

ROBERT GIRON—reflections on China		
GLOBAL HUMANITIES INSTITUTE Event Feedback Form, Spring 2016		Seminars Abroad: China Pre-Travel Trainings and Travel
<i>My global self-awareness and/or identity in global context has been enhanced in the following ways:</i>	The trip to China and the training—our quick talks about our interests— informed me about the culture and history of China. I realized that cultural identity is truly a liquid entity—by this I mean that the history of the culture and the political climate greatly affect how one sees himself. In learning about China, combined with other seminars and training such as the African Diaspora—the Smithsonian fellowship years ago—I am more aware of my own cultural background as it relates to Europe and the current USA. I no longer see things only through a telescope but rather a wide lens and I can see how one area has affected another.	
<i>My ability to engage different perspectives and world views has been enhanced in the following ways:</i>	Knowing more about China and world history (in general) than I ever learned while getting my education, I am able to add these aspects to my own course discussions and often they are reinforced by my own students from Asia, African, Latin America. This allows students to feel they are also engaged but also contributing to the education of their peers. In the past, I would have simply overlooked something whereas now I am aware of it in ways I would have never imagined.	
<i>My understanding of cultural diversity in a global context has been enhanced in the following ways:</i>	With regard to China, I did not know about its 50 nations under one regime— thanks to my Chinese student who felt free to add to discussions after I presented my own GHI presentation to the class. The cultural and religious richness of China also came to life while at the mosque in Xi'an.	
<i>An example of how I will apply my new knowledge is:</i>	When we have a discussion that centers on cultural or religious differences or conflict, I would bring up the environment that has allowed cultural differences to flourish in specific countries: China, Spain (pre 1492), etc. Focusing on the positiveness of diversity rather than the conflicts would help	

one to see that diversity can co-exist but that it needs to be done carefully to avoid the domination of others or the attitudes that create negativity.

What aspects of this experience worked well for you?

The pre-seminars given by my colleagues and prep discussions prior to our trip to China were very helpful. Asking us to focus on an aspect that was of interest to us also forced us to focus on something that we could then use in our classes but basically I have used almost everything folks have presented about China because I find it intriguing and that is my nature—to use as much as I can---in the hopes my students will also learn and be stimulated to discover things on their own.

Overall, was this a worthwhile learning experience?

Absolutely, since I studied Chinese in undergraduate school, I had dreamed of going to China but I never thought I would one day. Thanks to the GHI and my colleagues who recognized my contributions to the GHI and the College in general, [my academic contributions are recognized].

If we can't address and resolve [cultural difference] issues in-house, then how in the world can any of us deal with more serious issues across the continents? We are here to educate our students yet sadly some of our own colleagues are the ones who need intervention. I see this as one of the purposes of the GHI. Cultural harmony and respect across the continents are absolutely crucial and it begins within our own departments and disciplines. For this and many other reasons, we need the GHI and programs like it more than ever before.