

TIANJIN, CHINA

KURSAT GOK

Program: UW Intensive Chinese Language, Summer

Kursat's Major: Chinese

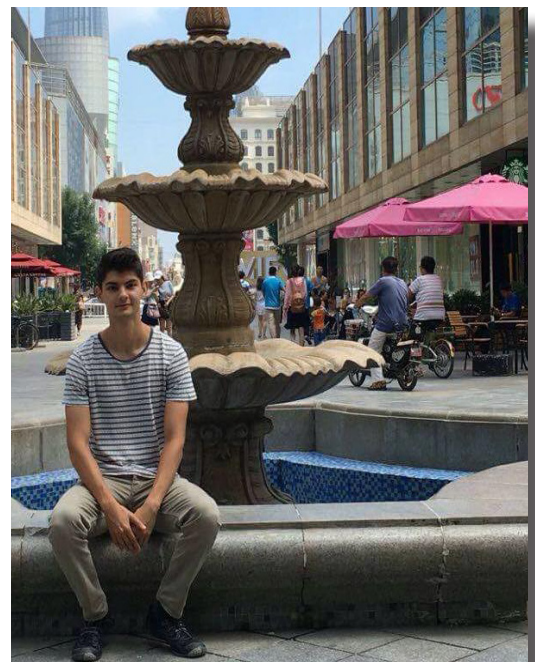
Academic Life: My academic program was very rigorous and immersive. I spent a majority of each day studying and practicing Chinese. When I was not studying Chinese I was working out at the gym or spending time with friends around Tianjin. The classes were taught mostly by teachers from Madison but a few discussion sections were led by native Chinese teachers. The classes I took were third and fourth semester Chinese. The other students in my classes were a majority from UW-Madison, and some from various U.S. universities.

Cultural Differences: Social customs are very different. It is normal for a man to bring his shirt up halfway past his belly or his chest just to cool off. In my experience, some citizens assumed that all Americans are blond, white, and blue eyed. When I was walking with my friends they wouldn't believe my friends when they said that I was also American. Xenophobia and embracing stereotypes is the norm in an almost totally homogenous society.

Self-Reflection: I learned that my Chinese skills get a lot better when I'm hungry. I learned that living in a different environment is not that hard if you focus on the essentials and don't overcomplicate it with trying to obtain the same luxuries that we take for granted in America.

Tips for Future Students: Make the most of it by not being stuck on your phone. Make every effort you can to go outside and interact with Chinese people and make new friends.

Benefits of Study Abroad: It will help me understand Chinese culture and interact with Chinese people more naturally and smoothly.



Kursat sitting on an old fountain at the Yingkoudao shopping district of Tianjin.

“Study abroad helped me understand that cultural differences are OK and that being different is good.”

