

EAUI Program Newsletter

From GSAPS, Waseda University (Vol.3 July. 2015)

HARIDAS, Gayathri
(Nanyang Technological Uni. PhD Program in Public Policy and Global Affairs)

Basic Academic Information

Academic Calendar:

<http://web.waseda.jp/gsaps/en/academics/calendar/>

Faculty information:

<http://web.waseda.jp/gsaps/en/about/faculty/>

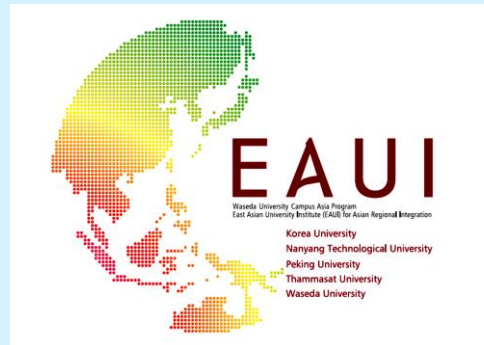
Course List:

<http://web.waseda.jp/gsaps/en/academics/course/>

*The AY 2016 course list will be uploaded in mid-March 2015.

Syllabus Search:

<https://www.wsl.waseda.jp/syllabus/JAA101.php?pLng=en>



Voices from the past participants

LIN, Chia-Tsun

(Nanyang Technological Uni. PhD Program in History)

My experience in the EAUI program can be divided into two portions, within the curriculum plans which also refer to those courses that I have taken, and outside the curriculum plan, which are the activities that were being done outside the official curriculum that have undertaken. During the course, I was able to take two modules, and the seminar, *zemi*, provided by Prof. Liu-Farrer Gracia, that has benefited me the most and allowed me to interact with multiple students and scholars who are specialist in different areas of studies on migrants and migration. Not only did I get exposed to the different aspects of migration issues in Japan, which are in several ways directly linked to my work theoretically and empirically, but also, during the presentation, I could gain several key ideas that were important to my research proposal, in particular to my key concepts, empirical data and literature review section. Through their work, I have also been able to identify several key areas of migrant spaces or communities in Japan, such as Ikebukuro, Yokohama, and Roppongi, and the dynamic social life and transnational activities that were played out in these transnational spaces, in addition to their effects on local policy and local communities. This was being carried through to the activities that I had been able to do outside of my official curriculum, where not only was I able to physically experience these spaces, meeting several of people who belong to these minority communities, and understanding how they go about building their transnational social life. Unexpectedly, because of the accommodation that I was living in, called Tokyo Stay, I was able to observe and participate in the booming French migrant community in Japan, which was something that was out of my plan but very beneficial. I had been able to look at how these French migrants construct their transnational social life, negotiate their small community and interact with the local community, which in several ways have been able to provide a cultural comparison to the Chinese migrant communities that I am attempting to study.

Another purpose of my visiting Japan here is to 'learn more about Japan culture and language', which has been made possible through the visit to Tokyo Fuji Art museum and the National Art Center, as well as participating in the numerous festivals, *Matsuri*, held between April to June. The cultural event that had left me the strongest impression during this entire EAUI semester exchange program was the *Kanda Matsuri*, in which I was given the opportunity to carry one of the small portable shrines. I was part of the festival as not just an observer, but also as a participant, and this opportunity allowed me to learn so much about the rituals, and speak to people who were directly organizing the event. This included the rituals conducted before the shrine was being carried, when it was carried, and the ending of it. I could observe the different interactions between people that were involved in the event, the costumes, chants, symbols, languages used, to the individual motivations and challenges that these traditional rituals are facing in Japan. It was one of the most memorable experiences I had in relation to the learning of Japan culture and languages.

Perhaps, another phenomenon that struck me as interesting in Japan is the political scene, which I have the privilege to observe. In particular, the local election scene and the several protests that were being conducted by individuals in Waseda University, Shibuya and Shinjuku. The posters that were being hung around on the street, the campaign by the candidates, with the endless use of megaphones and announcement on the cars that drove around as well as the distribution of flyers. Despite the language barrier, which has made it difficult for me to fully comprehend what was being advocated, it in several ways gave me a brief insight of how democracy works in Japan. This is coupled with the field trip that was being done in the Action Research for Regional Integration Seminar, where we were able to visit key institutions for the running for Japan as a nation, such as the National Diet Building, and Tokyo Stock exchange, hence giving me a lot of insights of the policy making and political life in Japan.

My research project had been to understand the global network of Chinese Diaspora transnational organizations, and its significance to the local Chinese migrant communities. For the past 3 months, I have discovered that the dynamics of migrant associations in Japan, in particular for ethnic Chinese, is not as active as how I expected to be. Rather, due to the influx of student migrants, online activities have rather become one of the more active sources of organizing among Chinese migrants, which got me thinking further of why this might have been the case in Japan, unlike the Southeast Asia countries where associations still matter. Through the exchanges with other scholars, some of the key elements that I had changed on my proposal because of my experience in the EAUI program includes incorporation of agency into my network theory, both subjective and objective definitions into my concept of diaspora, including other migrant associations work into my literature review, and the relating of my proposal to the new Chinese migration studies. I also took into consideration the local context, and how such transnational network interact with the local community, the perceptions and impact it has with the Chinese communities located within a nation state. During the visit to the National Diet building during the course, I have also been able to discover some primary material that may be relevant to my work, such as the collection of newspaper archives, magazine, company data, which I think would be useful in the future when I enter begin data collection in the later stage of my research.

I was incredibly lucky to arrive in Tokyo during the sakura season of 2015. The whole program was meticulously organized by the administrative staff of GSAPS and hence, I was not too anxious about my first trip to Japan. I vividly remember the friendly welcome and orientation I had at GSAPS the next day, and I was able to settle all the administrative requirements on that day. Since then, my days in Japan just flew by with a lot of excitement and fun. From greeting to eating habits, there is a custom that is to be followed when one is in Japan and I learnt that in my first week. I learnt a lot about the Japanese society and culture and gained a lot of precious experiences during my two-month stay.

Hailing from India, and having studied in the UK and Canada, I did not know very much about my Asian neighbors before I started my graduate life in Singapore. The EAUI program has been an eye-opener for me in this regard. I spent a week attending Summer School in Korea University in 2014 and then I did the semester-exchange at Waseda University recently. These opportunities to immerse myself in different cultures will give more balance to my perspectives and refine my opinions on regional issues. Knowing and understanding each other is important and this will allow for better regional integration in Asia.

Waseda is one of Japan's premier higher education institutions and an opportunity to study at Waseda is extremely valuable. As a student who is interested in regional studies and regionalism, it is important that I travel and experience different parts of Asia as much as possible. So spending time at Waseda gave me an insight into how scholars and researchers work and interact with each other in Japan. By comparing Singaporean and Japanese universities, I was able to understand how relationships work in different societies and this will be very helpful for me in the future when I start my career as an expert on Asia. Waseda has a highly efficient administrative system and excellent infrastructure and faculty. GSAPS, my school at Waseda, has a very unique, diverse, and dynamic international crowd of students and faculty and interacting with them has vastly widened my professional and personal network. I met and made friends with a lot of young students with wide perspectives and interests in the region. Attending seminars with them were invaluable experiences as the discussions on various pertinent questions would extend well into our breaks. The professors were enthusiastic and engaged with the students and contributed greatly to the invigorating discussions. Productive collision of ideas was the norm at such seminars and it added multiple layers to my evolving research.

I am student of Public Policy with a background in Biotechnology and Science and Technology Studies. I am currently studying Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) Policy of various countries in Asia; the main focus being on Singapore. One of the major questions that I am studying is about the impact culture has on innovation. How does the various cultural influences impact the production of knowledge or innovation in Asia? During my time in Waseda, I took a seminar given by Professor Seio Nakajima on the growth and development of creative industries in Asia. Professor Nakajima was also my supervisor at Waseda University. His expertise spans over organizational studies to important theoretical principles in Science and Technology Studies. I learnt so much from him in that he introduced me to much new and important literature in my area of research and he provided me with guidance on how to proceed with my work. In addition to my research question, I will also be exploring the production of knowledge in Singapore using Actor Network Theory under Professor Seio Nakajima's supervision.

On the whole, my experience in Waseda was very professionally enriching and personally satisfying. I wholeheartedly took to life in Tokyo. As part of the Action Research Seminar, Waseda gave us field trips to the National Diet, the Diet Library, and the Life Safety and Learning Center. These were impressive experiences and I have benefited greatly from the resources at the National Diet Library. I was a constant visitor of the National Diet Library when I was a student at Waseda and it does host an impressive collection of materials which I utilized to write my papers. It was also incredible to see how well-equipped Japan is to face natural disasters. Being able to experience the disaster relief facility in Japan was an eye-opener in terms of what really goes into keeping a city and its inhabitants secure.

My trip ended quickly and I am now back in Singapore and have resumed my research. It would be an understatement to say that I miss my life in Tokyo and the nurturing environment of GSAPS, Waseda University. Globalization has achieved much for us and yet, there exists so many differences between people of various cultures. It is even more pronounced in Asia with our complex histories and traditions and values. There is a need to work with the differences and not to eliminate them. I believe this is what the EAUI program will achieve by allowing young scholars like me to travel across and immerse in various societies across Asia. It was an invaluable learning experience for me and I strongly feel that it will benefit me greatly today in my PhD and in the future as a sensitive, and aware professional working towards a better life for everyone.

For more information about the EAUI Program, please visit the website http://web.waseda.jp/gsaps/eaui/index_en.html or send an email to EAUI Program Office (eaui-waseda@list.waseda.jp).