I ended up having a long conversation with a street vendor in Accra about volunteerism in Ghana. When I visited the Gurdwara, a temple of Sikhism in Cochin, India, I was wholeheartedly welcomed by Anmol who took a lot of his valuable time to introduce me to a great concept of life. There is so much more I could tell about how many wonderful souls are out in this world, who welcomed travelers, like to share stories and give you some valuable thoughts on your way. Each country became so much more than "just a face". It became individual stories, natural beauty, sounds, smells, emotions, hundreds of faces, architecture, and much more.

Ship life, I cannot lie, is very luxurious. Talking to Todd Miller, UWCers were told that this ship was chartered for a very good price and that is why Semester At Sea ended up on a ship that I knew already many years ago from watching "Das Traumschiff", the German TV Soap Opera with my grandmother. As UWCers we had many discussions that we would like to be much

more involved in the ship life in terms of having responsibilities like help in the kitchen, make our own beds, do our laundry and clean the rooms, etc. But we do understand that this is very limited by certain rules how things have to be done. A very positive contributor to my fantastic experience on the ship has been the crew members who never failed to make me smile at 6am in the morning. Having worked as a waitress and chef for quite a few years before coming on the ship, I felt an immediate connection between us. They are all doing a wonderful job, and it is very visible that this crew is a strong team that has worked together for a long time. Well done Semester at Sea for creating a fairly good environment for them to work in. They seem genuinely happy and have told me that they in fact are, too. It would be lovely to involve them in pre-ports, as many of them have lots of knowledge they could share.

All in all I had an amazing time on board of the MV World Odyssey. I see lots of potential for it to improve even more, but it is very present to me that the board members try very hard to develop the program to its best.



Personal Information - I've grown up in Laos, Morocco, New York and spent the last two years in Maastricht, The Netherlands at UWC. I took a Gap Year before starting University in the Netherlands where I spent 3 months in Costa Rica teaching English as a volunteer teacher.

Name - Gilles Luyendijk

Current Email Address - gilles.luyendijk@uwcmaastricht.nl

Home Country - The Netherlands

UWC Attended - UWC Maastricht 2015

University Attending - Gap Year Student, will attend Erasmus University

College Courses on SAS - Globalization & Development; Societies and the Sea; Social Entrepreneurship; International Marketing

Highlights of the Voyage –

— Meeting a wonderful community of UWC Students and thus expanding my ever-growing UWC Network.

— Being able to experience some of the most fantastic adventures around of the world with amazing people aboard the ship.

Evaluation –

The Countries: I think Semester at Seas Itinerary was nearly perfect. It started off in Hawaii, an area still part of the US yet quite different from where most students had ever been.

Our first international port being Japan I think was probably the best decision Semester at Sea made in regards to the itinerary. A completely different culture, however still very similar in Western aspects when it comes to the order of the city, the safety found in Japan's main cities and how easy it is for tourists to get by in Japan.

Apart from that, the rest of the countries we were able to visit with the exception of Ghana have all been fantastic.

I think with South Africa it's a bit of a shame that almost nobody experienced any of the neocolonialism which goes on, or the amount of racial segregation that the country still suffers from, simply due to a majority of people staying in Cape Town and partaking in either Safari's in luxury nature reserves or Extreme Sports.

The only country which I found odd for Semester at Sea to go to was Ghana. Ghana's tourism industry is still really developing. With the exception of its slave castles and one beautiful national park, the only things that many of the Semester at Sea students were able to do was these village experiences, or work with local NGO's for a few days. As great as these things may sound, I feel that the commodification of these village experiences, where students are brought to a village to really just take photos with all the happy Ghanaian children before hopping on their air conditioned bus back to the ship, and the volunteerism activities students were able to take part in reinforced the stigma that many people have created about countries within Africa, or how many of the students refer to Ghana as, Africa. When they look back, the only things they'll think about is all the poor children with filthy clothes and how they ate little food and slept on the floor, still living like barbarians instead of seeing what Ghana really is, one of Africa's leading nations in development with fantastic opportunities.

As I said earlier, with the exception of Ghana, I have however, immensely enjoyed the countries we've visited.

The People: The people aboard the ship.. Oh boy, it's definitely very different from what I expected. It's certainly a diverse group of people, almost everyone including the international students who aren't UWC having very close ties to the US although because of the US' immense size, we've certainly got a diverse group of people. I can see how this voyage was beneficial to many people, especially due to the fact that there is a large group of people who had never left the US before, some not even their state.

Ship Life: Ship life is absolutely marvelous. It's super relaxed, the work load in my opinion is very little, a lot smaller at least than what the IB demanded, and that is with taking an upper-level class and three other classes where we consistently have to hand in work and do readings. For the rest, I use the gym, the pool, the ping-pong table regularly and partake in many different clubs, all organized and run by the students, which is great. I also attended many of the lectures and discussions held on most nights. During black history month we had about 25 students and some faculty show up for many of some of my personal favorite lectures

and discussions on topics ranging from Martin Luther King to the recent racial events which have occurred in the US. At a ping-pong tournament, which I organized, we had a turnout of about 50 students, and that was solely to watch the finals.



Name: Chloé Guilbert-Savary

Home Country: Quebec, Canada

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UWC Attended - Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific Year 40

Dear Mr. Davis, This letter is to thank you for your generosity in allowing me to participate in a global studyaway program and give feedback as to my experience at Semester at Sea. Not only was I able to witness cultural practices, learn about different belief systems, become aware of local challenges that communities struggle with or get to practice my inter-cultural communication skills - but I was strongly impacted by the breadth of new knowledge that I was exposed to and the range of questions it has prompted me to consider.

First, your generosity gave me an opportunity that I would never have gotten to experience otherwise. My interest for Semester at Sea and the goals it represents would simply not have been financially possible. While the tuition ensured my full participation in classes, the scholarship provided for in-land travelling ensured my engagement on the ground. I felt privileged to be able to focus fully on my learning experience, engage in the shipboard community and pursue my academics.

One of my main motivations for participating in Semester at Sea was intellectual challenge. I wanted to challenge myself and my pre-conceived notions of the world. I wanted to push my boundaries of knowledge and inquiry. Many times in a country, I found myself completely blank of answers - a humbling situation. During my journey in China, I visited the autonomous province of Guilin. One evening, I went for a walk in the park. What had for me started as an ordinary visit to a park turned out to be much more simply because I bumped into a cultural phenomenon that I did not understand, coming from a Canadian background: the park was full of adults practicing square dance, practicing music instruments, playing badminton, playing cards, gardening... Nothing like the behaviors one would have seen in a park back home. I was

struck by the simplicity and humble joy of a Chinese folk music practice... and ended up joining them. That evening was special: I was participating in something that was beyond my understanding. After reflection, discussion with my "Intro to Anthropology" professor and readings, I believe that the music practice was an embodiment of yangsheng, a form of lifestyle based on life cultivation. The practice of a good life translates in performing activities to nourish the life within the body for health purposes and the well-being of the mind. These manifestations of preventative healthcare in the public park were thus fostered by a wider life philosophy. The public nature of the activity is required for the full benefits of the activity: good mood and positive feelings are thought to be fostered by public participation and social gatherings. Moreover, the music practice was a product of the non-confrontational Taoist concept of wu wei - a concept that translates as "action without action", or more clearly, as incrementalism. In brief, my travel with Semester at Sea challenged me intellectually because I constantly had to ask questions to understand what was really happening.

After studying at Lester B. Pearson College where I got to meet people from around the world, I was eager to step outside of my own country and get to explore the places where my friends came from. I was curious to see what exterior factors had shaped them in becoming the person they were when attending UWC. At UWC, I got to hear stories from my co-years, to discuss issues, to imagine what their cities looked like, to have a sense of their routine and environments... and got to know my co-years as human beings. Yet, I often felt like I was missing on something, or that we were not on the same wave length. Over time, I started to learn to navigate these situations, but one's culture remains difficult to fully comprehend without being immersed in one's cultural context. Semester at Sea allowed me to deepen my understanding and educational experience I received at UWCs: studying and walking in countries, I was having realizations and flashbacks about moments I had not fully come to understand at UWC. For instance, my time in Ghana was meaningful in coming to deepen my understanding of Charles, my Ghanaian co-year. Charles once told me he felt that his religious beliefs were unappreciated in Canada. I had noticed the importance of Christianity for my friend through his multiple biblical references. Yet, the incorporation of religion in everyday life was striking to me when I set foot on land in Ghana and provided background as to my friend's habit. On a similar note, a highlight of my voyage was certainly to meet my Japanese co-year in his home city, Yokohama. He welcomed us at the port and took us for a walk of the city, giving genuine insights into his living place. Thanks to his explanations, I was able to appreciate the sustainability efforts that the city had been undertaking for the past twenty years, the massive land reclamation efforts, the planned urbanization and re-organization.

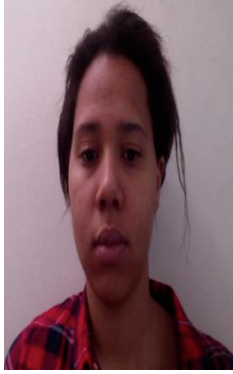
From my time in countries, I realized that my academics allowed me to immerse myself deeper in other cultures – I was not only appreciative or enjoying myself, but rather I was observing, processing and thinking on the ground. I was surprised to become aware of how cultural identities are created and how cultural practices take form. A very meaningful moment for me was in Hong Kong, when I was able to witness and speak with a traditional doctor. The experience had been well-prepared by the class "Plants, People and Cultures" that I was taking on the ship... and I was even able to serve as a rat for demonstration of acupuncture! In taking an "Intro to Anthropology" class, I became more appreciative of museums and material

expressions of cultures. Indeed, in participating in a field lab in Kerala, India, I realized that material culture establishes a feeling of belonging to a regional cultural group. In Kerala, South Indians perceive themselves as different from the rest of the nation. These differences as how they perceive themselves come from their regional cuisine, dance and artifacts. According to our guide, Kerala translates as “the land of coconuts and spices”, a definition that cannot be questioned when we were introduced to Keralan foods! Beyond only cultural features, I was able to see impacts of colonization in the world. The history class I took on the ship was entitled “The West and the World” and looked at the ways in which the West got rich over years and the ways in which the Rest of the World has developed since. In Mauritius, an example of the impacts of the West is the arrival of indentured laborers from India by ship at the Aapravasi Ghats after Britain abolished slavery in 1835. These workers operated under capitalist values: the frugality of “planteurs” justified low wages and poor working conditions, leading to economic expansion. Today, Mauritius’ majority is Indian and sugar cane fields remain the main crop. My fourth class was entitled “Societies and the Sea” and looked at the relationship between humans and the marine environment... A suitable topic to investigate when studying on a ship! I got to investigate different environmental philosophies and apply them to contemporary issues of the sea. For instance, Aldo Leopold’s Land Ethic defines conservation as following: "Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land." (1949, 243). This implies a shift to realize a state of harmony between human interactions and marine ecosystems: ocean acidification, water pollution, loss of biodiversity, over-exploitation of marine resources are proofs of an unbalanced relationship.

I am thankful for the experience I had on the ship - although the semester went really fast, I felt like my daily routine and encounters with people allowed me to foster meaningful friendships, take healthy habits and give back to my ship community. I felt like I took part of informal and formal discussions – at dinner tables or during cultural pre-ports. Leading morning yoga was a concrete way to contribute to the physical and mental health of the ship community while preparing minds to participate in class discussions. I sometimes felt frustrated to be locked in such a small crowded space but in these moments, I tried to experience compassions for other people on boats in the world, whom are in less fortunate circumstances, maybe trying to flee their countries and securing a future for their children.

Hopefully, this letter gives you insights into my experience at Semester at Sea,

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time, Again thank you so much for your generosity.



Name: Thato Kgalema

Current Email Address: thatokgalema@gmail.com

Home Country: South Africa

UWC Attended: United World College Maastricht

University Attending: St John's College Santa Fe

Courses on SAS: International Trade Law, Social Psychology, International Trade: Theory and Policy, Business Ethics

Highlights of the Voyage –

The Japanese field trip I took to Hiroshima and Mt. Fuji area. It was amazing because it was a small group that allowed us to get to know people (which was great as I knew no one on the trip). We all got on well and I got to see some of the most special places in Japan and got to understand the history in a way I wouldn't have by myself or with a big group

My time in Vietnam – I went around with my co-year from Maastricht. We were not supposed to be there as our trip got cancelled but we turned it into one of the best experiences. Going to the Cao Dao Temple which was one of the most specular things I have ever seen
I also loved my bike ride through Bagan and seeing the sunset on a Pagoda, which was amazing.

Hanging out with my friends from various colleges and different backgrounds from myself

Getting to have dinner with Desmond Tutu (AMAZING as a South African to be able to do!)

Evaluation -

I think the biggest thing lacking was the diversity on the ship both socio-economically and by ethnicity. I understand that it is a hard thing to achieve with a limited budget. But I think progress needs to be made there.

The ship life overall is amazing and we are spoiled for choice. The set up on the ship was done well, and the quality of food overall is good.

The engagement of the staff is quite impressive but it tends not to be focused on very intellectual things and more things of fun. I think they should do more talks on the ship (similar to the TED talk module by professors and students) as well as more academic talks need to be compulsory.

There also needs to be diversity of professors (professors are all from USA and many seem to be ethnocentric) though there has been a much better push for diversity of the ethnicity of the professors.

Class engagement varies but there should be a greater push for discussion-based classes, so you can engage with it more in depth.

The opportunities were amazing and some of the places we went to were incredible to visit as I am not sure if I would have had the opportunity to see some of these countries. Most of my field programs were great.

The people as a whole were super and were interested in seeing the various places and engaged with the culture of the various countries.

The Deans were warm and easy to speak to.

There were many spaces for discussion in an informal basis which my friends and I utilized

I liked the idea of the pre-port and some of the pre-ports were great and gave us a well rounded idea of the countries we were going to.



Name: Dolores Maria Albarral Bravo

Current Email Address: lola_albra97@hotmail.es

Home Country: Spain

UWC Attended: United World College South East Asia, East Campus

University Attending: Whitman College

Courses on SAS: Marine Biology, International Business, Conservation Biology, Global Media

Highlights of the Voyage -

The best highlights of the voyage were the beauty of the different oceans from around the world and the incredible friendships that I have formed on the ship. In Semester at Sea, I was able for first time to share a very important aspect of my life, which is my hearing loss and I could see the positive impact that I made on the people through informing my friends about my experiences.

Also, the fact of being in many countries in a very short time I could see what things every country had in common and in what they were different. This was very important for me since it helped me to develop my understanding about how the world works and how I could improve it. Specifically, I could analyze what impacts the oceans had in every country, which was very important for me since I will study Marine Biology.

Evaluation -

Semester at Sea could improve even more if SAS has more control about planning the IMPACT programs and field labs. In my opinion, SAS does not offer enough time in order to do a good IMPACT program because it is important that the student establish a relationship with confidence with the children of the IMPACT program, and to have that relationship a longer time is needed. Also, SAS should give more detailed information about what to do in every country since I did not know very well what to do in some ports, such as Shanghai and Ghana because we received very little information about these countries.



Name: Peniel Ibe

Current Email Address: Peniada94@yahoo.co.uk

Home Country: Nigeria

UWC Attended: Waterford Kamhlaba UWCSA

University Attending: Earlham College

Courses on SAS: Academic Writing, International Public Policy, Geologic Hazards, and Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Highlights of the Voyage-

Reflecting on this voyage is going to be one of the hardest things I have ever done. Due to my parent's career choice and my choice to attend a UWC, I have been fortunate to travel quite a bit and also meet people from around the country, These experiences have fashioned my traveling practices in a way that I no longer look at the other countries and see differences but instead I search for the similarities, either historically, politically or culturally. The highlights of this voyage were the people I met on the ship, the inter-port students I was able to interact with and the similarities I found between myself and the college students in the countries we visited. I began to feel like a part of the community on the Sea Olympics day. It was fun to come together and cheer for our sea mates during the different games. I realized that SAS gave me the opportunity to interact with students from the U.S. On my campus, I fell back into the comfort of interacting with international students and students from my home country due to the comfort of finding a friend who shares the same issues with you. At SAS, I was able to create friendships with people from different walks of life in the U.S. and around the world, and I am so grateful for this. I enjoyed taking classes that had little or nothing to do with my major because I learnt so much about issues around the world. From learning about endangered languages in the countries that we visited to dissecting the basis of international public policy, the spring 2016 voyage was academically exciting. I loved being able to attend class after a port and discuss what I saw in the various cities and how they related to what we discussed in class.

Evaluation -

The vast array of countries was quite amazing. They were a perfect mix, each complementing the ports before and after it. I particularly enjoyed the fact that the three countries in Africa were completely different from each other which helped to dispel the stereotype amongst American students that Africa is a country and not a continent. I wish I had more opportunities to explore the countries without being on a SAS field program, I feel that the voyage was exemplary and the Davis foundation has definitely played a huge role in increasing the diversity on the voyages and I hope to see this go on for years.



Name: Kaley Hawthorne McNeill

Current Email Address: kaleyhmc@gmail.com

Home Country: United States

UWC Attended: Taft High School

University Attending: GAP Year - Skidmore College

Courses on SAS: Nonviolence Global Citizenship and Contemplative Activism, Gender in Cross Cultural Perspective, Sociology of the Family, Social Psychology

Highlights of the Voyage-

I think that the countries that we stopped in were fantastic and that we were fortunate that we visited them in the order that we did. Japan was both the first and easiest country to navigate. China was a bit messier but everyone still spoke enough English for us to get around and it wasn't too bad. Things became increasingly difficult and challenging as the voyage continued, culminating in Ghana and Morocco. While I found those countries to be difficult to navigate, I also felt equipped to handle them by that time because of all the practice I'd gotten in easier countries. It mattered less that I didn't speak Arabic or French in Morocco because I didn't need as much help getting around. Japan let us start off easily and helped us find our footing before picking up the pace and helped me build my confidence for the rest of the voyage and get rid of most of my intimidation.

I know and fully acknowledge that this next statement is more of a petty complaint, but I find myself unable to leave it out. Eating boiled potatoes for three meals a day for months on end is just too much. I like potatoes, but *nobody* likes potatoes that much. I understand that they keep well, they're easy to get, easy to cook and relatively cheap, but I find myself unsympathetic. At the very least the potatoes could have been cooked differently.

Enough complaining. There were easily more good things than bad on this voyage, outweighing my troubles by miles. The faculty and RDs onboard were fantastic. I know some of my classmates complained at times for one reason or another but I attribute that to disagreeable students more than I do to faulty faculty. I didn't meet a shipboard authority figure who I didn't like at least and more commonly absolutely adore.

There are moments in a person's life that they experience and simply know that they'll remember for the rest of their lives. I collected more of these moments on this trip than I thought possible in the span of four months and while I could describe each in greater detail, for the sake of brevity I will instead list them. I pet a lion and climbed Table Mountain in South Africa. I explored a ruined pagoda in Myanmar/Burma. An excessively friendly deer attacked me when I was visiting Japan. I climbed the Great Wall of China. I worked with orphans and played with them in Vietnam and again in Ghana. I rode a camel and slept under the stars in Morocco.



Name: Emalie Lise Dam Christensen

Current Email Address: emalie@live.dk

Home Country: Denmark

UWC Attended: UWC Red Cross Nordic

University Attending: GAP Year - Glasgow School of Art

Courses on SAS: Global Music, World Prayer, Human Societies and the Sea and Drawing at Sea courses

Mr. Davis, I am writing to thank you for the great opportunity of Semester at Sea. It has indeed been a life changing experience and this is all thanks to your generosity. The Semester at Sea Spring 2016 voyage has given me a completely new perspective on travelling, how to live life and appreciating nature. I have appreciated the relevance of the courses to my future field of study and see this as invaluable experience, which will certainly prove useful in the future. Once again, thank you, and I hope you will continue to support both UWC and the UWC programme in relation to Semester at Sea.

Highlights of the Voyage-

When first embarking on the Semester at Sea vessel, the MV World Odyssey, everything feels completely foreign and it is difficult to imagine that this will soon be what you consider home. Living on the ship has in fact been one of the many highlights of my Semester at Sea experience. As I am from Denmark and there is never more than 50km to coast, I have grown up looking at the sea, so I was very curious to explore being at sea. I wanted to see the horizon without any land like many explorers prior to us, which was one of my reasons for applying to Semester at Sea. Experiencing the endless horizon and follow the trail of the sun across the sky has been such a pleasure I would have never been without. One of the things you find about sunsets is that they attract people and important conversations. At this point of the day, people seem more inclined to open up and this is where I have had some of my most memorable conversations; about anything from UWC to American Politics or issues with ocean pollution. These conversations, no matter where or when they occur has also been a highlight. I have met many new people from whom I have learned so much and I hope that they have learned something from me too. For the first time, I had the experience of feeling like a minority, as there were only two Danes on the ship, which has opened up a lot of discussions about nationality and a sense of belonging. I had never imagined this to be an important factor, as I attended the UWC RCN in Norway, where approximately 30% of the students are from the

Nordic countries. Therefore, I have always been able to speak Danish at any point in time, but the limited internet access and low number of students have challenged me in a way I had never imagined possible. This has been a highlight as well, as this has given me the opportunity of expanding my English vocabulary and prepared me for studying in an English-speaking country for the coming four years.

When it comes to the countries visited, I believe there have been highlights with each. Common for all is the insight in how people live their life and use spirituality and religion to guide their lives and how to live them. As I am from a near non-religious country, I had never experienced this up close. Yes, I experienced the specific practices in UWC, but experiencing a complete community practicing the same religion has been an incredible experience. This has given me a new perspective on my own spirituality and I believe that through the universality of certain rules in all the religions, there will be a path to peace, which everyone can understand and relate to. Moreover, in the pursuit of peace, I have been welcomed by so many different peoples from different places and with different backgrounds that I indeed believe achieving peace is possible. In comparison to UWC, I think the concept of peace is often theoretical and only discussed on a higher level, where through Semester at Sea, these thoughts have come to life and many of the people I have met in countries have had similar ideas and the bonds here implement the theory in practice. Semester at Sea has therefore been an excellent opportunity to explore the concepts often discussed in UWC.

Related to this point, visiting countries with internal issues has been very eye-opening as well. For instance, visiting Myanmar, we had an informative presentation on the Rohingya people in Northern Myanmar. The Rohingya people is a Muslim minority group, which is currently oppressed and stateless as they are a Muslim minority in the mainly Buddhist country. I was never aware of this issue before being on Semester at Sea and being introduced to the topic through reading and discussing an article as a community as well as a fellow student presenting on the issue. It was a similar experience with Morocco and the Western Sahara dispute. Here, I was given the opportunity to present about the territorial dispute, as my roommate in UWC was Saharawi from the refugee camp in Algeria. It seemed that many students, staff and lifelong learners were not aware of this dispute either, so I am happy I had the opportunity to present. I believe these experiences on the ship relating to the countries are just as important as visiting the countries themselves. Without any information about the country or certain issues faced today, there is a limit to how much you can possibly learn. Engaging in discussions and encourage people to do more research and start the conversation back home also extends the Semester at Sea experience to the community around you. I believe this also makes participants more interested in current news as they now are looking for updates in the matters of the Rohingya people or Saharawis for instance. This will again open discussions and I believe it to be extremely useful and a highlight, as I have experienced other people opening up to the world.

Evaluation -

When it comes to the managing of the experience, there have been both ups and a few downs. First of all, I really appreciated how well the administration and crew knew UWC. It was a very comforting feeling when they all had previous experience with UWC and were able to help in many UWC related matters (such as the distribution of the scholarship and questions about who to go for with questions). I felt very welcome from the first moment I stepped on the ship and appreciated the enthusiasm towards starting the conversations of international education from a SAS and UWC perspective. Moreover, it was very generous of Semester at Sea to add the \$5,000 and flight tickets to the scholarship. I was very happy with the influence of Mr. Davis to implement a reimbursement system as this was requested prior to the voyage. I believe this is a system worth continuing in the future.

When it comes to the question if the \$5,000 should be in our shipboard account or cash, I believe that it should be a mix. Perhaps allow \$1,000 in cash to travel independently as this is the amount most would spend on independent travel (from my impression). Despite the SAS field programs being very informative and sufficient in partially exploring a culture, I believe independent travel enhances these experiences and are important. As I had a limited budget, these experiences were hard to balance as the matter of money would always be taken into consideration first.



Name: Mo Kwok

Current Email Address: mokwok@uchicago.edu

Home Country: Hong Kong

UWC Attended: Li Po Chun United World College

University Attending: University of Chicago

Courses on SAS: Drawing at Sea, International Marketing, Introduction to Comparative Politics, Social Entrepreneurship

Dear Mr. Davis,

I only know you from Wikipedia, from your words in the copy of the Davis Scholar Annual Report, yet your name hung on the lips of every scholar throughout the voyage,

synonymous to an inexplicable gratitude for the opportunity, invoking a desire to be good stewards as members of the shipboard community.

Every time I return to the cabin, my roommate is fast asleep and I will be gone before she is awake. I crawl into the fresh duvet after midnight and leap out at the sound of my iPhone alarm, only to find the gorgeous sunrise faithfully greeting me in the mornings, and the mornings to come. Though the busy schedule drains the battery out of my bones, I am so grateful because I have all the reasons to wake up. I tell myself: I can catch up on sleep in Heaven.

What are some of those reasons, you might ask. Words fail me so I may seek the help of photographs, which I took mostly on film, and have been trophying the photo albums as my prized possession to share the experience with people, mostly my beloved grandparents. Let us begin with why classes are worth waking up early for, or rather sacrificing sleep for.

Admittedly, as a senior studying political science at the University of Chicago and is about to attend law school in the fall, I was skeptical about taking classes on the ship especially with younger classmates and in a class size larger than what I am used to. Fast forward to the end of the semester, many of assumptions were dispelled, by the conversations I have had with professors on the deck, by the debates that carry on after classes, by the field programs that provided the opportunity to put theory into practice. I chose two classes completely unrelated to my major and I was taken aback by how much I have learned.

In the last Social Entrepreneurship class, we gave our final presentation for a group social venture project, which focused on creating a scalable and sustainable residency for senior citizens to promote active aging in Hong Kong. We named it Imaginary Estates and the whole process was basically writing the business model of my dream. Though we did not do “well” academically, the sleepless nights were well worth it because I ended up with two good friends, and a business plan that I will be presenting to local businessmen and the Elderly Commission within the Hong Kong Government this summer.

In terms of ship life, I derived much joy and tremendous meaning from the UWC and Christian community on board. As one of the leaders of the Christian Fellowship, I was in awe of how the students and faculty alike can be united in literally the rockiest of waves to worship a God of all nations. I have spent part of the scholarship in what is called Cookies and Christ. On one occasion, it took place in the evening on the pool deck. We read excerpts from an autographed copy of Archbishop Tutu’s book: *A Vision for Our Time* and reflected upon our own suffering and how we can transform the suffering in our world in a way that God has transformed the cross, a gruesome instrument of torture into a glorious symbol of hope and salvation for Christians.

Not to mention, what an extraordinary blessing to have Archbishop Desmond Tutu sitting 20ft away in the Lido Terrace as we read his work. To express my gratitude for his wise words and the contribution he and his wife Leah Tutu have made to changing the history of South Africa for the better, I wrote a song and performed it with a group of my dear friends at cultural pre-port. Seeing his face light up and his lips curve into smile as he watched the performance was one of the most heartwarming moments I have experienced.

I can go on forever. But know that I am eternally grateful for this wonderful experience which was made possible by the hard work administrative staff put into organizing Semester at

Sea, the countless hours the crew spent on ensuring our comfort, and of course, Mr Davis, your extraordinary generosity.



Name: Andrea Constanza Blobel Pérez

Current Email Address: andreablobel@gmail.com

Home Country: Chile

UWC Attended: Lester B. Pearson UWC of the Pacific (PC40)

University Attending: Lewis and Clark College

Dear Mr. Davis,

After four wonderful months of traveling, finally I find myself in peace in my home in Chile: from the window of my grandmother's apartment you can see the Andes full with snow, you hear the cars running on the streets, and you can feel the cold wind smuggling through the windows as a sign that winter is approaching each second that passes away.

First of all, I want to emphasize my gratitude for your financial and personal support. Without your help my present and future would not look as bright as they do now. Probably, it would have taken me away to pay for my university studies, I would not have much freedom in choice of studies, and I would have never circumnavigated the globe.

One of the most precious things that I have gained with the opportunities given by your support is to see the pride and happiness in my mother's eyes, and to feel for the first time the recognition of my father who never supported me in going to UWC.

Therefore, I want to give you an extensive evaluation of the program Semester at Sea based on and limited only to my personal experience. I tried to make it fun and interesting by adding pictures, so, please keep up with my narrative!

I divided my experience in three sections: a) Academics, b) Life on the Ship, and c) Travels. Each of the sections is discussed in detail with examples and improvement proposals. If, by any chance, you had questions or wanted more explanations, I would be more than willing to expand and discuss them with you personally!

a) Academics:

The courses taken were: Media Ethics and Newswriting with Professor Gradstein, World Religions with Professor McCormick, and Human Diversity with Professor Mackelprang.

I chose these courses because I wanted to explore journalism and figure out whether this was one of my main interests. At the same time, I chose Human Diversity because it was related to my Sociology/Anthropology major at Lewis and Clark College. Indeed, I also chose World Religions because I wanted to learn especially about Buddhism, Islam and Judaism to have a solid background about their beliefs and the misinterpretations made by various religious groups, and I knew that the countries we were going to visit were full of religious history.

- **Media Ethics and Newswriting:** I was constantly challenged to write articles of cultural interest, such as writing about the popularity of the Betel nut in Myanmar and the red smiles of its consumers. I was really excited to have Professor Gradstein as she had worked in the NPR in Israel and was very knowledgeable on the conflict of the Middle East, which during and after Pearson became my main interest in politics. At the same time, as the voyage progressed the classes became monotonous and in both of my classes we never really discussed about anything related to journalism or the work that was described in the curriculum. Instead Professor Gradstein invited guest speakers to teach the lesson. In the beginning I found it very interesting as some guest speakers really touched on the theme of media and journalism, but by the end of the semester I noticed that most of them were random and I did not absorb anything from their words. This was disappointing as the class became a lazy class, and there was little that I could do other than giving feedback at the end of the semester as I never felt confident enough to criticize the class by personally talking with my Professor.
- **World Religions:** I really enjoyed this class in the time that Professor McCormick taught it. He had to leave after our visit in Japan as his wife got very sick and needed to rest. He was an inspiring professor who could motivate me to learn more and stay awake besides the setting where the class took place, which was a dark “cinema” with comfy chairs. After he left, we had some interesting guest speakers, such as U Nan, a Buddhist monk from Myanmar, and Professor Loki from India who talked about Hinduism very passionately. In Mauritius we got a new professor, but the chemistry between the class and him never really worked out. He asked us to make questions, but he never answered them completely, and he compared all religions with Christianity. This frustrated me many times, as I had a simple question but he always went on the tangent to answer it and I felt a deep rejection against comparison with Christianity, as Christianity had been a colonizing factor in South America.
- **Human Diversity:** This was the only class that motivated me to participate to my maximum. Professor Mackelprang was very inspiring and he motivated me to think and challenge my opinion. For the first time I was exposed to questions of diversity related to disability and Professor Mackelprang organized a field lab to visit an Orthopaedic Training Center in Ghana where I was able to absorb so much knowledge. Moreover, he took us in our field lab to visit a center called “Days for Girls” that is a clear example of good investment rather than benevolent aid and volunteer-ism. This center focuses on

educating women about their menstruation and sexuality and provides them a re-usable pack of textile pads. This is crucial as girls in Ghana do not go to school 5 days a month, which sums to 2 or 3 months per year, because of their period, and they end up dropping school. This experience shocked me, and I am still trying to figure out what I want to do with this knowledge. Moreover, Professor Mackelprang supported me in doing a personal research related to the short-term Orphanage visits of Semester at Sea in various countries and their “impact” on the children, program, and students. I am hoping on sending my results to a life-long learner from the ship to make together some change in the ethics of those visits. (If you want to know more about that, I could also send it to you!)

In general, my academic experience was mainly positive and at the same time disappointing in a few aspects. The classes showed clearly US ethnocentricity as they all focused on comparing the countries visited with the US. I found that aspect very limiting, because that reflects the international policies of today: the US dominating and “superior” power that judges the situations in other countries. I was especially disgusted to see that the majority of professors and students were judging blindly China’s controlling government with no background and historical knowledge, as I had studied previously China’s dynasties and rise of Mao Zedong and his legacy. I expressed my sentiments in various essays saying that describing China, as a “horribly controlling force” was incorrect as in the US the CIA also secretly listened and controlled our calls. Moreover, we discussed in the Diversity and Inclusion Club that the majority of US students were not sensitive enough after their visit to China or India: most of them “saw poverty” for the first time and said many negative comments after their first exposure. This resulted in hurting students who came from those countries. Thus, fomenting conversation of comparison in classrooms is not very constructive. It should rather be a conversation of understanding and embracing differences.

b) Life on the Ship:

The life on the Ship was very comfortable. In the beginning, having a steward make my bed and roll my cables made me very uncomfortable, as for the first time in my life I was exposed to that extent of luxury. With time and laziness, I was able to adapt but I did not conform to the luxuries! With some UWCers we gathered with a board member (the producer of Global Grins) to discuss about reducing the amount of luxury on the ship. He did not really give us any possible changes, but in my opinion humility should be promoted more on SAS.

There are three aspects that I would emphasize on changing in the future:

1. Educate previously students about poverty and make their experience on the ship more humble
2. Educate students about the US Foreign policies and interventions in the countries that will be visited
3. Educate students about diversity
- 4.

I emphasize on these three points because of the following reasons:

1. The majority of students have lived in the US in a bubble and are not conscious that poverty also exists in the US, but they have never really been exposed to it. This ignorance causes insensitivity and promotes a saviour complex in the countries visited. Moreover, SAS supports and promotes Global Grins and the distribution of toothbrushes knowing that the toothbrushes are produced in a factory in China without heating (source: presentation of Global Grins) and we tried out the toothbrushes and they do not last even for 5 uses. Thus, SAS should educate about poverty instead of promoting a saviour complex in students.

2. In our first cultural pre-port we discussed about the forced annexation of Hawai'i to the US and most of the majority of students did not even know about it. This educational opportunity caused lots of discussion within my peers. I was disappointed though when we got to Japan, SAS never promoted the discussion of Hiroshima or other events. Japan is not the only country that we visited and had been horribly intervened by the US. We shortly discussed about the Vietnam War, but what about the rest? In my opinion, this is crucial as SAS students are the generation that will be voting and having a say in foreign policies, and as the US is currently one of the major political powers, it is urgent to educate young souls about their influence and importance of international education!

3. SAS should provide a better time and space for the Inclusion and Diversity Club. This would motivate the general population of the ship to come to the events and get educated about diversity by interactive ways. Why is this important? Because diversity is a big issue in the US and it should not be neglected while on a ship, where the percentage of diversity does not reflect the reality.

Those are the three things that lay deep in my heart and that need urgent improvement on the program. Nevertheless, my life on the ship was beautiful in many ways. The time I spent on the international waters helped me to find peace in my heart for many personal issues that were keeping me rushed before jumping into this adventure. We were able to dance, sing, and share our opinions with a small portion of the ship community. I felt that it was my task to share with everyone who I was, and that was a beautiful experience as every day there was something new to learn and experience.

c) Travels:

I organized my in-country travels in a combination of independent travel with SAS field trips. There were things that I would have never done independently as I could not afford the expenses. In that sense, I am really thankful for the money you provide us to use with SAS. Nevertheless, I have to tell you that the best experiences were while traveling alone. I have thought a lot about the reason of this and I came to the conclusion that independent traveling gives a special spice to traveling. In my independent travels, I did not know where I was going, what would be the result, where we would sleep, who we would encounter, etc. All these questions made it so spicy and interesting that it felt like a real adventure. Whereas when I was

traveling with SAS I knew I would have a bed to sleep and I had to lie back on the bus or plane and relax, as everything would be done for me. This sounds a perfect combination, right? Now looking back, I hated the big groups of SAS trips and the luxury in each place we visited. In a way, I felt I was “observing from a bubble” the outside world, while traveling independently I was suffering the drop of sweat instead of enjoying the air conditioning. Thus, my only suggestion for the next generation of UWCers in SAS is to continue the reimbursement policy of visas and vaccines, and if possible, provide more money in cash for independent traveling. I know you have heard this suggestion a lot, and past generations have misused the money, but I want to tell you that if you provided us with this genuine opportunity I do not think people will misuse it again knowing what in the past has happened.

I feel I have given you a lot of words of criticism and improvement.



Name: Femke Heddema

Email: femkefheddema@gmail.com

Home Country: The Netherlands

UWC attended: United World College of South East Asia (Singapore)

University attending: Leiden University (Netherlands)

Courses on SAS: International Marketing, Social Entrepreneurship, Documentary Photography, Intro to Public Health

Evaluation

The past four months have been a blur of new experiences, new discoveries and there is still much of this journey that I have yet to process into words. To summarize the last 101 days, 12 countries and infinite experiences into two pages seems like quite a challenge, but I will give it my best attempt.

When I stepped onto the MV World Odyssey four months ago I took with me one extremely large bag but also the attitude of learning. I wanted to know, I wanted to turn the stereotypes into people, the pictures into experiences. I wanted to know beyond the lines of newspapers, beyond the must sees in guidebooks. As I entered the ship, I met people looking for a similar experience, and I found people looking for completely different experiences. Those

who went looking for the same experience became my close friends, and they taught me a lot along the way.

In the first week, in between the seasickness and small talk, I ended up having a conversation about privilege with my friends. Since then the topic reappeared over the entire journey and I have thought about it a lot. What I consider privilege is an advantage given to some to access opportunities without any hindrance. I think every person on the ship was very privileged, as they had been granted the opportunity to experience the journey, in one way or another, yet privilege has many ways and forms. Through my involvement in the Diversity and Inclusion club and many more conversations with my friends I came to the conclusion that privilege is not a bad quality. Privilege, when the owner recognizes it, can be used in very good ways. It becomes a bad quality when people that 'wear it' forget they do and thereby cannot see the oppression of others.

I am so happy there were so many diverse and international students aboard the ship. I think it made the shipboard community realize that diversity in privileges, views and behaviors are not only in these strange countries we visited, but also amongst ourselves. I hope that in the future, this diversity will not only be expressed in nationality but also amongst the students themselves. Over the years the ship has been getting more diverse but still during this journey the 'diversity' was represented only by a handful of people. One hope I would have for Semester at Sea is to become more accessible for those who want to learn like I did. There is so much potential in this program, yet I find myself debating whether all of it is used as much as it could be.

One of the potentials I was struggling with was the time in each country. A question I faced with many times was; 'How can I combine learning and enjoyment of this place into these five days I am here, and thereby make sure I get a *real* impression of this country?' There are already many controversies in the question, let alone the answers I tried to seek. I stood debating ethical perspectives about race, voluntourism, economic background and colonization in orphanages, temples and houseboats. I stood debating inequality in townships, holding my camera in my hand. I stood debating freedom yet went on a balloon ride in Myanmar. In the end I think my talks with 'locals' made my experiences most fulfilling. Some of my best memories are going to a Ramen restaurant in Japan with two couples that showed us the way and their favorite dish, and seeing my guide in Myanmar get passionate about Ang San Suu Kyi. I got a little feel of a place through the expression of the people.

In order to make the best of my time in each country I had the great privilege of having funding for field programs through the 5000 USD granted to me on my shipboard account. Normally I travel with a very low budget but through this I was 'rich' enough to buy field programs thousands of dollars in price. Five thousand dollars is an awful lot of money, yet what did I spend it on? I am so extremely happy I got to attend some of these programs, and I am also quite disappointed with others. The field programs gave us comfort, air-conditioned buses, luxury hotels, amazing dining and the best guides around. I enjoyed most of the field programs.

I don't think this voyage was what I expected it to be. I don't know if I enjoyed it as much as everyone else seems to have done. Don't get me wrong, I had many very good experiences and made many good friends. I enjoyed the voyage a lot. It just wasn't *just* about enjoying for me. I am still debating whether I should have just enjoyed, because what difference will all this thinking really make? It just seems so controversial to enjoy and be in

such luxury without any worry, when you know and have seen people that will never be able to do so.

I think this voyage made my understanding of both the world and myself more complex. Seeing all these different places and talking to different people made me debate a lot of what I thought I knew. I spent a lot of the voyage in my own head. I was pushed against my own borders and forced to go beyond them. Instead of exploring the world, I think I ended up exploring myself. This voyage made my life more difficult, but in a good way. I think I got less ignorant and I got more critical. I have realized that I will never be complete, yet every step I take to learn will bring me towards a more complex but also better version of myself. As we come to the end of this journey it seems it has led me towards more thinking. More challenges. It seems little progress but I am so thankful. I am so thankful I can take these challenges. I am grateful I now have the confidence to challenge those around me, as well as keep challenging myself. I hope this journey will continue for many others after me, and many others will be challenged to think.



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UWC attended: United World College - USA

University attending: Columbia University

Courses on SAS: The East in the World: Women of Asia, Documentary Photography, Travel Writing, Introduction to Anthropology

Evaluation

This voyage is a very special opportunity and I was very grateful to be able to partake on this journey at the time I did.

For one, I liked the direct engagement my classes took with the ports we visited. In each of my classes, our syllabus directly lined up with the ports that we were visiting. Even in my Women of Asia course in which we were specifically focused on that continent, my teacher still found ways to relate the course work to our ports in Africa once we arrived there. This definitely increased my sense of globality and helped me understand the ways in which different cultures have crossed paths over the last century or so. In Travel Writing and Documentary Photography, we always had assignments that forced us to directly interact with

locals once in port. These interactions, although sometimes frightening, helped me understand the work we were doing in Anthropology and these different connections helped interlace all my classes together with the travel and adventure we partook in.

I had many different highlights during this trip but there were a few that specifically stuck out. While Archbishop Desmond Tutu was on the ship, I really felt the entire shipboard community come together to better understand his work in South Africa with apartheid and as a religious figure in general. The Archbishop gave a great talk in which he spoke about the future of South Africa, his experience with the truth and reconciliation work after Apartheid and lastly, his interest and passion for the Semester at Sea model. He really helped inspire me in terms of creating peaceful solutions for conflict and I think he also brought out a lot of reflection on the part of all the SAS participants. Another highlight was my Anthropology field lab in Kerala, India. We were able to go to a museum and a cooking demonstration as a class and it was interesting going on this trip as a class and having to at the same time, apply anthropologic thinking to our outings. I had a great understanding of why Anthropology was important on this trip and it helped me write more thoroughly about the different cultures we were exploring. Semester at Sea, if you allow it, really brings learning and travel together in an impeccable way that I had never experienced before and although I think this can be done even better, I think the program is at a great place already.

There are many places that the program does fall short and I think there can be some improvement in certain parts. For one, I don't think the out of class commitment pushes us hard enough. We were required to go to pre-port discussions about cultural differences and relevance but I think this can be done much better. Never in these events did we review current events or the US's relations with the ports. I think that it is important to also place ourselves relative to the places we visit so we have a better understanding of the country. For instance, when we went to Ghana, we didn't really discuss slavery or the decline of the Asante people or the effect that all of this has had, to this day, on the US and Ghana. In Hawaii, we didn't really discuss the way in which Hawaii became a part of the US and the struggle Hawaii is currently enduring to preserve its language and history. I think the port we did this in best, was Myanmar in which there was a lot of discussion about the military regime and the democratic party pushing against this and Ms. Suu Kyi. I know that it is often difficult for the US to do reflection on its own impact in other countries but I think if we did that more on the boat, we would have a better understanding of our role in the countries and how we can be travelers rather than just tourists.

Overall I really do think that SAS is an amazing experience and I learned so much on the various trips that I took but I do think that, as always, there is room for improvement. I do think, however, that as a UWCer this experience is especially valuable because it puts all the ideas we talk about hypothetically in our UWC schools in a real, applicable environment where we can actually explore more and learn more. This was my first time outside the US even as a UWC student and I think I valued it so much because I saw all my UWC dreams coming to life in front of me.

Thank you again, Shelby Davis, this experience has meant more to me than I can ever capture in a letter. So has UWC and really, everything you are able to offer so many UWC students. I know that our generation will profit greatly from the opportunities we have had because of your contributions.



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UWC attended: UWC Mahindra College

University attending: University of Victoria (BC, Canada)

Courses on SAS: World Religions, Fine Art Photography, Writing the World in Poetry, Human Sexuality

Highlights of the Voyage

Even though there is a preconception that travelling is the cornerstone of the SAS experience, after finishing the voyage I concluded that learning was its main component. It took place in different ways, and happened due to different sources (in other words, it was not only confined to my on-ship classes and the shallow perception of the countries visited).

I cannot deny that the exposure to other cultures, often dissimilar to our own, is always a source of learning even if the engagement with the countries' locals is poor. Just by observing carefully and trying to absorb (and retain) everything happening in our surroundings I could trace differences and similarities to the culture of my home country (Venezuela), the country that I went for UWC (India) and the other countries I had visited earlier in the voyage. And I do believe this is always meaningful. Realizing in which ways two cultures could bond in similarity or misunderstand each other through difference is important in an increasingly interconnected world, and essential if we decide to learn about others who are different, culturally speaking.

To be more specific, my exposure to Japanese culture — although brief and limited— was eye-opening. The section of the world that I knew, meaning Venezuela and India, was full of outspoken, loud people with an almost non-existent idea of what physical personal space meant. In Japan I encountered quite the opposite. Silence was valued and respected. Public displays of affection were not common. Fear of causing discomfort to others considered. And this stark difference does not imply that people in my country do not care about others, but that their sense of respect is perhaps channeled and expressed in a different way.

Similarly, I faced an encounter during Easter Sunday in Ghana that reinforced the idea that culture can be seen as an external shell which encloses the same universal human needs, yet expresses and displays them differently. During the local church service, I observed how the congregation's faith was expressed overtly through dances, loud collective chants and fervent responses to the pastor's commentaries on scripture. I noticed that these means of religious expression did not necessarily indicate a higher degree of faith in comparison to faithful Christians that express their faith in a more passive manner. Instead, it was an example of how dimensions of culture intermingle and thereby shape experience, in this case, Ghanaian religious life.

When I say that my learning experience was not confined to the time in port, I mostly say it because of factors defining on-ship life and several people of the shipboard community. Even if the student body was not as diverse, I had the opportunity to exchange perceptions with my American roommate and meet several people with whom, through interactions, I learnt about myself, others and issues relevant to our experience, such as privilege, responsible tourism and cultural sensitivity. I committed to activities that I had not experienced before, such as LGBTQ meetings and Presidential Scholar Abram Yarbro's theatre play concerning LGBTQ issues and religion in cross-cultural perspective. I was able to attend events such the Black History Month organized performance, and to participate in the Latin American Evening, for instance. I believe that I owe a big part of my learning to the active and stimulating on-ship life.

In addition, one of the things that I mostly treasure from SAS was the opportunity to form new relationships and reunite with pre-existing ones. As cliché as it may sound, during the semester I met people with whom I will meet again in the future and preserve friendships. But traveling around the world also gave me the opportunity to reunite with previous friends scattered around the globe, and to learn from that. For example, in Japan, I visited an American classmate from UWC Mahindra College who moved there to start his path as a sushi chef. This opportunity was not only valuable because I saw him again, but because it prompted me to reflect upon the challenges one faces when moving to a foreign country and after graduating from UWC. In a way, I could give a personal reading to my friend's experience, and apply some conclusions to the challenges I am facing in my new life in Canada. Furthermore, the ship's stop in Cochin allowed me to visit my UWC for the first time after graduation, which would have been otherwise not plausible. This visit, similar to Japan's, gave me the opportunity to reunite with some of my best friends, but also to realize that UWC was simply a special stage of my life and that I was ready to share and apply all what I had learnt during the past years in the "real world".

Lastly, I think that stepping outside of my academic comfort zone was a valuable decision. Even though I was already familiar with religious studies and photography as academic disciplines, I decided to deepen my knowledge in areas such as poetry and sexuality, which would otherwise not have fit within my degree's academic plan. Coming from an overall conservative education atmosphere in Venezuela, I was never exposed to topics in sexuality concerning abortion, sexual disorders, sexual orientation, gender identity, and others. Gender was always presented as a binary-exclusive classification, and the course in SAS allowed me to learn about the

complexity and richness of our sexual nature. Moreover, the cross-cultural poetry course not only opened doors to understand different poetic forms and traditions, but most importantly to develop effectively my own poetic voice. I had been writing poetry (or something like it) since I was fifteen. However, the abundant feedback of my teacher and opportunities to practice our writing skills allowed me to find my own poetic identity, the literary devices I mastered, and the motifs of my own work. This was quite a liberating experience, since it offered me different tools I will be able to use in the future, while documenting my experiences through poetry.

Evaluation

My main disappointment with SAS was related to the image it promoted to be. It is indeed a special and unique opportunity, but several aspects of its promotion deviate from the experience that most students have, and create distortions on the purpose of the program and our place within it (which is, in my opinion, mere tourists).

For instance, I felt troubled sometimes by the discrepancy between some of the course material and some of the field program activities. To give a tangible example, during the cultural pre-port of Hawaii (which was one of my favourites) students and faculty discussed the effect of colonization in the destruction of the land, natives' feelings of shame towards their own culture, disappearance of indigenous languages, and cultural appropriation and simplification for the sake of profit and tourism by big invasive hotel companies. Learning about this was very meaningful to me, yet my experience in Hawaii felt like I was being part of what I seemed to be against. I spent my day riding a submarine and strolling around Waikiki, and in my own ignorance I felt I was feeding this machinery of a destructive practice of tourism. The image that we were being more than tourists, and that we had a deeper understanding of the countries' culture than regular tourists, seemed false to me.

In some field programs, I also felt that the activities and itineraries were hindering the students' exposure to the local culture and their engagement with it. For example, during my Bagan trip in Myanmar, we stayed in a five-star hotel that seemed very disconnected to its surroundings. What made me uncomfortable was not staying in a five-star hotel per se, but claiming by being part of SAS that we were there to experience the culture at its fullest. I would have preferred to live an experience which resembled (not fully, but more closely) the life of locals in Bagan, perhaps by being more austere with our hotel choices or having a greater degree of exposure to the commoners' life in Bagan.

Lastly, I also felt that the notion of "IMPACT" programs needed a bit of a twist. Even if this perception was not explicitly promoted by the field office, I felt that people thought of themselves as change-makers by participating in impact programs. During my experience in UWC Mahindra College, we discussed extensively the need for needs assessment before partaking in a service-related activity. I do not know if the field office does take this into account, but some of its offerings (like 3-hour orphanage visits) seemed to be made more for the SAS students' experience rather than intended to cause a beneficial impact in the communities visited. For this matter, I thought a change of image is necessary. SAS should make

clear to students that we are participating in the countries as tourists, and that some of the programs coordinated by the field office which claim to cause positive impact in the countries, do not cause positive impacts at all. By this I am not saying that the programs should be eradicated, since in some of them I learnt a lot (like, for example, in the Day in the life of a Fisherman in Accra). Instead, the projected image should be made clear. IMPACT programs are made for the student to learn and be impacted by the experience, not for the communities to benefit from us.

Nevertheless, I would not do justice if I just pointed out the negatives of the field office and its programs. The great amount of logistics behind the scenes and the organization of the programs are remarkable and should be openly acknowledged. Moreover, some of the programs I participated in with SAS were chances that gave students access to certain opportunities that would have been otherwise difficult to coordinate independently. For example, Biking in the Outskirts of Saigon, Hiking on the Great Wall of China, A Day in the Life of a Fisherman, and Religions of Morocco were all experiences that I owe to the field office, which I would probably not have been able to live on my own.

In relation to the academics, I found the concept of field labs to be a very enriching part of the academic program. Two of my field labs were some of the most memorable learning experiences of the voyage. I think that investing effort in planning them can make them very valuable experiences for the students. Moreover, a possibility for students to join additional field labs unofficially that do not pertain to their courses should be considered. Even if I am unable to come up with a plan for its implementation, I believe it is something that could be taken for further discussion.

In regards to the life on the ship, I have no complaints. The ship was packed with activities of different kinds led by motivated students and faculty who were willing to share their interests and knowledge with others. I believe SAS gave the opportunity to students to execute any activity they wanted to share, and this freedom enriched the options available and integrated extra-curricular components to our lives on the ship. I thought the packed schedules and the overwhelming amount of events was a positive thing. It promoted participation and allowed students to make their own decisions on what to attend and to which activities they should devote themselves.

In terms of logistics, I was impressed by the degree of organization that SAS demonstrated. Onship and immigration procedures were clear, opportunities to seek help provided, the Dean's Memo, and logistics while in-port were well-thought of. I can only appreciate all the effort behind the scenes and all the resources available for students during the voyage.

Thank you so so so so so much.

I will always remember that Mr. Shelby Davis and SAS made this experience possible for my personal growth, and I live with the certainty that I will use all of what I learnt to make the world a better place within my possibilities.



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UWC attended: UWC Mahindra

University attending:

Courses on SAS: Cross-Cultural Psychology, Introduction to Comparative Politics, Intercultural Communication, Global Media

Evaluation

Laying down on a familiar bed, one that is wide and grounded. Ears no longer rest on the rustle of the ocean's waves, as they slam my cabin's window. The rocking ship on which I used to live, ceased to challenge my physical balance and ability to concentrate. The bed on which I am now, typing this, is so distant and foreign from the reality I experienced in the past four months. Reality of constant discovery, boundless exposure to the unknown, and anchorless state of mind, one that is free and independent to explore environments, societies, norms, thoughts, and ideas. Having settled, I feel content. Certainly, I will forever conserve all my Semester at Sea experiences and insights, inserting them in a protected jar, one that can be easily carried in a bag of a traveler.

My name is Yarden Boytner, and I am an Israeli graduate of the Mahindra United World College in India. The courses I took on the ship were Cross-Cultural Psychology, Introduction to Comparative Politics, Intercultural Communication, and Global Media. Being a Jewish Israeli citizen, I am obliged to serve in the Israeli army, as Israel maintains a compulsory military draft for women and men. Considering this law, I do not carry the privilege of choosing to pursue higher education in the next three years of my life. Hence, I participated in Semester at Sea as a gap year student, which allowed me to celebrate freedom in a way that I will not be able to experience in the near future.

Before I will begin with naming two highlights of my SAS experience, I would like to express the reason I applied to Semester at Sea in the first place. Coming from one of the most homogenous cities in Israel, in reference to religious affiliations and socio-economic class, I was

taught to feel solidarity and compassion, to all the people surrounding me, as long as they are similar to me. Throughout my time in a UWC, I started question the ingrained nationalism that was seeded in my consciousness since kindergarten, I asked – but what about those who do not look like me?

What about the lives of people with whom I share nothing in common? Why are they positioned lower on the ladder of human suffering?

Being exposed to Buddhism during my time in India, I wanted to take off the blinds that were glued to my heart for years, so I will be able to see every co-human on this planet with equivalent appreciation and compassion, and cure my mind of the destructive disease of discrimination and racism. Why? Because I find humanity to be one of the most complex and enchanting phenomenon in our world. Our ability to contain love is extraordinary. Once this love will be shared more openly and explicitly between humans, I believe we will all be one step closer towards genuine happiness.

I found Semester at Sea to be an extremely unique opportunity for me to practice my sense of compassion and love, being able to meet and visit humans who are so different from me. People whose face structure is 'strange', who do not speak a language I can understand, dress in a way I have never seen before, or carry their body with a narrative I have zero awareness of. I wanted to challenge my ability to relate with others who are so different from me, insisting on finding the commonalities between us all humans, and expand my sense of solidarity and sincere care for others. All that so I can go back to my country of conflict and work towards breaking the ethnic division and mental walls between the humans who are forcibly positioned on two opposite fronts of a mental war.

When I was in Japan, I traveled with two guy friends in Chiba, a small town at the outskirts of Tokyo. As we visited a local bath house, separated at the sex division, I entered a bathing hall of many clothless Japanese women. The women around me were so beautiful, their bodies and faces were so different from everything I have seen before. Still, there was so much variation in their size and shape, and in age as well. From women of old age, to girls around the age of my ten years old sister. The hall was full with acceptance to the female body. Experiencing such welcoming vibes from the co-bathers, bound with sweet attempts to interact with me. I felt such great appreciation for the female body, and the endless possibilities of shapes it can take. What a difference from the west. Where society is structured to follow one model of bodily beauty, one that is tall and skinny, aggressively canceling out all the other equally beautiful shapes of female existence.

Another highlight of my trip was the intellectual and slightly sentimental confrontation I experienced in Cape Town, South Africa. Prior to arriving at the port, I was very intrigued to observe the remaining legacy of the power dynamics between the different racial groups, considering the arguable linkage between Apartheid and Israeli occupation. It was the first time in my life where I got to witness remains of social conflict as an outsider, one who does not share any common narratives with either parties. I used to disregard the argument that draws

the similarities between the oppression in South Africa and the reality in Israel, as the histories and the social groups involved are distinctively different. However, the visible racial segregations in the work force, restaurants, residential areas, and wealth disparities were very familiar to the reality I see at home. Saddened by the huge disparities I witnessed, I felt deeply motivated to become more politically active back in Israel. I want to work towards becoming a politician, to have the power and influence to reduce the violence of the complex reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Coming back to the ship, I participated in a three students panel, where we shared an idea we ponder on following in-country experience. I chose to share few of my insights as an Israeli in South Africa with the shipboard community.

Reflecting on my gap experience in Semester at Sea as a whole is somewhat impossible. I feel that new thoughts continue flash my mind with more realizations and emotions, squeezing out every drop of remaining meaning that I still did not touch in my reflection. I believe that the program provides UWCers with space and stimulus to challenge the idealistic attitudes we have cultivated throughout our time in a UWC. However, in terms of improvements for the future, I would like the Davis foundation to make it clearer for us, scholars, of the reasons and the intentions behind granting us such a generous scholarship. At multiple points throughout the voyage, my role as a Davis scholar within the shipboard community was not very clear. If the purpose was to share my perspectives and past experiences with my co-ship mates, to critically examine the ISE institution, and to challenge the arguments presented to me by my professors or classmates, then I had met these expectations. But were these all? Do we as Davis scholars determine the purpose of our scholarship?



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UWC attended: United World College of the Atlantic in Wales

University attending: McGill University

Courses on SAS: Introduction to Comparative Politics, Global Media, Gender from a Cross-Cultural Perspective, Travel Writing

It was a true privilege to be able to meet UWCers from so many different colleges. There was a lot of value to sharing the similarities and differences between our UWCs making me wish there were more effective platforms for current UWC students to meet each other and discuss about the way their colleges function.

In terms of the itinerary, I think the four African countries we visited were very well chosen in the sense that they showed how diverse the African continent is and experientially demonstrated to the student body how misleading the single-story about Africa is. Adding a port in Eastern Africa before reaching Capetown would also have been tremendous.

There was talk on the ship of the possibility to reduce our energy and water consumption by adding a piece of equipment to each shower (Professor John Tyner). Hopefully, ideas like these are documented and passed on to the new managerial team.

Other UWCers must have addressed various issues surrounding the IMPACT programs and the saviour complex they oftentimes perpetuate. Some were arguably both valuable to the students and the communities the programs were directed at (eg Kranti Workshop). In general, they barely engaged students to discuss about the structural power issues that the programs partly rested upon. Perhaps more environmentally focused programs (eg beach clean ups to state obvious one) would have less negative impacts than some of the current IMPACT programs. Although, these would also require a critical reflection before and after the program. For the simple reason, for example, that countries deal with trash and recycling in very different ways. In India and Ghana, programs dealing with demonstrating how the countries are sometimes being used as some wealthier industrialised countries' wastelands would have been particularly impactful for many students. Luckily, in my Global Media course, this issue was briefly talked about in regards to e-waste in Accra.

Semester at Sea was an amazing experience that gave me a lot to think about and process. It proved to be more challenging than I expected in that respect. I am forever thankful for this incredible opportunity; it meant so much to me.



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UWC Attended: Mahindra UWC, India

University Attending: Macalester

Courses on SAS: Anthropology of Tourism, International Finance, Introduction to World Art, World Religions

Highlights of the Voyage –

- Being able to interact with fellow UWCers in the setting of a voyage around the world
- Learning about Myanmar. Being such an isolated closed economy, I had no idea about the culture, food, music, people and sites in Myanmar.
- Visiting South Africa – it was the most enjoyable travel experience I had. I got the chance to interact with nature in its most pristine form.
- Meditating while at sea and reflecting on my actions, beliefs, strengths, weaknesses and prejudices and trying to broaden my way of thinking.
- Intense discussions on feminism, privilege and understanding the “other” i.e. the hosts in the countries we visited, with members of the Shipboard community
- Learning from Inter-port individuals about their countries and cultures and interacting with them i.e. the ‘hosts’ at a personal level

Evaluation –

- The Itinerary and the fact that the voyage goes from East to West were much appreciated. The time zone changes were easier to handle because of the extra hours gained!
- I think the restriction on the use of Davis Funds solely for shipboard expenses and field programs is a valid one and I appreciated being able to be accountable for the money that I had received. I was reimbursed in cash for all the visas I had to acquire out of the Davis Fund of \$5000. I think that cash was very useful to me for buying souvenirs, native food, etc.
- I was mobbed and threatened in Ghana. That was the country that I was most uncomfortable in because I was constantly being followed and coerced to buy things from the local people. I felt unsafe and my private space was violated in that country, even though I did not experience any bodily harm. I tried to understand why Ghana was chosen as one of the destinations on this voyage instead of Namibia like Spring 2015. I had excellent reviews of Namibia from SAS spring 2015 voyagers.
- Other than Ghana, I learnt a lot from each of the other countries we visited, I felt welcome and respected and I enjoyed this voyage thoroughly.
- This voyage taught me that it is easy to be compassionate towards people when the interaction is friendly, however, showing that same compassion in situations where you are uncomfortable and feel compromised, is very difficult. I understand that the people in Ghana were simply trying to earn a living because they have very limited resources, however, I found it very difficult to feel compassion towards them.