

Trip Report
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I would like to begin my trip report with Spanish proverb saying, "He who would bring home the wealth of the Indies must carry the wealth of the Indies with him". It means that a man must carry knowledge with him if he would bring home knowledge. I liked this proverb very much because it was so true and appropriate to my trip to Lexington, Kentucky. I brought knowledge about my country - Kyrgyzstan - to Lexington and gained so much knowledge that I would take with me back home.

It is obvious that you will encounter challenges when you go to a new country, meet new people and know new culture. It is part of the process of adjusting and learning. One of the initial challenges in cultural terms in Lexington was very wide personal space. The other thing that surprised me was politeness and smiling. Some Americans would smile at me and say "Hello" even if they didn't know me at all. It was very nice and I quickly got accustomed to it.

The most striking thing for me was that average Americans do not consider the U.S. as a power. They are worried about their nutrition, healthy food. And I remember one woman kept saying the word "organic" for the food. Also Americans are worried about the price of gasoline, since life in the USA is impossible without cars. It took some time to get adjusted to the fact that Americans can't do without their cars; one UK professor said "The car for an American is the extension of his personality". The traffic in the U.S. is crazy as well as it's difficult to find parking place. There are a lot of poor people as I noticed in public busses.

Most Americans were not aware of Kyrgyz nationality. I was always confused with being Japanese, Chinese, Thai or Vietnamese. Most people had not the faintest idea about where I am from. Those who knew were people who traveled to the former Soviet Union countries or UK professors.

I discovered a lot of new things about the concept of a "residential university". University of Kentucky provides its students with a great number of activities and events. It provides them, too, with a lot of lectures aside from those of educational process. For example; I was lucky to attend

a lecture given by Richard K. Betts, Director of the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia. The lecture's title was "Intelligence and National Security: Reform or Revolution". It was organized by UK's Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce. Richard Betts was Director of National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. It was a very educational lecture for political science students as well as for me, in the own words of the people who took direct part in the process of foreign-policy making. He talked about the U.S. attempts to overview the role of CIA and FBI aftermath 9-11 and to try making them cohesive.

Aside from providing education, UK gives students various activities and unions, as fraternities and sororities, International Night for international students, "ladies time" for female students, Muslim Students Association, Baptist Students Union etc. I was puzzled when I saw students with different Greek letters, for example: "λ β π" on their clothes and bags. It took some time to find out what it meant, since we don't have such things in our universities. As I understood and read, those letters represented fraternities and sororities. Fraternity is a group of male students associated or joined by similar backgrounds, occupations and interests. As for sorority, it's a social organization of women college students. It was absolutely a new experience for me, I have never heard of such organizations.

UK is "An Equal Opportunity University" and there are a great number of students from all over the world. Mostly I noticed Hindu, Chinese, Japanese and many Muslim students. For international students UK has "International Night", where all those students have an opportunity to represent their countries. As for Muslim students, there is Muslim Students Association and being Muslim myself I was happy to attend "The spirit of Ramadan" event, organized by the association.

As for the system of Education, American and Kyrgyz systems of education are two completely different things. Being a student I understood that here you have much more independence and responsibility. You are on your own. And your life depends on the decisions and choices that you will make. I liked the way professors assign the books that students would need during course and give the list of the books to the bookstores. Students then go and buy them. UK students have much more opportunities and resources for study. I mean books, computers, free Internet access, etc. Comparing process of learning in our country and in the USA, American

students spend more time outside the class writing papers, researching, reading; our students spend more time in class.

The first surprising and interesting social activity on-campus was "Social ice-cream". Social ice-cream helps people to break the ice and to meet new people, and it's especially helpful for freshmen students. It's a good opportunity to meet professors.

As for the educational system, I liked academic freedom. Every professor is free in making up syllabi, choosing literature and methods of teaching. And the term "syllabus" is also new for our system of education. As I understood, syllabus is not just an outline of study course, but it's a document, regulating the relations between students and professors. It's up to professor what to include into his/her syllabus. It was quite a challenge in a way. Because we have prescribed curriculum in our country and we have to follow it.

I should also mention the difference in relationships between American professors and students and those ones in our country. They are very distinct. In our system of education it is supposed that the professor or teacher can answer any question the students ask. The professor is seen as an authority that teaches and knows everything about his/her subject, and he isn't argued with. I assume that this is a legacy from the Soviet System of Education. In the American System of Education, the professor or teacher might easily admit that he/she doesn't know everything, but knows how and where to find the answer. He/she is a guide and can direct students. Students can approach the subject from many sides and different opinions. It is even better if the student can support his opinion with arguments and find new ideas.

I am here to develop syllabi on Political Science, in particular, 2 classes: U.S. Foreign Policy and American Government. We were lucky to have colleagues in University of Kentucky who mentored us. After researching of schedule of classes I decided to attend 4 classes: PS 101—American Government with professor Waterman; a reading class on US Foreign Policy with professor Karen A. Mingst; HIS 108—History of US THRU 1865 of with professor Summers; and HIS 109 History of US Since 1865 from professor Bowman. All the professors are very different and they use different methods of teaching.

Now I'd like to write about my impressions after having attended classes that I chose. I enjoyed American Government class. Professor Waterman is very friendly and teaches in informal manner, using jokes, news to begin the

class. By the way, the sense of humor is also different in US and Kyrgyzstan. Sometimes I had no background to understand some professor's jokes during the class. The other students would laugh but I was confused what they were laughing about. The professor used multiple choice tests for students' evaluation. The tests are also different, as I was told afterwards, the goal of tests here is to find out how many students succeed and how many fail. And it's normal that there are many students who don't. In our education culture, it's better to have more successful students.

The class on US Foreign Policy was completely different from the other ones, since it was a reading class. I did a lot of reading on my own. It involved making a lot of research, looking for information on the internet. It was more independent. In terms of teaching methods, professor Karen A. Mingst was very helpful giving me a lot of ideas as simulations of conflicts and events in US Foreign Policy, showing movies about major historical events and group debates. I think I gained a lot from Karen, especially in organizing my ideas for my class on American Foreign Policy. She essentially contributed to my understanding of American Foreign Policy in general and clarifying some terms and events. Karen mentored me in working out my syllabus.

My favorite class was US history after 1865. The reason was the subject itself and the professor. Professor David Bowman lectured very articulate and colorful, trying to emphasize the brightest and the most significant events in US history. He used a lot of maps. Besides, he had his own documents collection, which was such a treasure. I remember his wonderful introduction article about Liberal Arts in the collection. He had many papers and essays, improving critical thinking. Assignments in the US system of Education are very diverse: papers, essays, critique papers. Papers involve development of argument not just narration. I assume it would be a challenge for my students as it had been for me. Therefore, I will have to give a short course how to write papers, involving critical thinking. This class was very helpful in understanding the historical part of international relations of the USA and developing my syllabus on US Foreign Policy.

The most unusual class was the class of professor Mark Summers on US History before 1865. The reason is that he was very animated and energetic; he would jump around, run and so kept the audience's attention. He looked like Albert Einstein. I liked the way he used a lot of pictures and autobiographies of famous people. Besides, he played the music of the

certain period in the US history before every class. It helped him to tune the students into a certain mood.

In addition to these classes I found interesting to visit the following classes:

- PS 584 The American Presidency and the Federal Executive Branch
professor Donald Gross
- PS 212 Culture and Politics in Third World
professor Walker
- PS 430 Conduct of American Foreign Relations
professor Douglas Gibling
- RUS 370 Russian Folklore (in English)
professor Jeanmarie Rouhier- Willoughby
- RUS 101 Elementary Russian (in Russian)
- HIS 595 History and policy of Iraq since 1958 to present
professor Robert Olson
- Geo 329 Geography of the Former Soviet Union
professor Stanley Brunn

As for carrying knowledge about my country, as I mentioned above, I gave several presentations at UK professors' classes. The first one was for "Russian Table" - a club for American students, studying Russian language. It was very interesting, because it was bilingual. I talked about general information about Kyrgyzstan and Bishkek, about system of education, nature, people and traditions. American students asked many questions, both in English and Russian.

The second presentation was at professor Jeanmarie Rouhier - Willoughby's class and it was in English. Since they were studying bilingual countries, Jeanmarie invited our group to talk about "Language policy and attitudes towards Russian and Kyrgyz languages both in the Soviet times and now". Mainly the students' questions were about Soviet Union times.

The next presentation was for College of Education, in particular for Alison Tabor's class. This one was very important since I'm also in this system in my country. And the topic was "Comparative education" - differences of American and Kyrgyz systems of education. Mostly I was asked about personal experience and there were also a lot of questions about the way our people treat Americans. I was surprised when I mentioned CIS countries and those students didn't know this abbreviation.

Another class, on the contrary, was very informed about CIS countries. I was supposed to talk about Social Issues and Ethnic diversity. The

students knew the capital of Kyrgyzstan, bordering countries etc. Perhaps the reason of their awareness was that it was Geography class. Some of the students even asked questions, knowing all the details, for example, what relations our country has with Uzbekistan after accepting Uzbek refugees. It was pleasantly surprising.

The last and the most important was the presentation for Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce and the Asian Center at Patterson Office Tower. There were several UK professors who had been in Kyrgyzstan, at the presentation. Our group mostly talked about general information in terms of geography, history, foreign policy and culture of Kyrgyzstan. I think it's a challenge, because other people, who came to your country, consider some things differently rather than you. And it's interesting because there were some students in Patterson School from Byelorussia, Japan, Korea and India and mostly they asked questions.

I was lucky to observe almost three seasons in the USA; since I arrived in August I caught summer, fall and winter. Moreover, I was glad to celebrate the most colorful and significant American holidays, as doing nothing on Labor Day, going "trick or treat" and carving pumpkins on Halloween, eating turkey with cranberry sauce on Thanksgiving Day and decorating Christmas tree for Christmas Day. Unfortunately, I witnessed the tragedy of New Orleans, which will be also part of my experience in the US. It was the season of hurricanes and tornadoes. Being within the country, I had a splendid opportunity to follow the news in political and international perspectives and public opinion. We managed to visit two neighboring states as Ohio and Indiana. Our group visited the capitol in Frankfort - the capital of Kentucky State, Louisville - the home city of Muhammad Ali (Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr.) and Cincinnati.

It was curious to know the term "sister-city". It means that there are two cities in the world that have cultural connections and similar cultural features, for example Frankfort has sister-city San Pedro De Macoris in Dominican Republic, Seattle has sister-city in Uzbekistan - Tashkent and Cincinnati - Rome in Italy.

I attended handicrafts fair in Berea and homecoming at Berea College, where I met a lot of International students as well as students from CIS countries. I will always remember the picturesque views and breathtaking hike in Red River Gorge and natural Bridge Park.

Peculiarities of Kentucky are horses and bluegrass music. I had unforgettable trip with the UK professors to Keeneland, horse farms and bluegrass music concert.

I was lucky to visit Shakers village. It was absolutely new experience for me. I was curious about the name "Shakers". As I was told afterwards, these people called themselves Shakers, because they shook while they were worshipping. It was a small community of people, who decided for themselves to live the way they lived. Everything was plain in their life - furniture, food, they even did not use nails in constructions. The Shakers men and women lived separately and I guess that led to their extinction. We had lunch in the Diner at Shakers village and food tasted so delicious and fresh, especially bread. It is so astonishing to see highways, malls, high technologies several miles behind this simple and authentic community. Why are such communities predisposed to extinction?

I consider watching TV as a part of cultural activities or experiences. I watched the program "The movies that shocked the world". It was all about "The Birth of a Nation" by W.D, Griffith. It was the most controversial movie in the history of the American film industry. And it inspired the rebirth of Ku Klux Klan and Black American Riots. Even the success of "Gone with the wind" couldn't overshadow the aftermath of "The Birth of a Nation". Griffith was very pressured by his creation and ended up drinking and died. "The Birth of a Nation" depicts the hatred between Black and White Americans and shows very important and authentic part of American history. As far as I know, this movie was banned to be shown and even wasn't included in the curriculum in film departments at colleges and universities.

The movie "Courage under fire" with Denzel Washington and Meg Ryan was about the Gulf War. The actions in this movie take place in Kuwait during the war. It is based on true story. Captain Karen Walden, played by Meg Ryan, is America's first female soldier to be killed in combat. And she was the only woman, who was honored with a Medal of Honor.

As for documentary, I watched the film about the Kennedy women, about Jacqueline Kennedy in particular. She had very brave and strong personality. Jacqueline was very beautiful and smart. She was the first "First lady", who made the reconstruction of the White House and created the new fashion for brunette women and a lot of American women looked up to her. After her husband's assassination she didn't want to change her clothes, saying "they should see what they have done". Despite of her sorrow she managed to arrange the funeral of the president as the funeral of Abraham Lincoln.

Even her little children took part in the funeral. After the death of her husband Jacqueline had strength to support his brothers. I enjoyed watching this documentary and found out a lot of new things for myself.

Summarizing my experience in the USA, Kentucky, Lexington, I must confess that I was lucky indeed to have it. And I am extremely grateful to all those people who made it possible. I was truly honored to meet all people who helped me adjusting and having so much fun here. All of them will always have a special place in my heart and they contribute a lot to my image of America and American Studies. I will miss all those people, who were always there for me and helped to overcome some challenges. I will definitely miss the noise of helicopters and trains as I lived near Central Baptist Hospital, where they used helicopters to transfer emergency patients, and near railway road. Here I would like to name all of them: The director of American Studies Project Alan De Young, Valyaeva Galina, J-1 Scholar Advisor Marc K. Invergo and Assistant Director for International Student Services Karen M. Slaymaker at Office of International Affairs; UK professors: Karen A. Mingst and her spouse Robert, Stanley Brunn, Robert Olson and his spouse Judith, Donald Gross and his spouse Devon, Jeanmarie Rouhier- Willoughby, Alison Jackson Tabor, David Bowman, Richard Waterman, TA - Sara Manning, Douglas Gibler, student of Patterson School Angela Susan Van Berkel; Assistant to the President College Relations at Berea College - Cheyenne Oldham; friends: Laura Hellebusch, Katherine Fegley, Colin Broderick, Robert, Emma, Pauline Chhooi. Thank you all very much!