MIXPLATECHINA
MY CHINA EXPERIENCE, ENJOY! THOUGHTS, IMPRESSIONS, AND OBSERVATIONS.

FIRST BLOG POST... ALOOOOOOOOHAA!
MAY 14, 2014
I’ve been looking forward to studying abroad this summer in Hainan for awhile, but this past mothers day is when I really realized that I’m actually going to China, because my mom is so worried about me going to she took me shopping at longs to pick up living essentials like medicine, toiletries, and deodorant(and anything else she thinks I need). She really is the best mom any son could ask for! It makes me think of how long I’ll go without seeing my family. In total I’ll spend about 6 months in China, with a couple of weeks between summer and fall semester back in Hawaii getting my visa for fall semester. I feel that this trip really hasn’t sunken in yet and I won’t really feel like I’m going to China until I’m at the airport boarding the plane. As of right now I’m only focused on acing my finals and making sure I don’t forget anything before I leave and won’t be back for two months!

My name is Koa Webster and a little bit about myself is that I am a Marketing and International Business major at UH Manoa Shidler and minor in Chinese. I’m really figuring out what I want to do with my life through this trip not sure if that will happen, but i know for sure it will be a great adventure! I picked the name mixplatechina because I was trying to think of something that will be easy to remember for my family if they look for my blog and also if they ever search google it’s the only name that will come up. Also I love mix plates, and I’m sort of a mix plate because I’m English, Irish, Scottish, German, Dutch, Filipino, Spanish, and Chinese so ethnically I’m all mixed up!

WEEK 1 IN HAINAN AND ITS HOT!
MAY 22, 2014
It finally hit me that I was returning to China when I boarded a plane full of Chinese people,
mostly Shanghainese, excluding us 4 Hawaii University students. The 11 hour plane ride didn’t feel as long as I thought it would, mostly because I was sleeping, but also because I chatted with a guy from Shanghai who is a tour guide for Chinese people. They do tours for 14 days in America, stopping in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Washington, and Hawaii. Each for about 3 days. He said that every month he travels with his tour group to help them with hotels and car rental, and the rest of the time he has his own time to relax. After the tour returns to China he has the rest of the month to do whatever he wants. His job sounded like a dream job to me because I really want to travel while earning money.

We stopped in Shanghai Pudong International Airport for a 7 hour layover and some of my classmates who were also on the flight went to the heart of Shanghai to see the pearl tower and bund. Our first chance to speak Chinese was at the airport when we asked for the best way to get to Shanghai. We asked several workers and after getting mixed directions from some of the Chinese airport workers we decided to take the Maglev(a magnetic train) which goes 300km, makes sharp turns that turn the train nearly sideways, and takes about 20 min to get into town. On the Maglev we met two Caucasian South Africans who were teaching English in Ningbo near Shanghai and were getting paid 20,000 yuan a month! This is a lot of money in China, and possible option for me if I decide to work in China. After the Maglev, we caught the Line 2 subway metro to Lujiazui station to see the Pearl tower. On this day Shanghai was extremely foggy, cloudy, and possibly polluted. Of the three pearls, we could only see the first pearl. Later we caught the underground tunnel below Huangpu river to look at the Shanghai towers from the Bund side. Everything was just as beautiful as I remembered. I lead the navigation through the city because I had been there before, the city seemed so familiar and it seemed as though I hadn’t forgotten anything, I even quickened my pace to match the normal hustle and bustle of Shanghai, it felt as If I had never left, and really made me look forward to my next semester there at Tongji University.
After we quickly returned back to the airport for a 2 hour flight to Hainan. The first thing I noticed when we arrived at 1am was that Hainan is very hot! Since the humidity is almost 100% most of us built up a sweat immediately after stepping off of the plane. Mentally I was prepared for this heat and as we waited for our baggages I realized I actually kind of liked this sauna like feeling. We had the chance to chat in Chinese with our driver who is a Hainan local as he took us to our dorms. My dorm is normally used for 2 people so its huge! With two beds, a tv, closet, two tables, dresser drawers, a bathroom, I feel like a rich person living so lavishly. Although they are currently renovating the entire hotel there are huge holes in the ceilings of all our dorms. Outside there are wires hanging and construction materials laying everywhere. The next
morning we could see a large banner in front of our classroom buildings dedicated to the Hawaii University Students. We were given an introduction to the Hainan program that was totally in Chinese. All of the administration was extremely friendly and happy to help us with any questions we had.

Although its only been a week, it feels like we’ve been here for awhile now. I’ve been doing my best to make everyday count, by doing something different everyday. Our first couple of days were spent going to mandatory meetings or dinners with administration and the Dean of Hainan University. The Dean was very interesting, he told us about his hometown and one of the things I remember him saying is how we should address young women as meinu 美女 which literally means beautiful girls, he says its flattering, and similar to calling a young man handsome shuaige 帅哥. I wasn’t expecting great food in Hainan but the food in Hainan is some of the best Chinese food I have ever eaten, I just have to go and find the right spots to eat at. I also found some interesting snacks in a small store on campus including one packaged chicken foot!
For the fourth year level students we have five different Chinese classes including Chinese Idioms, Writing, Reading, Culture, and Integrated Chinese and two optional classes Kungfu and calligraphy. In all of our classes we have different teachers, and each are extremely intensive. The teachers to me seem amazing, and even our Kungfu and calligraphy teachers seem extremely professional. Our first day of Kungfu class was pretty funny, we all had a chance to kick our teacher in the knee and trip each other using the moves he taught us, but at the end of class he did a nunchuck demonstration that had all of us in awe. Our calligraphy teacher is also a police commissioner who came to class with his secretary and coworker/translator that told us to practice calligraphy everyday, he even brought his own huge calligraphy painting up 5 flights of stairs that he says is worth 20,000 to 50,000 yuan.

In my free time I’ve been to the beach which really reminded us of Hawaii, especially because there’s a store there that sells ukulele’s, we talked to the owner and we plan on returning to play ukulele and practice our Chinese with him.

We also went swimming with our tutor who didn’t know how to swim, so we spent most of our time teaching him how to swim using only Chinese which was great for using words about how to move the body.

Yesterday we we played ping pong with some very experienced Chinese students, fortunately I won a couple of games, but I’m sure they would have beaten me in the end, we got their numbers and will call them next time we return to play.
Today, we were doing pull-ups near the school's gym and we saw some extremely fit students that really changed my mind about Chinese students. Before I had the impression that there were no Chinese students that like to workout as much as Americans, but these guys were as big if not bigger than many of my classmates and friends back in Hawaii. Also, there were many older people doing more pull-ups than we were doing. I asked one of the older men how old he was and he told me he was about 50 years old. I was astonished that he was that old and still working out hard and also because he didn’t know his exact age, I think maybe to some Chinese age is not as important as it is in America.

One of the best experiences so far in the first week was getting a massage with all of our group. It felt really nice since we had been walking everywhere and I had never had a foot massage before. We started by soaking our feet in water with tea bags, while the girls gave us a back massage, then they massaged our feet in ways I had never seen before. At one time they used fire to heat up glass balls that they stuck to the bottoms of our feet for a couple of minutes. These girls’ hands were much stronger than I originally thought. We all thought they must be really strong to do this for 1 hour must be tiring, then we asked how long do they work each day and they told us they work 10 hours everyday!

This first week was very eventful! I didn’t realize how much I could write about. In the following weeks I’ll be focusing on really improving my Chinese in class and also through meeting people outside of class to practice with. Hopefully I’ll have more pictures and less words for my blog post next Friday! Until next time 再见！

INTENSIVE CHINESE LEARNING

JUNE 2, 2014

I truly believe that language learning is best learned while immersed in the country and culture. And over time if you’re not using it you’ll probably be losing it. Its been a while since I’ve really used my Chinese to communicate with anyone. The past year in Hawaii most of what I learned was never really applied outside of the classroom. But now almost everyone outside of our Hawaii group speaks only Chinese. Some important times to use Chinese correctly are getting directions, understanding homework assignments, and solving problems. There were
times that I thought I knew what someone was saying and it ended up I was totally wrong, like turning left instead of right and getting lost, or having trouble doing the right homework for class, and how to repay for dirty hotel towel and new hotel card. The key for me was to double/triple check until I knew exactly what they meant. Misunderstandings in English are bad enough, but in another language its too easy to interpret the wrong meaning.

Getting directions in Chinese for bus station. Figuring out how to get to Wanning.

Its been two weeks so far and I already feel that my Chinese has improved so much already. One of the reasons is that we have five classes five days a week, that are fully taught in Chinese. Second, is that my interest in learning words and phrases has increased because I wanna use them outside of class. I’ve had many conversations where I thought to myself “if only I knew how to say this I could get my point across.” Interestingly I’ve also noticed that my listening skills have gotten better, because I’ve been focusing so hard to catch the words that I can understand. Also, I’m getting pretty good at pretending to understand what they said and hope to make sense of it later in the conversation. As long as its not extremely important I try not to stop the person every time I hear a word I don’t understand. Im not sure if this is a really good way of communicating, but it helps to keep the conversation flowing.

This past week I’ve mostly been focusing on studying Chinese in the classroom. Whenever I get the chance I’ll start a simple conversation with people to practice, and thats pretty easy because a lot of the Chinese students are eager to meet a foreigner and to practice their English. I met two girls from Urumqi, Xinjiang province. I mentioned that there recently was a bad event in that area referring to the recent terrorist attack, but both girls didn’t seem interested in taking the conversation in that direction. We continued to talk about lighter topics(which is better for my simple Chinese) and they even helped me with my Chinese homework. Another good place is to chat with some of the food vendors outside of school, while you’re ordering its easy to start conversations, and they seem to really enjoy meeting a foreigner who is learning Chinese.
I’ve met a few Chinese people so far that are fairly good at speaking English, which isn’t the best practice for me but I don’t mind. What has really helped me is to not be embarrassed when my Chinese is bad or incorrect and continue to use it even though their English may be better. Sometimes I feel myself and other foreigners become too self-conscious of their language skills that they stop using it all together. But I feel that its best to keep trying, and over time it will become better. To keep in contact basically everyone in China uses WeChat. WeChat is an extremely popular mobile app here in China and similar to FB when it was at its peak, everyone has one and that is the best way to communicate with Chinese people. Whenever I meet someone I want to keep in contact with we exchange WeChat ID’s.

Most important apps in China. Pleco(Chinese dictionary) and Wechat

There were three highlights of the week that were mostly during the weekends. We got to see a local Hainan museum that had some really interesting art including, some Hula girls.

Chinese hula girl art

We drank coconuts in a busy shopping district, Hainan has a huge coconut supply, with farms all over the island. It seems to be a huge part of the Hainan economy.

Late night market/drink coconuts and chill
This past weekend we went on a weekend surfing trip to Riyue bay, in Wanning. This was the best part of the week by far, because I had been looking forward to this opportunity since I was in Hawaii.

Riyue bay front opening

I had already been introduced to some connections before going to Riyue bay. Luckily, I met some foreign students at Haida who were planning on going as well. We caught three different bus rides to get there and after arriving we bargained for a hotel room with an ocean front view that was $11 per person. Food was a little more expensive than back in Haikou, but the whole trip which was three days cost me less than $70. The whole time I thought to myself that you could never do this back in Hawaii. Later, I got to meet with the owner and a few of the managers of Riyue bay. I’m really considering returning there to either work or volunteer, I feel that they have a great atmosphere, a lot of opportunity, and it would be a great way for me to continue learning Chinese. I even had the chance to attempt to coach three Chinese girls how to surf totally in Chinese, unfortunately only one of them sort of stood up, but I learned a lot of useful Chinese words in the process, and they all said they had a lot of fun in the end. One challenge that Riyue bay faces is that unlike many Americans that love to tan, many Chinese people like having white skin. Even in normal everyday life many Chinese people protect there skin as much as possible.

Chinese students using umbrellas to stay white. Didn’t get a chance to snap a picture of the clothed surfers.

I also had the chance to chat with a foreigner named Jeremy who was filming a documentary on Riyue bay, it's been about a year and a half process, he says the footage is fascinating. From what Jeremy told me is that Riyue bay is doing something interesting where they invited a few of the local village kids to start a surf team in Hainan, they have coaches and train every weekend. The reason being is that lot of Hainan land is being bought by hotel industries, and
many of the farm land will be taken away, forcing the people who live there to either move and start a new farm or work in the hotels. Many of the kids were raised to be farmers. Buying their farm land will give them no choice but to work in the hotels. Surfing gives these kids the opportunity to be the best surfers in all of China, and a chance for endorsements and other career opportunities. I really feel that this is a noble cause for the owner of Riyue bay to undertake. He sponsors the kids and really wants them to become successful in life. This past weekend had a large inflow of Chinese tourist to Riyue bay, due to the national Children’s Day holiday, many of the visitors were rapped head to toe in clothing, to make sure that their skin stayed white. I’m really interested to see what waits for the future development of Riyue bay.

Random cattle herd near Riyue bay.

Left to right- Mongolia, Kazakstan, France, Hungary, Chicago, Fujian, Hawaii, England. Photographer is Switzerland.

Different countries all in one place. Switzerland, Hungary, France, Kazakstan, Mongolia, Fujian, England, Chicago, Hawaii.

This coming week I really need to study hard for my Chinese classes. Also, we have a swimming competition coming this weekend that a couple of the Hawaii student’s are participating in. In Hawaii I’m an average swimmer, but here they say I have a chance of placing high so we’ll see. Until next time,再见！

CROWDED CHINA
JUNE 8, 2014
This 3rd week in China was fairly relaxed. I mostly focused on my studies and our swimming competition. In the beginning, coming from Hawaii we believed we would probably crush all of the competition. But later we realized we were out of shape and I had never swam a competitively before. All in all it was still a very fun experience. I came in second in my race, and the other Hawaii student may have came in first but he didn’t stay long enough to check his time. One night we went to the pool to practice and were shocked at how many people were in the pool. I have never seen a pool so packed with people. There were too very large pools next to each other, and both were extremely crowded.
School swimming pool. the other pool right next to it that's not in this picture has just as many people.

On another day we went to the center of the city to eat some street food that was delicious. This place was also extremely crowded with people everywhere, people were bumping into us, noise coming from everywhere from music, traffic, and people talking, neon signs on top of neon signs advertising for the individual food stands. This place felt alive.

Yesterday, we went to eat jiaozi(dumplings) and also ordered some Cicada bugs to experiment. They were actually more expensive then the other dishes but we figured lets just try it out. The taste was actually fairly bland, I probably wouldn’t get them again.

Later, we went to a hot pot restaurant and check out the city view. Looking at the pictures you can’t really tell its China, but the noise and the smell is what really lets you know you’re in a different country.
At the end of the night we decided to get a massage. I opted for the simpler and cheaper foot massage but our resident director and two classmates decided to get the head and foot massage that looked much more intense. The masseuse’s finished the massages by stepping on their backs and stretching them in complex positions. I thought it was super funny so I took a bunch of pictures.

Since the beginning of the trip I’ve been meaning to go and explore a little on my own. I still haven’t done that yet so that’s what’s on my schedule for today. This next week I hope to make a lot more Chinese friends, I’m feeling like I’m speaking way too much English lately. Until next time 再见！

**CHINESE FOOD**

**JUNE 25, 2014**

It's been another very eventful week here in Hainan. I've made some really good friends,
including a Mongolian, Kazakhstan, Filipino/Russian, and a really good Chinese friend from Fujian. I plan on visiting Fujian with him when he return home sometime in July. I’ve also made a bunch of Chinese friends sometimes just hanging out a few girls will come over to foreigners and want to meet us and practice English and exchange WeChat. I really enjoy meeting local Chinese here in Hainan, its a great way to understand their culture and practice Mandarin. My Fujian friend and I meet many times a week to workout at the schools weight room. The weight room really reminds me of the Palolo gym back home thats not nearly as fancy as 24 hour gym, but in the end all you really need is correct form and heavy things and you will find a way to workout.

Weight room. Fujian/China, Mongolia, Filipino/Russian, Kazakhstan.

Everyone who visits China is usually surprised at the use of oil in Chinese food. Since its my second time here I had already been expecting it, but for all of the other students they were not expecting the food to be this way. I’ve asked many people why they put so much oil in all of their food, and I still haven’t really found a definite answer, but one answer that sort of made sense to me is that its just a habit of Chinese cooking. Fortunately, since I have been working out more I’ve been meeting a lot of Chinese people who also feel that some of the food in China is not proficient in helping to stay healthy and build muscle. Many of the Chinese weight lifters that I’ve met take protein or cook their own food. In Hawaii I also try to cook my own food instead of eating out because its cheaper and also I can decide exactly what I’m eating, but it seems that its harder for people to do this in China because they are not as health conscious as some parts of America and especially in Hawaii where some people are very health conscious. For example if I go to Times or Safeway in Hawaii I can choose from a selection of meats very easily, but in the supermarket that we visited here in Hainan their fresh meat selection was very small. My Fujian friend who’s English name is Dave, made a home cooked meal in his apartment for us both. We bought frozen chicken some vegetables and bread and he made everything only using a rice cooker to cook everything. Honestly, this was one of the best meals I’ve had in China because of its simplicity and I feel its rare to have whole pieces of chicken meat, and no oil and sauces added. Normally in many of the cafeterias and restaurants they serve a lot of fat meat and bones. I feel that the Chinese people would have a lot to gain if they changed their diets. I think given the opportunity would choose these healthier options that could help them to feel better mentally and physically.
Recently, I’ve been eating really well because I’ve been hanging out with Dave and other international friends, we go to eat dinner after working out, and I get to practice my Chinese. Some of the international students don’t speak English well so we can only communicate in Chinese. For instance my Mongolian friends English isn’t very good, so we mostly speak Chinese to each other.

This week we also visited a Chinese tea shop. I’ve always drank tea now and then but I’ve never really had much interest in tea’s history or the culture behind it. But after the meeting the tea shop owner and hearing her lecture on tea I really started to understand why some people love it so much. It reminded me of people who are coffee or wine fanatics. Where these types of people have certain rules of drinking, how to hold it, what it means, so many different varieties and flavors etc. The owner was very kind, she brought out any tea we even briefly mentioned, including her most expensive tea’s. She also invited us back to drink free tea whenever we wanted.

This weekend we went on a trip to Hainan’s southern area. We stopped at a botanical garden and was amazed at how many similar plants Hainan had with Hawaii. They had the Bird of
Paradise, pineapples, and plumerias. They also had an extremely poisonous tree that a contact with an open wound could kill a person in 15 minutes. We also got to go to Monkey Island. In the beginning we could see many monkeys everywhere. The only downside to Monkey Island was the performance part. Many of the performing monkeys didn’t seem to want to perform but were forced to. The monkey were obviously very smart and could perform many tricks, but it seemed they were performing in fear of their trainers as sometimes the trainers would hit them if they stopped performing. It really made us feel uncomfortable, and were told that this is a very big difference between some Chinese is that they don’t view animals the same way that Americans do.

After, we visited the Li minority cultural center. Our tour guide informed us that actual Li people live in the cultural center. As we began our tour we could see many elderly women with
tattoos on their faces, these were some of the Li people. The tattoos have a meaning for the Li women, we were told that the tattoos relate to their mothers and help to distinguish one family from the other. The Li do this to help in choosing a possible mate, preventing incest, and in making stronger and healthier children. There were many similarities between Polynesian tattoo culture and Li tattoo culture, the tattooing instrument that they both use are wooden tools sharpened to points that are dipped in ink and tapped in to the skin. I also noticed similarities between their traditional dance that uses long bamboo sticks and a traditional Filipino dance that uses similarly long sticks to dance with. Both dances include hitting the sticks against the ground while people dance in between them in a rhythm. In my moms house she has an old picture of this exact dance from the Philippines.
We also heard about some interesting food choices of these Li people. Apparently some Li enjoy eating rats, we were told that these rats were not your usual rats found in alley ways and in dumpsters, but actually these rats were caught in the wild, and were considered a healthier choice. I’ve also heard of stories of some Chinese people eating dogs, and that these dogs are not pet dogs, but dogs raised on farms meant for dog meat. I have a pretty open mind when it comes to food, but I don’t think I could ever eat either of these meats.

That’s it for this week, next week we head to Wu Zhi Shan for some river rafting. Until next time 再见！

LOCAL HAINAN DINNER AND WU ZHI SHAN

There were two highlights this past week including a local style dinner with Hainan locals, and weekend trip to Wu Zhi Shan for river rafting.

The dinner with the Hainan locals was actually one of my most favorite experiences in China. It started with our calligraphy teacher asking if we would like to eat some authentic Hainan cuisine with him and a few of his friends. It sounded like a pretty good plan considering he’s a police officer so wherever we went we would have been safe, but actually I probably would have gone regardless. We arrived at the restaurant that didn’t have a name that was on a old Chinese opera stage. The servers brought out two big tin buckets that looked similar to 5 gallon plastic buckets. The bottom was heated with coals and they brought out plates of different meats and the thinly sliced outer edges of the watermelon, the part of the watermelon that no one usually eats. They started asking us of we like to eat pig intestines, and since we were guests we really feel it polite to refuse, so we all thought we would give it a try. And actually in the end the food wasn’t too bad. The pig intestines were pretty chewy and fortunately they brought out some normal pig meat to eat that actually tasted really good. The best part of the night was meeting our calligraphy teachers friends. They reminded me so much of my uncles back home, they way they acted and joked around was very laid back. They only spoke Chinese and I tried to start as much conversation with them and use as much Mandarin as possible. I think they really appreciated that we were all trying to learn Mandarin. At one point I told them that I started Mandarin for my business degree, but what keeps me interested and wanting to learn more are moments like this, when I can talk to people about normal things, and I can understand
their lives and they can understand mine. If I never learned Mandarin we would never be able to talk to each other. Towards the end of the meal when all of our spirits were up the calligraphy teachers friends all told me to call them brothers or big brothers. I really hope we get to hangout again before we leave.

On stage with some of the crew. One of the best experiences in China. Didn’t get a picture with all of the uncles, this was at the beginning of the dinner.

Our weekend trip to Wu Zhi Shan was all for the sake of going river rafter. When we finally made to the river it was clear that this trip was worth it. There were parts of the river that were more exhilarating and parts of the river that were extremely peaceful, the scenery was beautiful. At some points I would just look around and think to myself how stunning our view was, it felt like a something out of a post card or movie, with all of the nature and mountains surrounding. Although the rafting was about 3 hours long I wish we could’ve stayed longer and relaxed out there for a bit.

Unfortunately I couldn’t bring my camera or else it would’ve gotten soaked so I took pictures of my classmates pictures.
Next week I’ll probably be hanging out with a few new Chinese friends that I met. I’m really excited to hang out with them and practice Mandarin and see what the local Chinese college students do for fun!

**PICTURE ESSAY ON MY CHINESE FRIEND DAVE**

**JULY 15, 2014**

For the Hainan Program I’m supposed to do a picture essay about one person or thing in Hainan. It’s only supposed to be pictures and captions. I figured maybe you guys mike like it too. For my picture essay I choose to write about Gaigai or his English name is Dave. We met playing soccer in Haida and have been good friends ever since.

Weight room. Fujian/China, Mongolia, Filipino/Russian, Kazakhstan. Dave is on the far left. Chinese friends know him as Gaigai.

Lighting Kongming lanterns. With two Chinese friends, Hawaii classmate Ryan, and Dave.
Nearly everyday at 5pm Dave and I go to lift at the schools gym. I think I’ll forever remember how to say gym and workout in Chinese. On the left is Great Man, he name translates to Great Guy, but he says now he is a Great Man. Next is Dave, and far right is our Madagascar friend who also lifts everyday.

Dave and I at a really fancy tea place. The boss met us and really liked us. She said next time you come here everything you want is free. We weren’t sure if she was telling the truth or not, but this time we found out she meant what she said. After drinking a few expensive teas the worker refused our money. Dave and this tea shop owner I feel reflect the kindness of many Chinese, and really makes me appreciate China.

SECOND PHOTO ESSAY CALLIGRAPHY
JULY 15, 2014
For the Hainan Program I’m supposed to do a picture essay about one person or thing in Hainan. It’s only supposed to be pictures and captions. I figured maybe you guys mike like it too. For my second picture essay I choose to write about calligraphy and a little about our calligraphy teacher.

Our calligraphy teacher takes Chinese calligraphy very seriously. He’s a police officer. Watching him write calligraphy it seems so easy and effortless. This finished product also looks so effortless.

Our teacher is very adamant that Chinese calligraphy is the best calligraphy, better than Japanese and Korean.
THE PAST THREE WEEKS HERE IN HAINAN

JULY 15, 2014

Its been awhile since I’ve updated my blog, lately I’ve been extremely busy, mostly with school work and also just trying to make everyday count here in Hainan. So I have 3 weeks to write about. I’ll try to keep it short and sweet.

Quite often a group of girls will go up to a random foreigner just to meet them and take a picture with them. On this occasion at the singing competition this happened to me. A few girls came up to me and asked me in Chinese if they could take a picture with me. I was pretty flattered at the time and we exchanged Weixin numbers. Since then I’ve been hanging out almost everyday with two of those girls, my good Chinese friend Dave, and one of my classmates from Hawaii. We usually eat food or get something to drink together. We mostly speak in Chinese the whole time, with a few translations from Dave occasionally. Two fun instances we had together were when we went to the top of a building to light Kongming lanterns, and when we went to the beach to play poker. Similar like many college students, when they have time they
Taken from https://mixplatechina.wordpress.com/

Like to spend it with friends, usually doing things that everyone can afford since we’re all poor college students.

Kongmingdeng lanterns, with Chinese friends.

Poker on the beach.

We had a weekend trip to Dingan where we visited one of the temples, they talked about China’s history and how temples were built back then. Later on we ate lunch with our tour guide who we all really liked, he only spoke Chinese and was very laid back and happy to be around us. He talked about the lifestyle here and saying how he likes it much better than living somewhere else in mainland China. One interesting thing he told was about his college experience. Mostly for him it was about socializing, having fun and making friends. He said that the ones who did poorly in college but went out and made a lot of friends, are now company owners and bosses, and the ones who studied hard all the time and never went out to have fun, are the ones now working for those that did poorly in school. That’s very similar to some American ways of thinking, where some of the richest and most successful people are those that dropped out of college. I’m still determined to get my degree, but I think just as or more important than getting a degree is making friends, creating networks, and finding something you like to do for a career.
Dingan temple.

One new hobby that I found here in Hainan was practicing calligraphy. Back in Shanghai I had tried to learn calligraphy but found out that it's much more difficult than it looks and takes a lot of time to master it. Being an artist I was hoping to learn quickly, but these characters were something extremely foreign to me. Our Hainan calligraphy teacher on the first day of class gave to us for free a calligraphy tracing book that we could practice with at home and he assigned a few pages for homework. But I discovered after practicing on a few pages that I really enjoyed tracing the characters, it was so simple and mindless that before I knew it I had finished the whole book! By the time our next class came around I had improved a lot, the teacher was even surprised and asked me how I had learned so quickly, I told him it was because of the books he gave us and he saw that I had finished mines. I also learned that this was a really good way for me to learn things in general, copying the correct way of doing things multiple times. For example kungfu class, I had learned the new moves fairly quickly, quicker than most of my classmates, because I use the same learning technique. The only thing I need to do now is to figure out how I can use this technique to improve my Chinese!

My finished scroll. It’s not the best I’ve done and not nearly as good as our teachers but much better than when I started.

Since this was one of our last weeks here we really wanted to take advantage of it and do something fun. So for one of our classmates belated birthday we went out to karaoke and two clubs in Hainan. In all of my life I’ve never gone to so many karaoke bars, or sang in front of so many people. But, as part of the Chinese culture I figured I should enjoy it and do as the locals do. Later on in the evening at one of the clubs my one Chinese friend came to join us with two of her Chinese friends and we played a really popular dice game in the club. Whenever I go to a Chinese club or bar they are always playing this game. I’ve noticed that a lot of Chinese drinking games have a lot to do with numbers, this one makes sense for clubs because when you play you can make hand signals to indicate the number of dice you have in case the music is too loud. I went home a little early because I wanted to finally get a good nights sleep. Most of my
nights have been spent with international friends or Chinese friends staying out really late and then waking up really early for class, so I wanted to use this weekend for a little rest time.

Karaoke for a classmates b-day celebration

One days homework here in Hainan.

Although the next day those same Chinese friends invited us to go to Wenchang to go sightseeing. The first thing we did when we arrived in Wenchang was order a local style Wenchang chicken dish. We’ve eaten Wenchang chicken before in Haikou but this was by far the best dish we’ve had so far. Later we went to a basically secluded beach with only a few other locals around selling coconuts. The scenery here was as beautiful as many beaches in Hawaii, the only major difference was that there was some trash along the beach and the water wasn’t as clean and clear. Sitting under the shade drinking coconuts was an awesome feeling and I think a good way to end our last weekend here in Hainan. There was a huge hotel on the seashore that we wanted to check out before we left. This hotel was really a beautiful hotel, again very similar to Hawaii’s hotels if not nicer. On our way back to the bus station we saw that the beach at night is much more lively than during the day compared to only a few people in the afternoon there was now hundreds of people along the shoreline and in the water.
One of the side streets in Wenchang.

Wenchang chicken. Plain cold chicken served with a sort of garlic dipping sauce and rice made with chicken broth.

One of the beaches in Wenchang. Its hard to believe that China has beaches like this it reminds me so much of Hawaii. The only difference was the water wasn’t as beautiful as Hawaii’s.

One of the pier’s under construction. It really seemed like they were trying to develop this area for more tourists to come.
In the afternoon the beach was empty, but at night there were hundreds of people coming out.

The campus here in Haida has become much less crowded because most of the students are starting to return home for the summer, including most of the international students. We were really sad to see the international students leave, mostly because they were all so cool, and chances to meet so many different nationalities are rare. I made a few really good international friends including some Korean and Kazakhstan girls that I only speak with in Chinese, since they don’t speak English its our only way of communicating.

One of the last dinners with all of the international students.

International BBQ.
Korean friends.

Kazakhstan friend, Gulnara. She’s been in Hainan for over a year.

I also made some really good Filipino friends here, although they kind of tease me for being Filipino but not being able to speak any Filipino. They really opened my eyes to different perspectives of some Filipino’s around the world, a lot of Filipino’s have a reputation of being really hard workers and being able to make light of tough situations.

Filipino’s I met in Hainan, all born in the Philippines. Far right guy has been living in Russia for over 10 years. Girl on my left has been in Hainan for over 4 years.

They began reconstruction on the international student dorms, and I noticed they still use bamboo for construction here in China. Chinese construction is well known for being built quickly, and especially me coming from Hawaii, compared to Hawaii’s construction pace Chinese are amazing. Also here in Hainan and some other parts of China where it gets really hot they have nap time. And they take nap time seriously. A few of the Hawaii students have also gotten accustomed to the nap time here and usually take their naps right after we eat lunch.
We also had the chance to BBQ with a Haida freshmen before they went back to their hometowns they next day. We BBQ’d at one of the famous beaches in Haikou called Holiday Beach. This beach is empty during the day and much more lively at night.
been here for 2 months, I really feel like we’ve done a lot living here. The following pictures are random pics with captions. that I didn’t know how to add into the blog. Enjoy!

Minority Li group museum.

Live frogs outside of restaurant.

On the way to Monkey Island.

Never eaten so many coconuts and drank so much coconut water in my life than here in Hainan.
Couples night latin dancing to Chinese music. Good way for older couples to go on dates. Don’t see much of these in America.

Holiday beach. Can’t take a picture for a small fee with two peacocks.

Holiday beach, no one goes to the beach when the suns out.

Random pic of me getting my haircut for about $2.

View of Haida.
CATCH UP SINCE LEAVING HAINAN

AUGUST 31, 2014
At the moment I’m sitting outside my guesthouse in Bangkok, but this blog post will be to catch up on everything that went on in the last week of Hainan and since being back in Hawaii. The next post will be about visiting Bangkok for a week.

The last week in Hainan was very eventful. Finishing Chinese finals, surviving a category 4 typhoon Rammasun, making it to the airport in one piece, and saying goodbye to Chinese friends.

The one part of the program that I didn’t really like was having our finals test the same week that we leave. And being that we had to focus on studying for the test we couldn’t really enjoy the rest of Hainan. Although it was a inevitable that we would have to take a final it would have been nice to not stress about a test and leave Hainan on a happier note. Although I didn’t let our finals stop me from going out and hanging out with my friends. I feel that at times, those experiences are much more valuable. After we finished our tests it was nice to finally relax and take a break from classes. The next thing we had to worry about was the category 4 typhoon heading right for Hainan. From what I heard the worst spot to get hit was our city Haikou.

Holding up the glass doors from blowing down by the wind. A few hours later both doors broke and shattered on the ground.
I had never really experienced a serious typhoon, storm, or hurricane before. So being that this was my first one to experience, I would say I really prepared badly. I knew it was going to be bad, but in Hawaii we get false alarms all the time telling us that there will be a tsunami or heavy storm, and in the end nothing really happens. In Hainan its a very different story, when they forecast its gonna rain it rains. But similar to when I am in Hawaii I didn’t really think much about it, and just went along my day as normal. I didn’t prepare at all, I should have been out a few days before buying extra water and food. When the storm hit and all of the water and electricity went out I realized that I wouldn’t have been able to survive very long. Thank goodness the hotel had food and water to give us the next day. During the storm the whole area around us was flooded, the wind was so powerful the way the blew the trees around easily ripping off branches or blowing the whole tree down. The next morning when the typhoon had passed we still had to make it to the airport for our flight out of Hainan to Hong Kong for 3 days vacation. As we walked to find a taxi to take us to the airport we could really see the devastation Rammasun had caused. Huge billboard signs had been knocked down, streets flooded, lanes closed because of fallen trees, cars smashed in from fallen trees, and debris everywhere. I had never experienced something like this in my whole life. Fortunately, we found a cab that could take us to the airport. I noticed that many of the locals were handling the situation very calmly, these typhoon and storms come through Hainan all the time. I am so lucky and thankful to live in Hawaii where this rarely ever happens.

For 3 days my classmate Ryan and I visited Hong Kong. Fortunately, Ryan’s mom lives in Hong Kong and they both can speak fluent Cantonese, Ryan also gave me a great tour of Hong Kong. The differences between the two areas were much greater than I thought they would be, food and culture are quite different. But I realized that because I can communicate better with local Mainland Chinese people in Mandarin they seem a bit more friendly to me, whereas in Hong Kong I couldn’t really have a great conversation with the local people considering I don’t speak Cantonese at all, they can speak English a bit, but it’s not the same as when you converse in their mother language.
The hardest part about leaving this place is saying goodbye to some of the awesome local Chinese friends that we made. Especially these few Chinese girls that were so kind and hospitable to us. After being here for almost two months we felt that we had really gotten to know Hainan, until we met these local girls, they should us around to spots in Haikou that we probably would have never been to. My dad would always tell me to meet the locals, because of this exact reason, the locals know the best spots to go to, similar to Hawaii, as a local I know which beaches on the island are the best, where to get the best food, where to meet other cool locals. One place that they introduced me to was a ice tea place, and for some reason I really loved this tea, in the last week alone I had been to this place three times for the same iced tea drink. So these girls really knew I liked this drink, and on the last day while I was waiting at the airport these girls surprised me with two of these drinks. That was really one of the nicest, thoughtful gestures someone has done for me, on top of that it was really funny as well. They waited with me until it was time to board the airplane and they left. This instance really made me think about my friends back home, and how these simple gestures can really go along way and mean a lot to someone.
on this trip. My Chinese classes have been so helpful to improving my Chinese language level, I feel even more motivated to improve my Chinese in these next coming months on my Fall study abroad to Shanghai. I’ll always remember the great people that I came with to Hainan and the people along the way that were so helpful. I made some great friends and had some amazing experiences.

Then before I knew it I was back in Hawaii wondering where the past two months had gone. While in Hawaii it was great to see my family and friends. I also went to the beach and ate local food as much as I could. But for the most part of my stay in Hawaii was spent working almost everyday to save up for my next trip to Asia.

A project I did on my surf board i dedication to the Chinese calligraphy we learned.

Had poke bowls almost everyday since I got back.

And now i’m in Bangkok for the week visiting fellow Freeman scholar Punilani-Sky Buakarnthong, and also my uncle. The next week will be spent in Seoul visiting the other Freeman scholars Alice, Alex, and Kainoa. I’ll also meet up with a bunch of other local Korean friends that I met in Hawaii. And finally I’ll start my semester in Shanghai at Tongji University on September 10.
The first thing I noticed in Bangkok that was very different from the other experiences I’ve had in Asia was how friendly the Thai people seemed, after collecting my baggage I went outside to look for a taxi, and usually no matter where you go in the world airport taxis will be very expensive and if you’re a foreigner your chances of being ripped off are much higher, this is especially true in China, but as I approached a taxi driver with my guard up to ask him to take me to my hostel he greeted me with a very friendly smile and quoted me a price that I thought was much too expensive, so he kindly directed me to another place where the taxis were bigger for my luggage and I could get the cheaper price I asked for. The noticeably different gesture I noticed was that many Thai people smile often, this reminded me very much of Hawaii people. And also when they say thank you they bow and hold their hands in front of them as if they are praying, I didn’t get a picture of this, but I did get Ronald Mcdonald doing it.

The day that I arrived I immediately met up with fellow Freeman scholar Punilani-Sky Buakarnthong who is studying at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, which is one of Thailand’s most prestigious colleges. While with her I met all of her classmates and friends, we went out to Khao San Road which is a popular place among foreigners to go out. It was good to see that Punilani had a great group of friends from all over the world including Sweden, Finland, El salvador to name a few. Later she took me to a few street food vendors to get some delicious food, the whole time I was in Thailand I enjoyed every meal I had from street vendors to fancy restaurants, it seems that all of the food in Thailand was delicious, even the crickets weren’t bad!
Some highlights of the trip were going to a nice hotel meeting some international people down at the pool which overlooked Bangkok city, and also meeting up with a local Thai from Bangkok who I had met in Hawaii from Shidlers American Marketing Association club, her name is Monn. Monn took me to some amazing places in Bangkok to eat and hangout, but sadly we only got to hangout on my last few days in Bangkok, she really knows the best places to go in Bangkok/Thailand and as I was leaving for Korea I felt that I wanted to stay in Bangkok much longer. It was good meeting a real local because I asked her opinion on how foreigners view Bangkok/Thailand, and how local Thai view their home, she said that because there are some movies like “Hangover 2” that portray Bangkok only about partying, she says that Bangkok has partying but its not like that everywhere, and it gives Bangkok a false image for foreigners. Some advice that I would have for anyone traveling to Bangkok is try to venture outside of the city if you have time/money, there is much more to see in Thailand than just Bangkok. And if you don’t mind sweet, sour, and tangy flavors than you will enjoy some great food in Thailand at a very cheap price, don’t be scared of the street vendors because that is some of the best and cheapest food you will get in Thailand, but even the fancy restaurants have some delicious food at an affordable price.
M150 and the original Red Bull from Thailand, its much sweeter than the one I’m used to in America.

Similar to China there are moped riders everywhere zooming in and out of traffic

Different modes of transportation.

The river here was the literally black like paint.
I’m writing this blog in my guesthouse in Hongdae, Seoul, South Korea right now, I’ll have an update on my Seoul experiences coming soon!

HONGDAE, SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

Although I only spent 7 days in Seoul it felt like I had been here for a month. My only plan coming to Seoul was to meet my old Korean roommates from Hawaii, my University of Hawaii fellow Freeman scholars, and my Korean friend that I met in Hainan. I’m glad that I kept my schedule pretty open because I was able to be much more flexible with making/changing plans with friends. We ended up going to two amusement parks, one watermark, doing a lot of sightseeing, and eating a lot of great food.
Had a great time in Seoul.

One of the first things I had to do was get some delicious and cheap bibimbap, this is a famous Korean dish and in Hawaii it cost around $11 at Shirokiya for a bowl, here in Seoul its about $5.

Heart shaped egg in Bibimbap.

Then I went to go see my friends in City Hall, they work for Westin Chosun Hotel. In 2012 they came to Hawaii on a work trip for a few months, some of their cohort lived at my house. They really enjoyed their stay with us and we enjoyed learning about their culture, they told us their time in Hawaii was the best time in their life. They also recommended that if things don’t work out in Shanghai and I can’t find a job after I graduate I can move to Korea and work at Westin Chosun!

Great friends from Korea encouraging my study abroad and helping to plan my future in Asia.
The next day I went to visit Gyeongbukgong with my Korean friend from Hainan, it reminded me of the Forbidden palace in Beijing, with wide courtyards and ancient asian style architecture. Also, we went to Gwanghwamun where I tried on the emperors clothes, and my Hainan friend told me the stories of the two statues of King Sejong who created the Korean alphabet and Admiral Yi Sun-Sin who is known for his victories over the Japanese during the late 16th century.

One of the best parts of the trip was being able to visit my fellow Freeman scholars and see how they were adjusting to life abroad and listening to their experiences so far. Fortunately, we were able to see each other often and together go to Lotte World, and Everland/Carribean Bay. Its clear to see that Freemans scholars everywhere in Asia are truly taking advantage of this wonderful opportunity that was given to us.
Fellow Freeman scholars, missing Alex that’s looking the other way.

Magic island.

Lotte world.

Lotte World.

The only thing I would say about Korea to watch out for is that in Seoul I needed to be careful of how much money I spent, the prices of most things were about the same as American or Hawaii prices. Other than that food is great, the people are very friendly, and its easy to have fun in this great city! If you are thinking of a place to stay in Seoul I recommendHongdae, there are many cool places to check out here and see especially for young foreigners looking for a good Korean experience.

Below is just a few random pictures of things I saw in Korea that were worth posting. I really felt like I did so much in Korea, out of all of the pictures in my phone now, half of them were taken in Korea.
Pig feet, I prefer the front pigs feet, supposedly better than the back feet.

Dog meat restaurant.

Chon Korean pancakes.

Korean food is truly unique, this was a good example of using the meal to its fullest. By first grilling the octopus, then making
wraps with lettuce and other vegetables, then eating the octopus by itself, and finally pouring rice over the whole dish and mixing it in for a rice, sauce and octopus dish.

Locks at Namsan tower for couples.

Busy day at Namsan tower.

Namsan tower view.

I’ve just arrived in Shanghai a few hours ago and tomorrow I’ll be filling out school documents and taking physical exams that are required for Tongji University. I can genuinely say I’m glad to be here back in China and continuing my studies and getting closer to reaching my goals. I had a few problems at the airport upon arriving in Shanghai, so in my next post I’ll be giving some important advice on how to handle the best way of getting Renminbi money and getting to your schools dorms without getting ripped off. Until next time 再见！
THANK YOU FREEMANS AND THE FREEMAN SCHOLARSHIP, THE REASON I’M HERE IN SHANGHAI.

SEPTEMBER 12, 2014

Before I start my semester here in Shanghai I wanted to write a post about how important and thankful I am of the Freeman Scholarship and write about all of the things this scholarship has given to me.

While I was in Korea visiting my Korean friends, one of my friends, Julian who I am closest with, told me something that I thought really surprised me, after talking about what I wanted to do in life and my goals and aspirations he said in matter of fact way “Koa, half of your dreams have been accomplished already”, for some reason I never thought about it that way before he said that, but its true, for a long time its been my dream to travel the world, and although I haven’t completely traveled the world yet I’ve done a lot more than I expected to accomplish in only a few years. Other goals of mine include becoming fluent in Mandarin and having a career in something I truly enjoy and that I can contribute my skills in. A huge part of reaching my goals have been thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Freeman for continuing this scholarship for so many years and allowing students this amazing opportunity. I told my parents that I wanted to study abroad again in China through UH Manoa but I’d only be able to do it if I received a scholarship, my parents agreed and now fortunately here I am studying abroad in Shanghai, China.

I would also really like to thank Rikki Mitsunaga, student advisor and counselor at Shidler business school. She is someone I recommend everyone entering in to Shidler to go and meet. She has helped me overcome many obstacles at UH, she really has the Shidler students back! I really cannot thank her enough.
THREE DAYS IN SHANGHAI
SEPTEMBER 12, 2014

Famous Shanghai view from the Bund.

Its only been three days since I’ve been in Shanghai at Tongji University and I have a lot of advice for anyone coming here.

This advice will be on:

Getting to Tongji University Campus and not getting ripped off! First, I’ll write about what happened to me then I’ll share on how to avoid all of these situations.

Upon my arrival at Shanghai Pudong International Airport there were people flagging me down inside the Terminal asking if I needed a taxi, I knew these people were looking for foreigners to rip off, so I ignored them and kept walking to find a place to exchange money and an ATM to withdraw more money. The exchange center was charging 60 yuan for exchanges which is about $10 American so I decided that was way too expensive, and I could probable do it somewhere else free or much cheaper. Then I needed to withdraw money from the ATM but found out that the only ATM’s in this area wasn’t compatible with my First Hawaiian Bank back home. So I was stuck at this Terminal with no Renminbi. Out of curiosity I asked a taxi driver how much from the airport to Tongji University, she quoted 550 yuan which is almost $100 dollars which is absurdly expensive, so she changed her price saying “for you I give you special price 450 yuan”, this price is still very expensive, in my mind I felt that at the most it should be 200 yuan(less than $50) to get here. So I went to another person to ask for the price, same thing, they quoted me 550 yuan, I said okay can you do 200 yuan, they stared at me as if I was crazy(all an act) and said “no way”, so they quoted me 450 yuan and I out of curiosity I just wanted to see how low they would go so I simply said “no 200”, he changed the price to 400, so I started to walk away, he started screaming “OKAY WAIT! For you 350 yuan”! I told him I have no Renminbi, he said we can use your credit card, I walked away and didn’t turn back(no way do I trust them with my credit card info). I realized I needed to find somewhere in the airport that I could get an ATM and find a cheaper way to my dorms. I asked around and casually was pointed to the direction of what might be more ATM’s, I ended up having to ask around a lot before I finally found TERMINAL 2, here there were a bunch of international and domestic ATM’s that I could use, and I also felt that at this terminal the people here were a little more friendly since they couldn’t make money off of me, also I realized that I could possibly just catch the subway all the
way to Tongji University. I asked one of the desk ladies how to catch the subway to Tongji University, and just so happens there’s a stop right near my dorms. It took me more than an hour to get to my dorm, but instead of getting ripped off and possibly paying $50 I ended up only paying 7 yuan for my subway ticket or $1 American to get to the dorms. Huge difference.

For the advice, I recommend if you have American dollars to exchange don’t do it at the airport, the rates are bad and usually they charge a fee that’s much more expensive than other places. If you absolutely need to exchange money you may have to pay the $10 rate, as I could not find an area where they weren’t charging this price. Also if you’re at a Terminal that doesn’t have reliable ATM’s go to Terminal 2, there’s an area with domestic and foreign ATM machines. If you want to catch a taxi expect to bargain, and probably get ripped off, keep asking to only use the meter, it will be much cheaper, they might say things like “this is the airport taxi, so its safer”, but taxi’s are taxi’s, you can go outside and find one that will use the meter. The Terminal that I arrived at seemed like it was fully ready to take advantage of foreigners, the people there are great actors, they will stare you dead in the eye and make you believe that this is a fair price that you should pay, its all a con, and don’t believe it. Also know that the subway stops running at 10pm so if you can, arrange your flight so that you have plenty of time to use the subway. Basically, I would say is get to Terminal 2 and figure out how to get to where you need to from there. To get to Tongji University from Shanghai Pudong International Airport there’s only two subways in the airport which include the line 2 subway and the Maglev. Take line 2 subway to East Nanjing Road, transfer to line 10 and take line 10 to Tongji University. It’s very simple and like I said it will only cost you about $1. There maybe other ways to get there by taking the Maglev train, but I asked around and was only recommended to take the subway. I was very close to just giving up and accepting the original taxi price they gave me because I was so tired and just wanted to get to my dorm easily, but it was much more worth it finding a different/cheaper way to arrive at my dorms. Hopefully this helps anyone traveling to Shanghai or going to Tongji University.

Below is just some random pics I took of Shanghai these past three days. Next post will be about the registration process and the struggles of completing that.

**QUICK UPDATE**

October 7, 2014
Its been a busy five weeks since I’ve arrived in Shanghai. Mostly filled with sightseeing, studying, and of course adjusting to the Chinese lifestyle. Unfortunately, I still don’t have a phone number or a phone plan because my phone from T-mobile that I bought in America is locked and I didn’t unlock it before I got here, its a long story, but for anyone reading this remember to unlock your phone when you’re in the States, its much easier. Once I get my phone set up I’ll be looking to meet up with a few contacts that can hopefully be my future employers here in Shanghai after I graduate.

I have a lot of stories to share but I’ll keep it short and sweet with a lot of pictures and descriptions of what’s been going on recently (in no particular order).
One adventure was going to see the Shanghai Port, reported to be the largest ports in the world, but after catching the metro and a two hour bus ride we didn’t make it in time to see the port. We ended up having to go back on the metro, but at the new metro station we discovered what looked to be a ghost town, its one of the areas in Shanghai thats been developed but there a few inhabitants in the area. So a lot of building and structures but no one walking around, interesting to see and wonder what it will look like in a few years from now.
Surprisingly on campus there’s a restaurant that sells good food for an affordable price, that doesn’t have a lot of the signature oil that most Chinese restaurants love to add.

Japanese omelet

Surprisingly good meal at a restaurant on campus.

Today is the last day for China’s national holiday Golden Week, during this time many tourists visited the popular sites throughout China, I was advised that it’s actually a bad time to travel due to the traffic everywhere. This is a picture of a metro station and the huge crowd that’s just waiting to ride the escalator.

Waiting for the escalator.

My neighbor, and fellow classmate from Hawaii has been wanting to buy a turtle to set up in his room, for the supplies we went to a couple of pet markets in Shanghai, these pet markets are huge and really have almost any type of animal you can think of. Along the way we got to see a glimpse of the cricket fighting and gambling, which seems to be hugely popular here among the older Chinese men.

Cricket fighting.
After I commented on one shop owners tea set collection he invited us to sit down and have a few cups with him. He turned out to be a really nice and friendly person. He told us to come back anytime to have a tea and talk story, my classmate wanted to buy one of his turtles so he told us a price that was nearly $100 USD which I thought may have been a scam, but after telling him it was too expensive he gave my classmate a free turtle, and said it was lucky. We hope to return back soon to have some tea and hopefully bring some more friends.

Drinking tea with pet shop owner.

Also got to go on a class field trip to view the Shanghai Expo, it was a little smaller than I thought it would be considering it would show case all of Shanghai but one of the rooms presented an interesting video on the development and future plans for Shanghai. There are multiple expos and museums which you can visit to get a better understanding of Shanghai.

These are just a few pics of the views around campus, Tongji really is a beautiful campus, the environment is really relaxing, with a lot of trees and parks to enjoy.

One part of the campus that worries many students are the on campus post offices which are outside with seemingly no security to guard the packages of mail, although it works its a little unnerving to have your packages lying on the ground with only a few people watching out for them. Packages sent from the U.S to the international dorms are sent to the international student dormitory lobby where they will notify you to pick up your packages.
That’s most of what has happened here, below are a few pics and stories worth mentioning. I’ve been really focused and excited about learning Chinese lately, so after this post I’ll be going right back into my studies, until next post 再见！

Old couples ball room dancing to Chinese music, good for them.

Chinese Muslim food thats turned out to be one of my favorites to eat.

View from friends nice apartment, this new apartment is right alongside original Shanghai houses which will probably torn down soon to make way for more new apartments.
RECENT THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES IN CHINA

OCTOBER 19, 2014

This past holiday when we celebrated national golden week holiday, the Chinese government held a firework performance for the people living in Shanghai to enjoy. The entire performance lasted about 30 to 45 minutes. It is the longest display of fireworks I’ve ever seen, right when you thought this was the finale they started up again with another round, my friends and I ended up leaving early just because we felt it would go on forever. When we were leaving we could see all of the smoke and debris that filled the air and it reminded me of the pollution that China faces often. This past week on one day there was a high of almost 200 AQI which is rated unhealthy, out of the 6 ratings for the AQI that days rating was number 4, with 6 being the worst, in fact by just looking outside you could clearly see a foggy haze everywhere. Personally, I did feel a little unsafe walking around outside or exercising outside, especially because I could see
the pollution in the air. Although they say that if you’re here for a short time then it shouldn’t cause much harm, but for those here for longer it can cause serious health effects. My friend and I discussed the matter and both felt sorry for the young children growing up here in these heavily polluted areas of China, we also wondered what type of health effects this may have on them later on in life.

Pollution in Shanghai, pic doesn’t do it justice but the air is very foggy looking.

On another topic of many normal web usage apps in other parts of the world have now been banned here in China, and unless you have a VPN then you won’t be able to use them. The most recent to be banned was Instagram, personally I did feel very sad when they prohibited use of Instagram because it was very convenient to check up on my friends and family to see if they had posted pictures, also it was easy for them to see the pictures I posted and to see how I was doing. The ban was seemingly connected to the recent protests held in Hong Kong and from the all of the people posting pictures on Instagram, but some say it was bound to happen since Instagram is owned by Facebook which has already been banned from China for a long time now. Because of the recent ban I’ll have to use my VPN more often, but I’ve been putting it off for getting in on my phone because I’ve been waiting on a different phone to be sent from America to here. A word of advice is to get your phone set up before you come to China. Its much more of a hassle here and it’s not good to be walking around without communication, sometimes its important to be able to stay in contact with people. If you can afford to get the phone here then it should be pretty easy as well, but it’s nice to have a nice phone that you’re familiar with already.

Protests in Hong Kong.
My recent adventure was watching the Shanghai Rolex Tennis Masters Final, my friend and I caught the subway for about two hours to the tennis stadium. Fortunately, one of my friends from Hawaii who is working in Shanghai gave me free tickets to watch the game. One thing I noticed in China is that finding deals can be much easier to get if you look for them. For instance if we wanted to buy tickets we could have gone online ahead of time and purchased tickets, but many people have told us that a better way is to go to the stadium and purchase tickets outside to the Chinese who are selling them there, its much easier and cheaper. There are many cops patrolling the area and don’t seem to mind while the sellers are calling out if we wanna buy tickets. There may be some haggling involved but their beginning price is already much cheaper than buying them online.

This past Friday we were able to befriend Chinese Tongji students through the campus buddy program that pairs Chinese students to foreign students. It was a really fun event and I was able to meet many Chinese students who were very interested in learning about American culture and speaking English and who were willing to teach me some new Chinese words. But the only bad thing is that many foreigners complain that it can be difficult to actually get the Chinese students to speak Chinese with them, there English is usually much better than our Chinese and they continue to speak English for most of the time. In my opinion its understandable since they’ve been studying English usually for about 10 years or more so they are very eager to practice, but it can be a little overwhelming when they keep asking how to say things correctly. I think what would work best for me is to meet someone I actually have similar interests and enjoy being around and then we could spend more time talking about things that are relevant to our interests. I remember in the beginning I was very eager to meet any Chinese students as well to practice my Mandarin, but now I feel its more important to take some time to make some long lasting Chinese friendships. For example my Chinese friend from Hainan really enjoys lifting weights and eating healthy which are two things I also enjoy and now he has become one of my close Chinese friend. When we hangout together we talk for longer and he teaches me how to say things in Chinese and I teach him things to say in English, its a win-win because these words are of more interest to us.
Anyway now I have some new Chinese friends and new experiences to come!

**CAMPUS LIFE**

**NOVEMBER 3, 2014**

In this post I’ll just go over my daily schedule and things you can do in your free time while at Tongji.

At the International School at Tongji I have Chinese classes everyday Monday thru Friday at 8am, I have a main Chinese teacher that teaches our class which is about a group of 15
students. Every week we learn about 60 new vocabulary words with each chapter and each chapter has a story that uses those new vocab words. After that class we’ll either have reading, writing, or listening and speaking class that follows, sometimes they interchange schedules depending on the day of the week. So far I really like the Chinese classes, they are pretty intense but I feel that as long as you stay a little ahead by previewing before each class it’s much easier to learn the new vocab and not fall behind. We’ll have midterms and finals for each class. In the afternoons you can choose to take general courses that are given in English and taught by Chinese professors. I chose to take 2 of these classes, Chinese Socio Economics for one class which is taught on Monday, and China’s Foreign Affairs and International Relations for the second class which is taught on Thursday, these classes are interesting because they are taught from a Chinese perspective, and its also one of the easier classes because it’s in English and there are only a few assignments.

Monday and Thursday classes taught in English

One great thing about studying abroad are the other foreign students that you can meet. For instance I feel like I have friends from all parts of the world now. Some of my good friends that I’ve made here at Tongji are from Germany, Korea, Turkey, Venezuela, Japan, Spain, Indonesia, Poland, and Russia. Outside of that I have a more acquaintances that are from different countries. There is almost every country you can think of, there are also many South Africans, Middle Easterners, and even North Koreans. There are about 30 North Koreans that go to school here, they always wear colored shirts and pants with shoes, and on their shirts they were these red pins that represent the North Korean Communist party. I’m a little wary of them, just because I’m unsure of how they personally feel about Americans, but I know that North Korea as a country dislikes America, although I have heard of a few Germans and Americans that have
made good friends with some of them and have hung out together, Rodney, one of my classmates here from Hawaii said he met one and described his personality as very nice and friendly. I hope to meet some during my semester here, I think coming from Hawaii may be thought of differently in their minds. Especially in China where everyone is studying abroad I feel that everyone feels at least a little uncomfortable and is looking to make friends. I love hearing their different views on topics like politics, business, social life etc. One of the many great things about being from Hawaii is that everyone knows Hawaii and they’re are usually very excited to meet someone from there. An interesting thing I noticed is that because so many foreigners are speaking in broken English I can really see how pidgin languages can develop.

Outside of my international friends I have a few good Chinese friends. I’ve met them usually from being out playing sports, through the buddy program, or even by just asking for directions. Meeting some Chinese people can be interesting, many times the Chinese are very excited to meet a foreigner and practice their English, so sometimes I may receive a lot of attention which can be overwhelming, but overall can be a good experience to help them with their English and my own Chinese. Most important I feel at the moment is to meet some Chinese friends who are similar in personality and interests, in this way I’ll have more things to talk about. This past week I was lost and asked a Chinese girl for directions, she too didn’t know where the location I was looking for was, so she ended up helping me for almost 10 minutes trying to find the address. I thought that was really nice of her. In the end we started talking and she seemed like a very cool person to hangout with. So I invited her to get coffee the next week. She told me about where her hometown is, what she likes to do for fun, how she ended up in Shanghai etc. And I told her my story. It was a really great experience, especially because we only used Chinese, so it was great practice, but also because she seems like a very nice person, and she was also very helpful and patient with my Chinese. I’ve met many Chinese but I’ve only made a few that I feel could be good long time friends with. I feel that for making great friends and learning Chinese that will be important in the long run.

Outside of school and making friends there are a ton of sightseeing places that you can travel to in Shanghai and China. Temples, parks, malls etc. On the weekends I try to do most of my sightseeing. The food can be really good too, but its best to have someone who knows the area and can show you what places are better to eat at. In the beginning I’ve been to a few restaurants where I didn’t really like the food too much, but now that I’ve met a few people I know where the better places are to eat at.

In the end I feel like studying abroad is whatever you want to make it out to be. If you want to study really hard you can do that, if you want to make a lot of international or Chinese friends you can do that, sightseeing, traveling, shopping, business, almost everything you can think of you can find it here.

**FINISHED MIDTERMS AND LANGUAGE TIPS**

**NOVEMBER 15, 2014**

This past week was really intense with our Chinese midterms, almost everyday of the week there was a midterm test. Us Hawaii students have a different schedule than the other classmates because our program ends on December 19, whereas for everyone else the semester ends on January 14. So we don’t have to take the final exams, but we do have to score really well on
these midterms because we won’t have a second chance to improve our grades. I spent all of last weekend and this week preparing. At the end of it all I feel confident that I passed but I’m still unsure until the grades come out. Because of all the recent intense studying I feel a big improvement in my language skills. Studying a little Mandarin in the morning really helps to refreshen some of the old words and phrases, and I always feel a bit better after I do this. Good times to practice are when I meet random Chinese people, this is best to develop good greeting skills. But as you progress, its best to have long conversations ranging in varying topics. Because I noticed that for myself, I’m pretty good at having simple conversations, but as the conversation lasts, or if we meet more and more often, I find that my skills become limited. One important piece of advice I got from my teacher was to memorize passages of Mandarin that you find interesting, that way next time you have a conversation with someone you’re more in control of the conversation, because at times you’ll find that the conversation may go on to a topic you’re language skills are unfamiliar with, and then you’re stuck to only listening and not contributing to the conversation which can be frustrating. But over time you’ll have a wider range of topics to discuss, and then you can always just ask for clarification if a word is said that you haven’t learned yet.

Breakfast lady that I often speak with

FIELD TRIP, FAKE MARKET, AND SOCCER.

NOVEMBER 29, 2014

This past weekend all of the international students went on a field trip to Zhuji, just outside of Shanghai, for a vacation. It was a really good opportunity to get to know the other international students that I haven’t met yet, and also to get closer to my other classmates outside of the classroom. While driving through Shanghai to Zhuji, I couldn’t help but notice all of the development Shanghai is doing, mostly construction of new buildings. There are rows and rows of buildings that have already been built or are being built, parks, malls etc that seem to go on forever, even as we got out of the city it seemed as though the construction never ended, and I felt a real sense of massive development and even greater things to come. China’s current economy is doing great compared to many others, as the largest creditor country, they finally have the chance to develop and create the structures that will make China a prosperous country. I’m glad to be here during their development and I look forward to what China will look like in the future.
One of the ten buses filled with international students

Construction of buildings

Theme park in the middle of city

Some of the international students on lunch break
Taken from https://mixplatechina.wordpress.com/

Took a boat ride to get to the scenic area.

China also looks to tourism as another large business market. It was obvious to see during this visit China has a lot to offer for beautiful scenery. Later a Chinese woman told us that this area wasn’t even that beautiful, and that there are many other areas that we should go to that are much more beautiful. Although in my opinion, this place was amazing, I can’t imagine what the other places that lady was talking about must look like.
One thing that I recommend anyone coming to Shanghai do is stop by the fake market for the experience, you don’t have to buy anything if you don’t want to and in the end that may be a better choice. The fake market is basically a place you can get very cheap products if you are a good bargainer, if you’re not then you won’t get a good price. But also its worth mentioning that many times you get what you paid for, meaning sometimes the quality of the products are not so good. This past trip to the market I accompanied my friends who wanted to buy a few things, as for myself I prefer to get quality products elsewhere, but on this occasion I bought a nice cheap tie for around $2 American dollars. I helped my friend buy a bracelet, by bargaining with the store worker, and for me since I’m not used to bargaining its a little unnerving the first few times, but after that you can look at it like a game, I found its important to know when to walk away, there are many shops that have the exact same thing, and I can try again at another shop for the price I want. Outside of getting cheap products, this is also a great way for me to improve my Mandarin language skills. In these situations, I’m forced to think on my toes, and also be smart about the words I choose to use.

The other day I decided to join some international friends playing soccer. Three of them were from Turkey and two from Germany, they were all really good players. We found some Chinese students who wanted to play and we then mixed up the teams to make a fair match. I really thought about how I was representing Hawaii in this situation. Most people around the world assume that America isn’t very good at soccer, but for myself I’ve been playing my whole life, and although I’m not the best player, I can compete with their level. I feel that sports are a fun way to bond with people from other countries, we may not speak the same languages but we
don’t need to talk when we’re playing. After the game we have a chance to eat dinner or get to know each other better. Something about playing games brings people together. For instance you could be strangers before the game, but after the game you feel like good friends. I even here about companies setting aside time to play certain bonding games in the office, making for opportunity of coworkers getting to know each other, trust each other, and in the end create better work for the company.

FOOTBALL, AM CHAM, AND BEATS.

DECEMBER 14, 2014

A couple of my friends had told me that they saw some Chinese guys practicing American football, with pads and all the other gear. I finally got to see for myself and I immediately thought of the influence that America has over many other countries. Walking around Shanghai you can see many Chinese people carrying iPhones, wearing American Apparel, listening to American music etc, along the popular Nanjing Dong lu you can see all of the most famous watch brands (including Rolex) on each side of the street. Its clear to see that the Chinese consumer is demanding higher end products, which include many American high end products. As a business major its something that I consider getting into, after graduation I plan on returning to Shanghai to find a job in marketing for an international company.

Related to this idea is that for about two months now I’ve been volunteering/interning at Beats by Apple and the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai. Both companies have been really eye opening in terms of getting a real sense of how business is done here in China. And its been really helpful for me deciding whether I really want to live and work here. As a typical poor college student here in Shanghai there’s a huge difference from the people who live and work here and are successful. For instance when I get the chance to attend mixers held by Am Cham I see how the other side lives. Its appealing to me because I see the opportunity to have the same life, and also as a foreigner in business here in China, the chances for advancement are much quicker than back in America.
Also I mailed out my Freeman postcard out to Hawaii, last week, hopefully it will get there soon!

LAST BLOG POST FOR SHANGHAI, CHINA
JANUARY 23, 2015

Now that I’m back in Hawaii the whole trip seems surreal. I’m sad to have ended the trip, but happy to get things finished here in Hawaii, like graduating and seeing where I will go next. Some advice for anyone going on a study abroad or thinking about going would be to just do it, have fun, and remember that the journey is whatever you make of it. I can’t think of a single person who regretted studying abroad. The memories I have of going abroad are always so vivid, and I constantly feel a strong sense of nostalgia whenever I return back to my home country.

For those planning on studying abroad in China here’s 5 important things to know before you go!

1. Prepare early. Make sure you have all of your luggage and paperwork prepared early, a lot of times I thought I had everything ready, but as soon as I got on the plane I remembered I had forgotten something. This time I forgot my soccer shoes.

2. Get a good list of things you want to do and see while you’re there. While studying abroad sometimes you can get caught up in the school work or new friends, but it’s sometimes good to remember all of the things you wanted to do before you got there.

3. Bring a good camera or phone with a good camera. On that note make sure you know how you’ll be using a phone before you go whether it be with your current phone carrier or the one in
China, which is simple to set up as well but ask around to make sure you’re with a good phone plan. You’ll be finding a lot of photo opportunities everywhere you go.

4. Bring any medical essentials that you think you can only get in America. A few of my friends got sick or injured, luckily one of my classmates had the necessary medicine to help.

5. Pack local Hawaiian gifts to give to the new teachers and friends that you meet. Almost everyone around the world knows Hawaii, and its really appreciated when you give it as a going away present that can be remembered for a long time. You can get a lot of small and cheap Hawaiian gifts at Walmart or ABC stores.

At the end of the program I feel like I’ve had a greater understanding of what kind of person I am, and how I want to be in the future. Talking with people from other countries has given me a different perspective on the world and life, and I’m really excited for what’s to come in the future.

Until next time 再见！