

COLLECTED VOICES

Inaugural
Edition

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Introduction to the Inaugural Edition

This inaugural Summer 2021 edition of *Collected Voices* is a labor of passion and a commitment to the principles and mission of the Rutgers English Language Institute (RELI), English Department-Writing Program. The edition was created to share and showcase the incredibly creative and important work of RELI students. *Collected Voices* offers the Rutgers community an opportunity to engage with the ideas, experiences, and expertise of our multilingual students and to recognize the critical contributions they make to our global university, a university for the 21st century.

Special Acknowledgments

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Calls from Beneath the Earth: The Inheritance of Blood Relationship

Yue Luo



Photo of stone steps bathed in a warm light and lined with potted flowers by Sigmund sourced from Unsplash.

People say that culture belongs to the individual. That each individual holds the responsibility to pass it down from generation to generation. According to Luo Gang's paper "Culture Studies," from the perspective of existentialism, culture refers to the way a group of people exist, and that culture belongs to the group. I do not agree. Once I thought that I didn't belong to those generations. The culture and my duty to pass it on didn't resonate with me. It was like being separated from everything I'd known and learned. It was lonely. This point of view was unshakable until one experience when I began to know what my culture is about and understand the duty of being part of a whole. The culture I became attached to is called Ancestor Worship, and the duty I gained is the meaning of family.

When I was young, not even nine, every year on the Pure Brightness Festival our family would take a trip back to our hometown Jiayu, Hubei. There, I was always left in one of our relatives' houses at certain time, while my parents left to do something that I did not know about. After two to three days, we would return home. Events occurred like this each year, and as time passed I began to get used to this. I never asked my parents about details of their leaving, as they always replied to me saying, "You will get to know about these things when you grow older."

For my parents, any event could cause tiny but numerous disputes. By the time I graduated from primary school to middle school, the conflict between them finally rose to the top and the fighting quickly turned into separation. When I was twelve, they divorced. Still in conflict with many things, their fights ranged from which kind of carpet to use to who I was going to live with. An agreement was finally made that both of them would take part in my education, but that was after two years of disputes. In those years I was stuck between them, not only as a punching bag, but also as a lubricant for their fighting. Hard days passed like that, through which I gradually began to deny myself being part of this family. Our every-year trip was cancelled.

No one is able to stop the tide of time, neither me nor my parents. By the time I graduated from middle school, my parents were around 50. By then, they turned out to be stable and accepted each other's company easier. The relationship between family members was slowly fixed, though wounds can only be covered by acting: we pretended to forget what happened in the past. It is at that time that dad once said, "We have forgotten to continue the tradition for years due to quarrels. As now we can treat others with peace, shall we continue our trips this year?"

Agreed by unanimous vote, the next Pure Brightness, we returned to our hometown after being separated for years. This time though I was not left in a relative's house but followed my parents. Across tortuous roads we went, passing through the crowded old village, and finally to a small hill. On the hill there were various small tombs dyed with dark gray, like the mixture of black crow

feathers and bone debris, a solemn feeling surrounding us. On the sides of the tombs, there stood ones that I never expected to meet. My father's second brother was back in a hurry from school in a far-off northern city. His third brother was also there from a small city where we'd never visited. My aunt, who was busy dealing with her rebellious daughter in the past months, also arrived with her husband. Unconsciously, the whole family, no matter how busy or estranged, was all gathered in a small village, on the hill with tombs.

"That's the tombs of your great-grandpa and great-grandma, and the tombs of our ancestors." My father's words dragged me from shock back to the reality. "I can see why you are shocked, but with the exception of the last few years, each year on this day we will be together like this. Losing connection with each other doesn't mean we are not in the same family. This is proof: we are all here at Pure Brightness, following the old tradition, Ancestor Worship." There he walked past me again, silently hugging his brothers and sister. And then, the ceremony started in front of me.

Sticks of incense were lit up, and one by one my uncles and aunts walked to the tombs, sat down, burned up some paper money, and thus conversations started. Instead of talking to the dead, these conversations are like live people facing each other in the sunny afternoon, like if those ancestors were ghosts sitting on the other side of their tombs, listening. My second uncle talked about his experiences in supporting education as well as his family's situation—that both he and his wife had chosen not to have a child due to financial costs, and that for compensation he would love his wife even more in the next year. My third uncle complained about his job and his worry about not having a girlfriend while being older than 40. My aunt explained her depression in taking care of her daughter and her education. When they were doing this, my father and mother were cleaning dust and mud that had accumulated on the tombs over the past year. Finally, after my aunt was finished, she called me: "Your turn Yue, take a seat and have a talk with your ancestors."

The dark tomb seemed like it had some kind of forcefield, almost as if my feet could not move. Still, I pushed forward and sat slowly in front of a tomb. I was supposed to say something, but I became confused, for I found all of this filled with a sense of separation. I didn't know who these ancestors were, never even saw their faces before they were laid into these tombs. I found myself feeling lonely, that I couldn't understand the meaning of these actions, that I didn't belong.

There, as I saw the blood red sun fall from the sky to the hill, as dark ashes of paper money rose up in the sky, all of a sudden someone started singing.

From branches the petal falling, down to the soil sink, within it, it dreams of the new flowers to bloom next spring.

Up trees the green leaves flying, above the old rotting, that after they cleaned, to the energy for news to sing.

Then I began to understand it all, about this culture, about the reason why I was here.

In the past, I always thought I was being abandoned, that under the pressure of school, I still had to be the lubricant between my parents' quarrels. Actually, they never had ideas about hurting me, but just want me to grow up in a better situation. It was the lack of communication in real life that led to those quarrels and the break up, but the thing that never changed is that they always gave me the best before and after the split. And not only them—no one in our family was good at communication—this culture is needed for that. The conversations are not only with the dead but with the others at the ceremony. We could sit down in peace, reflecting upon the past year, realizing one's mistakes, making plans to correct them, sharing one's life with

others, and helping to smooth our connections with each other. Although we were all busy during our daily lives, attending the cultural ceremony every year provided us with a chance to strengthen our relationship.

There I sat, after I found all of this out, and said clearly,

“The communication between my parents and me was fixed, and we are all pleased with that.”

And there I am at the tomb, each year in Pure Brightness, sharing my thoughts with the others in my family. For we are all part of this together, for we are all here to keep this culture alive.



Photo of overgrown cemetery with old gravestone in the foreground by NeONBRAND, sourced from Unsplash.

What Does It Mean to Be Vietnamese?

Valerie Le



Photo of houses taken by Valerie Le.

What do you think “culture” means? To me, culture is not conventionality, superstition, cash, nor expensive festivals. The culture of my nation is language and letters. If a country has its dialect and writing, it maintains its culture. “Nét chữ, nét người” is a Vietnamese idiom that expresses this idea. Nowadays, the younger generation uses language negatively, and if it keeps happening, our beauty, the root of our nation, may be destroyed. Let's learn Calligraphy and its art, its nature. Do not overindulge or abuse technology, because you are losing your roots. What does it mean to be a Vietnamese? The answer is surprisingly easy: learn how to write and write beautifully.

We had lived on the outskirts of My Tho since I was one year old. It was said to be the most indigent area of the city. No one of any means lived there. On my way back home from school, I would never see a building taller than our three-story house. The roads weren't like any others in the city; they were muddy, narrow, and crowded. It took me almost one hour to get to school even though the distance was less than a mile. Speaking of my neighborhood, our small house was different from the others. It was unique not because of its appearance, but rather

because of the sounds it made every single day. The house had smiled and laughed ever since I was born. The house consoled me when I had terrible experiences in kindergarten. Despite its ramshackle appearance, disintegrated roof, creaking stairs, and damp floors, the house was cozy and full of love.

I once believed I had the greatest family of all. My mom told me, “Despite the poverty and the war, Grandma and Grandpa still did everything in their power to raise your aunts and me.” Mom was right. My Grandma loved everyone in the family. She took me to school every day, ran to the school every afternoon to help me change my clothes, and cooked delicious food. Grandma never shouted at me when I didn't do my homework or behave well in class. In other words, she loved me and provided every essential thing for me. At a young age, I learned that I should become a great woman like my grandmother, a woman willing to sacrifice her life not only for her children but also for her grandchildren.



Photo sourced from Hai Phong GLORY Tutoring Center of child practicing calligraphy.

When I was in first grade, things changed forever. During the hectic and humid days of July, my grandmother took me to a calligraphy class. It was absolutely terrible, and I asked my Grandma if I could drop the class. Surprisingly, she refused. My Grandma looked me in the eyes and said, “Calligraphy is the root of our traditions, our culture. I do not want you to lose it. Even in wartime, I still made your mom, and your aunts go to calligraphy class. As I always say: ‘Nét chữ, nét người.’” For three days, I desperately tried to learn calligraphy, but I got bored. I did not see the beauty of it, nor the culture embedded in it. What the heck is Calligraphy? I felt empty and decided to skip class. The teacher reported my absence to my grandmother. A sense of disappointment, despair, and animus engulfed in her face. She did not smile anymore. She did not go to class with me. She refused to look after me in the afternoon and help me change my clothes. I realized that my kind and loving Grandma had disappeared.

Grandma watched over me as I completed my homework assignments, and soon began to make impossible demands of me—getting the best grades in my calligraphy class. Every time I came home, I was afraid to look at her. I knew what she was going to say: Did you do well in your writing class? Did you get good grades? It would be a horrible day for me if I got a bad grade. I would have to stay up late and use my calligraphy pen, writing all of the letters repeatedly until she found that the notes were neat and clean. She would smash my hand if my letters got messy, or if my eyes did not stay open.

Even though I thought I got nothing out of Calligraphy, in reality, I did. When my grandma came to the classroom and asked the teacher to look after me more often, I was embarrassed. I could not look at my young, kind, beautiful teacher. She did nothing wrong, but the charge was on her. I did not have any confidence to look at her eyes and see her dazzling, joyous smile anymore. Surprisingly, she grabbed my hand from my grandma, chuckled, and told me to stay after. What if she acts nicely in front of my grandmother, and then changes? What if she would slap my hands for my laziness? Millions of questions popped up in my head, but my teacher did not have me wait too long. The class ended quickly, and I started sweating. Ms. Hoa laughed softly, took a chair, and sat in front of my desk.

“Hello Huong (Huong is my Vietnamese name), I am glad to hear that your grandma has strong interests in Calligraphy and wants you to succeed in this class. I know many things can make you lose your focus in the learning process, but please do not give up! Do you want me to tell you more about Western Calligraphy - the traditional calligraphy style that you are learning?”

“Sure, Ms... Hoa. I am... more than... happy to hear... it.” I replied, hoping that she would not be mad because I skipped many classes.

“Western Calligraphy is employed as a part of daily life, especially on formal occasions. This writing art is significant because it is what our ancestors developed and used to enhance their knowledge. There is also a belief

that one’s handwriting determines one’s personality, so calligraphy is very important. Although Western calligraphy is a mandatory course in our primary system, the government wants people to learn it by heart with these techniques. Let’s think about a life without any writing, any blogs, any poems. No history recorded, no recipes, no books, no knowledge invented, and saved for the next generation. Vietnamese people learned these writing techniques through thousands of years of the Chinese invasion with blood, sweat, and tears. Our role is to spread the good, the norm of this meaning, to our developing world. I am thankful for being a calligraphy teacher to bring calligraphy closer to students and tell them about the history behind it.”

“But... b...but teacher, calligraphy is... too... complicated... f...or me.... My hand is... w...eak for... this...”

“I have been watching you, Huong. I know you are trying, and I am proud of you. Your hand is strong enough for this practice, and believe me, when I was at your age, my hand was a lot smaller. The reason why you feel weak and cannot write uniform lines is due to the wrong pressures you put on the pen.”

“Teacher... Could you... lead my hand...? I want to feel it... the right pressure in my hand.”

Ms. Hoa handed me my calligraphy book and guided my hand through the complicated steps. I realized I did not exert balanced pressure on both tines of the nib, hence I could not write smoothly. It damaged the tines, which was also why I changed my pen’s nib too frequently. My teacher’s hand ran smoothly in the paper, like a jellyfish passing through the ocean without any obstacles. At once, I was shocked by the fluidity of the writing movements of her hand (in my hand), but then things changed: I finally got the feeling of writing. Then, she taught me how to use a paper towel to dry off nibs, so my hand would not dip in ink. She chuckled when she saw me writing just like her and inspired me to do all the practices voluntarily.

Day by day, things changed. I did calligraphy better due to tons of practice and did not wait until my Grandma forced me to get up to do homework. I realized the norm of calligraphy: practice. Not only did I shape my writing, but I also learned how to be patient. No one on earth was born a genius, nor a fantastic person. They practiced and learned from their mistakes. The way the pen scratches against paper makes me remember myself, of who I am. I am Vietnamese, a person who lived in a developing country. I am one of the millions of people who lived in poverty and worked hard to achieve higher education, higher salary, and a higher future. Our ancestors made houses and did incredible things just by their bare hands, and I should learn that too. Technology is not always available for one to use, to type, to surf Facebook. The Internet would not be around if one did not do the hard work, calculating and illustrating all the chips and wireless norms. Calligraphy would not be so popular if our ancestors did not observe French people’s writing

techniques and thus develop our own writing system. For once, I wrote with all of my soul, meticulously rewriting the letters with all respect as I nurtured myself. For once, I got an A in my class. It was the first and only A in the class ever. I began to see my Grandma show her beautiful smile again. Despite the poverty at that time, I got my Grandma the best gift she ever wanted: the best grade in my calligraphy class.

Up till now, I still practice my Calligraphy every single day. I use it in my diary, my notes, and prefer handwritten notes than typed ones. It is a way to keep our traditions alive. I use Calligraphy to write poems and save it in a folder to take a look at whenever I have time. Even when I am away from home, I keep my habit: writing and writing beautifully. It makes me remember my young, childish memories when I started practicing Calligraphy and reflecting the old Vietnamese tradition. It is alive in my soul, always nurturing me as I thrive as a student at Rutgers.

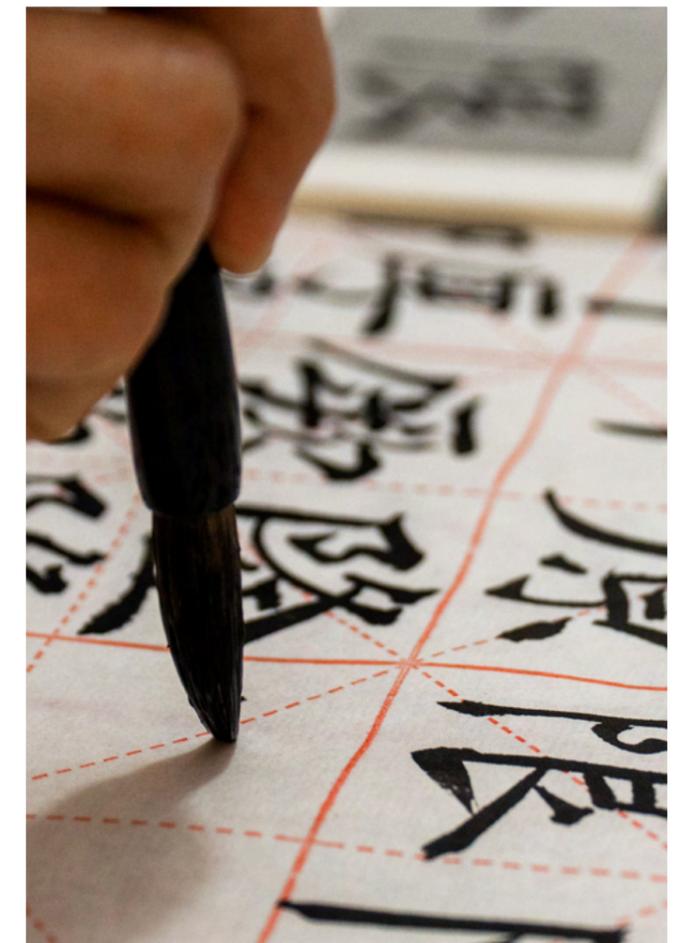


Photo of a person learning calligraphy taken by Qi Xna, sourced from Unsplash.

Culture of Opera

Zihan Su



Artistic rendition of Yu Opera garments on a performer, source unknown.

My name is Hua Mulan and I'm a girl.

They're just recruiting soldiers for the border.

When my father was in the army, he had to protect the frontier.

I can't stop worrying about military posters.

My father is old and my brother is young, how can I compare to a jackal?

It's hard to answer the question of loyalty and filial piety.

If you want to serve your father in the army, don't talk about it...

Whenever I hear this Yu Opera melody of Hua Mulan, my memories are awakened. It reminds me of my hometown, my grandmother, and the happy times I spent with her. This is the power of Yu Opera, a traditional Chinese culture. The culture of Yu Opera is a family bond. When we stay far away from home, it bonds together all my family members and keeps them away from loneliness. The culture of Yu Opera is a national connection. Staying in a foreign country, we will be proud of ourselves because we are Chinese and sing Yu Opera. Together these two bonds wrap around me tightly like a warm hug, accompanying me as I navigate the world.

Yu Opera comes from Henan, and it is one of the most famous operas in China. The Henan province is located in the center plain of China, and it is where I was born and grew up. Singing is the main component of opera. It refers to the opera's tunes and choruses and includes singing programs and dance movements. The opera's lyrics are pithy, sung in a specific tone of voice. It varies significantly from region to region. Costumes in plays are often used to reflect the characters' identity, age, personality, ethnicity and show the play's specific era, customs, and prescribed circumstances. However, not all Henan people could sing Yu Opera; it is popular only among the older generation like my grandparents, who made sure to introduce the opera to me from a very young age. Therefore, although opera is losing popularity in younger generations, thanks to my family, they taught me and it changed my life.

Twelve years ago, I was seven. At that time, my parents were busy with work, so they did not have time to take care of me on weekends. Therefore, I usually went to my grandparents' home. One day at noon, waking up in a daze, I put on my shoes and ran to my grandmother's backyard to play. The yard was surrounded by green. The trees and flowers smelled like spring. Suddenly, I was attracted by a wonderful sound. It made everything quiet and required my full attention. Birds in the trees stopped twittering. Cars outside the courtyard moved slowly. I quietly peered out through the door crack and found my grandmother performing something with sound and fury. She was just like someone new that I have never met before, so different from her usual cooking and cleaning self. Curiosity made me stop in my tracks and stare at

my grandmother, and gradually I waved my arms and imitated her. I laughed out loud and my grandmother spotted me hiding outside the door.

"What are you doing?" my grandmother asked, smiling at my exaggerated expressions and comedic gestures.

"What are you doing?" I asked back.

"I'm singing Yu Opera."

"Yu Opera? What's that?"

"Yu Opera is our traditional Chinese culture. It is a form of theater centered around a comprehensive performance of singing, reading, doing, and playing."

I was already dazzled by my grandmother's introduction.

"So can I study?"

"You want to learn Yu Opera?" Grandmother looked incredulous.

"Of course."

From that time on, my grandmother became an enlightenment teacher of Yu Opera. She gradually began to teach me some basics of the Yu Opera like emotion management. She was always patient in instructing my gesture and emotion. I was so enchanted by the art form that I could not wait to go to my grandmother's house every weekend to learn more. After three months, I performed Hua Mulan at our family gathering during the Spring Festival. All the family members looked startled and even mouthed the lyrics with me during the performance. Their attention was focused on me, and they praised me saying I was a natural. At that moment, I felt surrounded by love. Still today I remember their applause and words of praise. It was so memorable that it still warms my heart when I think about it.

There is something uniquely magical about opera performance that you cannot find in other art form. Opera is a unique culture in China. Unlike plays and movies, opera performances are subject to stage conditions and performance time limits. Therefore, the script should not be too long, and the characters and scene changes should not be excessive. Opera relies mainly on the expressive power of characters and highly concentrated scenes to unfold. Most of the time, opera reflects the conflicts in real life. Besides that, the characters in opera always express their emotions through words and actions.

My thirst for knowledge of Yu Opera became so intense that my grandmother's knowledge base could no longer satisfy me. After discussing with my mom and grandmother, I began to take after-school opera classes three times a week. Although I spent most of my free time studying Yu Opera, I was never tired of it. Sometimes, I struggled to get my facial expressions and gestures right in every class, which was an incredibly difficult process that required full concentration in class and day-to-day

practice. Thus, I accumulated extensive knowledge at that time.

Childhood is always happy and brief. Everything had changed when I was going to high school. At that time, I was overwhelmed since a flood of homework suddenly came to me. Every day I was so busy dealing with my studies, I had less and less spare time. My mom worried that it would interfere with studies if I continued studying Yu Opera. Therefore, she urged me to give up my lessons on Yu Opera. I rejected her, which made her very angry. There was a fierce argument between us about whether to continue my Yu Opera courses:

“I’ve been studying Yu Opera since I was just five years old, do you want me to give it up now? Just because I’m learning on a tight schedule?” I asked.

“You have to remember that you are a student now, and your mission is to study. Don’t waste your time on other things.” Mom yelled at me.

“Have you remembered all the wonderful performances that I gave at the family party earlier?” I tried to gain consent by evoking my mother’s memories.

She paused, and I knew there was hope for me.

“Traditional Chinese opera is the national heritage of China. And it is the crystallization of the wisdom of the Chinese people. Also, Yu Opera is the most precious culture of our Henan province. Now fewer and fewer people are studying it. I must stick to it.” I showed my determination to my mom.

“Well, I’ll allow you to continue your study of Yu Opera, but the number of courses must be reduced to once a week. You should remember your main duty is studying.”

At that time, I was so excited that I could continue learning. When I sing opera, I get to leave everything behind me and become completely relaxed. Yu Opera always reminds me of my grandmother, of the valuable time I spent with her. Since my school is in another city far from my hometown, it is tough for me to visit my grandparents. Besides that, I have the duty to preserve the heritage of Yu Opera. The lyrics of opera are refined, and all of them reflect the significant events in the past. Through the retelling of these stories, I also revisit the days I shared with my grandmother. Wherever I am, Yu operas brings me back to her and her unconditional love for me. Opera is the symbol of our long history, it represents my identity as a Chinese person, as a person from Henan, and as a granddaughter. In this way, Yu Opera is so meaningful that I would catch this valuable opportunity and never let it go.

Time flies. As I continue to make progress, everything has changed around me. My grandmother becomes older and older. Therefore, it is tough for her to sing opera with facial expressions and movement postures in place. Also, she doesn’t have the energy to guide me anymore. She could only watch in silence, trembling, and raising her hands in applause for me. Now, I go to the University in Shanghai, a large city far from my family and hometown. At night, I always sit on my bed, look at the moon, and feel nothing but loneliness. As a familiar melody comes from the TV, my mind is brought back to reality.

My name is Hua Mulan and I’m a girl.

They’re just recruiting soldiers for the border.

When my father was in the army, he had to protect the frontier.

I can’t stop worrying about military posters.

Yu Opera holds too many memories for me. Bits and pieces of the past come to me like a flood. Those happy times I spent with my grandmother resurface in my head. At that moment, I suddenly feel like I am surrounded by love. That is the power of Chinese culture. It can make people who are far away from home feel family, love, and hope. Although Chinese culture is invisible, it is always in the deepest part of our hearts. When we need it, it will exert its most extraordinary power to keep us surrounded by love. This power is available to every Chinese person since opera is a folk art.

Next year, I will go to the United States to start my college career. It is a strange place with no friends, no family, and no Yu Opera. However, Yu Opera has already been rooted in my heart, and now it is quietly growing into a gnarled tree, blossoming and spilling the fruit of the culture onto the vast American soil. When the Chinese and Western cultures blend and collide, I will be proud because Yu Opera belongs to Chinese culture!

Art Is a Sort of Communication

Jiaxu Guo



Photo of person viewing a gallery wall taken by Derick Mckinney, sourced from Unsplash.

Art is present in all parts of human activities and cultures. People today appreciate art in plenty of ways, whether it’s the graffiti and sculptures on the streets, or the art productions in the galleries. All arts play indispensable roles in individuals’ daily lives. In the film “Beijing,” five artists innovate and create their art productions with their own composition features. And they express emotions and feeling and transfer cultures by their arts. These artists use their art to display Chinese productions and cultures to the global community. In the article “Behind the Cello” by Yoyo Ma, “Yo-Yo Ma reflects on the role of arts, creativity and the edges of life.” (1) Ma points out that art could offer a new enlightenment by bringing science and art back together and combining critical thinking and empathetic thinking. He considers that this new enlightenment could help people find equilibrium easier in daily life. Also, he talks about globalization which is similar to this new enlightenment. Globalization created new things across different nations and cultures. Similarly, the new enlightenment helps people create ideas over the science and art boundaries. In the “Pandemic Pet Project,” Ed Attanasio is talking about how art shapes individuals and makes influences in the community. Ed draws pets to people for free, and he uses his art for good by asking participants to donate to animal shelters. Attanasio asks them to “pay it forward” by donating whatever they can to their local pet rescue organization, if possible. These three resources have relevant opinions about the role of art in our global community, which is that art is a sort of communication method in our global community.

Firstly, art communicates with individuals in a relaxed way. In the film “Beijing,” 5 artists use their art to provide a relaxing space for individuals. Using Xu Bing and Liu Xiaodong as examples, In Xu Bing’s art, he created 4000 fake Chinese characters in the art “Book from the Sky”. Those fake Chinese characters look like real Chinese, but all the characters are devoid of meaning. In the “Square Word Calligraphy,” all characters looks like traditional Chinese calligraphy but are English. Xu Bing said that “With all of these new forms of writing, normal path of thinking and logic is blocked off. Our brains are used to lazy thinking which needs to be disrupted and rebooted. After that, you can build a better functioning circuit.” (Beijing 7’00”-7’16”) people need some time for reading his arts. People could calm down and think whatever they can imagine during this period. It is worth treasuring for individuals today. In the process of reading, people can relax their brains sufficiently and gain new ways of creation and innovation. In Liu Xiaodong’s painting, the paintings show everything in a relaxed lifestyle. Liu said that, “It seems everything I paint becomes more gentle and mild afterwards.” (Beijing 52’30”) When people see his painting, people can not only represent the culture and tradition, but also feel relaxed. Similarity, in “Pandemic Pets Project,” Ed draw pets into cartoon art for people for free. With creative colors, those arts look rougher. In Ed’s words, “Its abstract art. I’m never going draw a black cat, black because that’s so boring,” Attanasio says with a smile. “ So, I might draw him with dots. I might draw him with whatever color comes to my mind.” People could feel happy and love when they appreciate Ed’s painting. Arts in these resources provide relaxation and happiness to individuals. Both sources provide a unique method for communicating relaxed and positive emotions when people appreciate arts.



Photo of artist Guan Xiao in her studio taken by Mathilde Agius for Art Basel (left) next to photo of Guan Xiao's art installation, "Pond" (2019) taken by Mareike Tocha (right).

Besides this, individuals in global communities can communicate and transmit information through art. Each artist would like to use their art productions to transmit their ideas. I would like to use "Beijing" and "Behind the Cello" as examples to explain this statement. In "Beijing," Yin Xiuzhen made an artwork named "Portable Cities." She utilized clothes to create art in suitcases for showing different traits in different cities. She preferred to transmit information about the experience and stories from the clothes from different places. About another artist, Guan Xiao, always made creative and innovated sculptures with totally irrelevant materials, such as ceramics and feathers. Guan explained her art like this, "I designed several different 'clone' characters with their own identities and cultural background like that they might belong to different civilizations or races". (Beijing 33'59"- 34'10") She told us the innovation by merging traditional Chinese art with contemporary art together. Her art productions transmit the importance of innovation and combination. In the "Behind the Cello", Ma pointed out individuals could transmit empathy through art. Ma considered the importance of bringing the arts and science back together in the beginning of the passage. Ma said that, "To be able to put oneself in another's shoes without prejudice is an essential skill. Empathy comes when you understand something deeply through arts and literature and can thus make unexpected connections." (Ma page 2) Empathy is necessary for individuals in daily life. If people only develop science and technology, our community will lack emotions and empathy. However, arts can just satisfy these empathic needs. When properly fostered, arts can create a more balanced way for thinking. Therefore, art could provide information for making people thinking more emotionally and psychologically.

Finally, art can transmit and combine cultures. In Guan Xiao's productions, the art productions could combine traditional Chinese elements and contemporary art elements together. She expresses the similarity and differences among different cultures through her art. It is a sort of communication and globalization in this sense. In the article "Behind the Cello," Yoyo Ma considers that "They can create new culture and invigorate and spread traditions that have existed for ages precisely because of the 'edge effect.' Sometimes the most interesting things happen at the edge. The intersections there can reveal unexpected connections." (Ma page 5) When people overcome the boundaries, globalization appears. In the process of globalization, art plays an important role of transmitting cultures. Arts express the traits and opinions from different nations and cultures while concretizing fundamental beliefs and ideas. In Ed's paintings, he also communicated a culture of love, providing love and shelters to animals and to the global community. In this sense, art provides an indispensable way to communicate cultures.

In conclusion, I connected with these three sources to find the role of art, a sort of communication. Besides communication, art also plays so many important roles in our global community. In addition, it could not only express individuals' thoughts, but also have a positive influence on people's ways of thinking. It could make individuals thinking more emotionally, psychologically, and even develop personality. Therefore, paying attention to the arts surrounding us and integrating art into our lives is important and indispensable.

The Culture of Chinese Funerals in Malaysia

Georgia Loh



Photo taken by Georgia Loh of the wake with food offerings.



Photo taken by Georgia Loh of the wake.

Growing up as a Malaysian Chinese whose family is in the funeral business, I have become accustomed to taboo topics like death and funerals at the dinner table. It is pretty unusual to be talking about death like the weather in Chinese culture if you ask me. I grew up learning funeral etiquette, death rituals, dress codes, funeral do's and don'ts while the rest of my friends were having a great time inviting Barbie and Ken to their dollhouses. I may have had more knowledge about this culture than any of my peers, but it turned out that I had no idea about the real definition of all the rituals and customs in a Chinese funeral.

It happened when my grandfather's car approached me after school to pick me up just like a normal school day. I peeked through the driver's seat to catch a glance of my favorite person - my Gōng gong 公公 (grandfather), but I saw my dad instead. My thoughts and mind got blurry when he told me that Gōng gong had passed away. Before I was able to process what was happening, I found myself crying at the backseat of the car.

We arranged a traditional burial ceremony for Gōng gong. The ceremony was categorized into three different parts: the wake, the funeral, and the post-funeral. For my grandfather's body, we followed the major custom of Chinese death culture which is inhumation, preceded by a 7-day wake. My family believed that on the 7th day after they died, the soul of the deceased will return and be with

us once again before it enters another realm. Gōng gong's burial location was dictated by the Chinese geomancy practices of Fēng Shuǐ (風水). The Chinese culture believed that the location of burying the deceased will have an impact on his/her family's well-being and future success in life.

As the oldest male heir of Gōng gong, my uncle led the funeral along with the help of my aunt and dad. Older family members such as my grandfather's siblings were not allowed to do so. My younger brother, cousins, and I were fully dressed in blue t-shirts and pants before we headed to the front yard where the wake was carried out. The front yard was strongly infused with pungent incense smoke, along with a grand display of huge flower wreaths, banners, offerings of pre-cooked food, peanuts, and beverages for the funeral guests. On the entrance of the wake, there's a white box that contained white envelopes filled with cash Bái Jīn (白金), offered by families and friends who attended the wake as a form of condolences. The amount of cash given to our family was all in odd numbers for auspicious purposes, and the same principle applies to the duration of the wake (7 days).

During the wake, my grandfather's body is temporarily preserved, well-dressed with Shòu fú (寿服), known as Longevity clothes. His wrinkled face was enhanced with light makeup for display in a wooden casket with glass. I gazed down at his features and his closed eyes. As I stared

down at him through the thick wall of glass, it was the very first time that I felt this huge interspace between me and my grandfather. While he was still alive and well, I could never survive the day without having his hands right beside mine. With him beside me, the world felt safer almost instantly. The urge to give him that one last hug and the feeling of being so close to him but yet so far was insurmountable. The glass on the casket that kept us separated acted as a barrier between us, reminding me that this is happening, that this time, he's gone for good.

The Chinese believed that the deceased soul in purgatory will use burned joss paper as money before they enter the gates of heaven or hell. For the offerings of the funeral, my family went above and beyond by preparing a ten-foot tall paper, made into a building with the same height as a real-life double-story house. The paper house came with necessities like designer clothes, shoes, electronic gadgets, servants, and a huge pile of money, all handmade out of paper. On the day of the offering ritual, we spent nearly an hour staring at the paper buildings as they burn into ashes. The fire ignited my memories with my Gōng gong as I watch them burn. Memories of him sneaking in a cold Milo beverage for his sick granddaughter without grandma's approval, him gently pushing my back as I sat on the swing, him bragging to his friends about how adorable his granddaughter is, and that one time when he attempted to ask if I would ever miss him when he's gone.

In those moment of raw pain, my memories with Gōng gong came to life just like yesterday. The fear of losing those memories exceeded the fear of losing his presence in my life. If I could ever wish for anything in life, it is to not wanting those memories of him to fade away like the ashes of burned joss paper and incense. So, I locked all those memories near and dear to my heart, and proceeded to the next day of his wake. It was a struggle to keep my head held high in front of families, friends, relatives, and the monk at the funeral. Things got more heart-breaking while watching my grandmother crying and screaming for his husband's name on the last day of the wake. According to our Chinese ancestral culture, it is believed that it takes 3 times to call out the deceased's name to make sure he or she finds the way home before leaving the earth.

As a Roman Catholic, these rituals and burning papers seemed excessive to me at the time. The money, time, and resources spent on funeral rituals were overwhelmingly immense. I remembered being severely puzzled by asking questions such as: "What is the point of being devoted to a ritual when what is done, is done? There's no way you could bring back a dead man's life. Isn't it hilarious to believe that joss papers burned will turn into a dead man's afterlife possession? Hold on a minute, does the idea of afterlife even exist? Why is the futile attempt of burning resources for the dead embraced even if it's bad for the environment?" I couldn't fathom why this culture of mine is contributing to global warming despite all the logical



Photo taken by Georgia Loh of the burning joss paper house.



Screenshot from a video titled “Magnolia Yang Sao Yia Digital Story: Immigrant Stories” focused on Hmong Dance.

dispute thrown by the rest of the world. In the beginning, there was a few occasions where I refused to hold joysticks in my hands and deter myself from burning paper money for my ancestors. My dad was very annoyed by this childish act of mine and gave me a serious lecture about the meaning and definition behind the traditional burial ceremony. After a deep reflection, I began to understand the beauty and the true meaning behind the Chinese funeral culture.

During my reflection, I remembered my grandfather’s funeral, lavish and grand, but in the inside, it was an emotional roller coaster for my family. The burial ceremony brought every member of the family back from different parts of the state and country. Usually, we only get to reunite as a family on celebratory occasions like Chinese New Year, and the Family Reunion dinner on the Lunar New Year’s Eve. But this time, the main element of grief was disguised in Gōng gong’s funeral ceremony which bonded us once again together as a whole. We sat down and reconnected our memories of Gōng gong through the entire process of the funeral. Different family member’s memories with Gōng gong were shared and I learned things that I never knew about my favorite person. Things like how he always fills up his petrol tank shirtless in the public petrol station, how he likes his coffee with Yóu Tiáo 油条 (Chinese Fried Dough), and the love story of how he pursued my grandma back in the days when they were young. Besides that, being with family members who were experiencing the same loss made the grieving process more bearable than being alone. I deeply associate the quote from “What is Hmong Dance?” from Yang-Sao-Yia when she stated that “Hmong Dance is a communal experience. Hmong dance is a performance, a representation, an exploration, a bodily research, an

archive.” The word ‘communal’ depicted Hmong dance as a core element to bond Yang Sao Yia’s culture with herself and members of her culture. Furthermore, it illustrated a similar effect on my family when we gathered in a circle of grief, sharing love and respect for Gōng gong through the Chinese Funeral Culture.

From an external point of view, Chinese death rituals and superstitions might seem excessive, but the process plays an integral part in proper grieving. The formality of the death ceremony amplifies our grief, respect, and love towards the deceased, which is distinguishable in every step of the ritual. For instance, we hope that he’ll find peace sooner in heaven by inviting a monk to perform and lead the rituals at his funeral. Though there is a vast number of superstitions and rituals embedded in the Chinese Funeral culture, it is always the little details in our culture that show our devotion and love to our loved ones.

On each Gōng gong’s death anniversary, you can find my dad, my brother, and I hustling in the kitchen for the food preparation of paying respect Bàibài 拜拜 towards my grandfather. We offer joss sticks, words and thoughts that we would want to share with Gōng gong (in our hearts), and plates of his favorite delicacies in front of his altar.

The worship proceeds as my father says out loud: “Dear father, it’s time for you to eat.” When those words are recited, I now begin to connect its meaning to a phrase from the reflection “A Meal of Solitude for a Restless Heart” by Jeon Sungtae:

“Hurry off now,” she said. “You’d be surprised how time flies.”

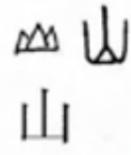


Photo taken by Georgia Loh of food offerings.



Photo from Georgia Loh.

The Buddhist nun in the story had fulfilled her responsibility of guiding Sungtae to his next chapter of life during his stay at the temple. The same goes to my father, expressing that he had done his responsibility as my grandfather’s child by carrying on the Chinese Culture to the next generation of the family. After everything is in place, we’ll stay and bond with each other while Gōng gong is “having” his dinner. I am beyond proud to no longer view this certain culture of mine as foolish or ignorant, but as a way to express our love and reminisce the good memories we had with our deceased family member. This is a culture that I feel is wholesome, sentimental, and vibrant in its meticulous way, and one that I will pass down to my future children and their own children as well.



山川
【shān chuān】



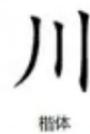
甲骨文



金文



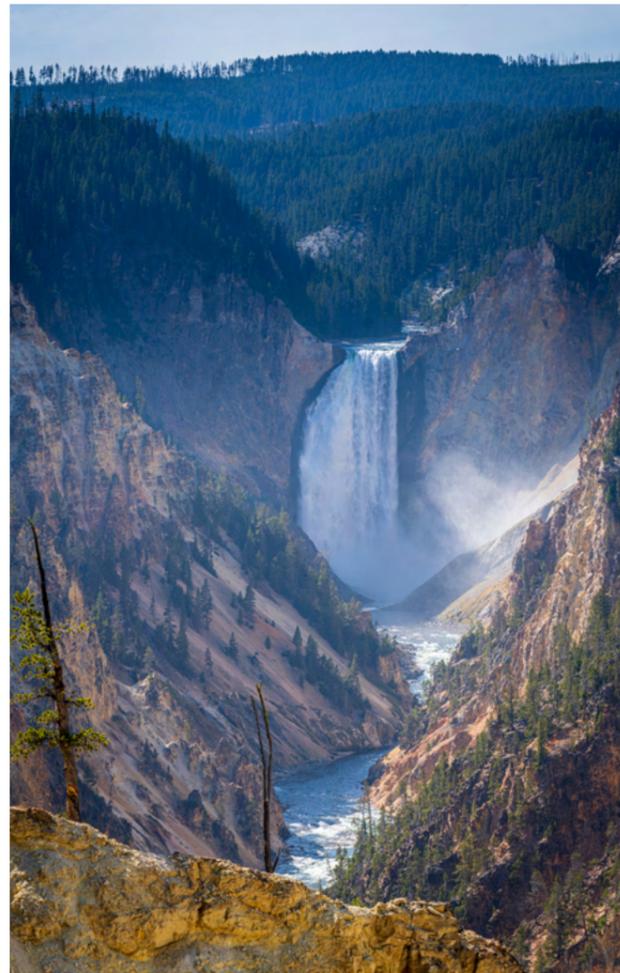
小篆



楷体

Chinese Word For “Mountain and River”

By Peiqing Zhu



The word “Shān Chuān” means “mountain and river in Chinese. To me, it is also the two characters that I learned of the first day of lower primary school. I learned that ‘山’ (shān) means mountain because it looked like a mountain when the ancient people first wrote it. ‘川’ (chuān) means river because the curves and stripes of the character look like a winding river. The picture of Oracle bone script shows the evolution of these characters. These words inspired me to learn and appreciate the Chinese language. When I was young, I thought it was magical that there are many characters that look like what they mean. It shows that the Chinese language is broad and profound.



Photo of mountains and a river by Antonella Vilardo, sourced from Unsplash.

Photo of mountains and a river by Laura Nyhuis, sourced from Unsplash.

-Bươn chải-

By Valerie Le



“Bươn chải”

For me, this word means “strive to make a living.” I grew up in a ramshackle house, but full of love. Even though we counted on my parents a lot to make a living for seven people including me, my grandparents, and two siblings, we were happy. It was not easy to be the first generation in the medical path: you have to find a job without a professional person’s recommendation. My mother tried her best to “bươn chải” for her and the family. She refused to be a doctor and changed to a pharmacist, a trendy job back then. Luckily, an international pharmaceutical company saw her potential and employed her. She saved my family from the creaking stairs and broken dishes. I am proud of my mom and want to achieve her dream: working as a professional as she has.



乡愁

思乡
Homesickness.



Celine Wang

思乡

Pool of light, Bowing in homesickness, I'm drowned.

I saw this word on a TV show in China called "Reader". A noteworthy writer translated an ancient Chinese poem into English. One of the lines of the poem was "Looking up, I find the moon bright, bowing in homesickness, I'm drowned." I felt confusion when I first saw the word "homesickness": Why is the emotion of missing home called a 'sickness'? Three years later, I moved to St. Clair Shores, Michigan during my junior year of high school. I learned what it meant to be "homesick." I wrote in my journal: "I want to escape here, want to return to the Palace Museum, want to see the red leaves of the Fragrant Hills, want to see the snow of my hometown... I miss it, very much." At the time, I realized that this emotion truly is a kind of sickness, and that it comes when you've lost all sense of belonging.

月亮
(yue liang)
Chinese word for "moon"

Zhendong Su



When I was a little kid, I was restless and fickle. One night, I kept asking my mom to bring out and play. So she took me to a park. There were only a few people and it was very quiet. I looked up and found a bright thing. My mom told me that is called "yue liang." We sat on the chair and she started to tell me stories about "yue liang." I stared at it. That was the first time I felt so calm and peaceful. Since then, I always take walks in the evening after finishing my dinner. I walk to a quiet place and look at "yue liang." It can always calm me down and help me forget the things in life that do not matter.



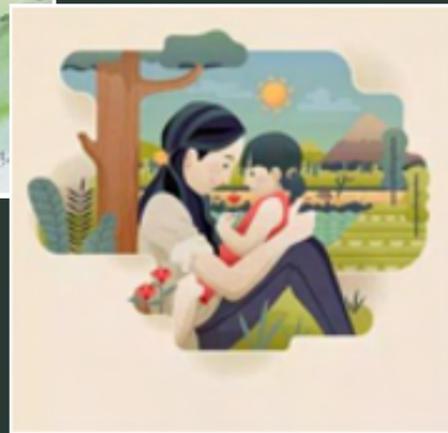
Photo of some phases of the moon by Mark Tegethoff, sourced from Unsplash.

無微不至



无微不至

Meticulously



Jiayi Liu

无微不至

This word comes from a poem from the Song Dynasty in China. It means **considerate right down to the most trivial detail**. It describes being very attentive and considerate.

For me, this word expresses the careful care of my parents since childhood and the careful guidance of my teachers in school. Especially at this difficult time, in the epidemic stage, those medical workers are now taking care of patients with COVID-19.

At the same time, I also hope that I can become such a person. So now I can try my best to do things meticulously, such as doing my homework. Secondly, I also hope that in the future I can take as much care of my parents as my parents do for me.

Who's Who in RELI? Chatting With Dr. Nicole Houser

Michael Mendonez



Dr. Nicole Houser is the Director of the Rutgers English Language Institute (RELI), within the English Department's Writing Program. RELI houses all divisions dedicated to scholars who use English as an additional language: Intensive English @RELI, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and Graduate ELL.

Q: As the Director of RELI, you've given numerous presentations on culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogy and often talk about the relationship between "Language and Social Justice." What does this phrase mean to you and how does it relate to the experience of students at Rutgers?

A: When I was a student, I had the experience of learning Spanish as an additional language. It wasn't connected to my upbringing or my family, and so the classroom was my window into the language and the culture. However, in my early studies I found there to be a lot of grammar exercises: fill-in-the-blanks, past tense, pronouns, direct objects. Basically, the "bits and pieces" approach of language teaching, and this has been prevalent for a long time.

But language is the way we describe our world, connect with one another, share our experiences, and interpret everything around us. It's very personal and social—not a formula. And so, as a student I was always frustrated with these approaches and what I call decontextualized language teaching. A lot of times you'll get ten sentences about different things and different people that have nothing to do with each other. It was helpful to study the form to some extent, but it meant nothing. It wasn't exciting or engaging.

As a student, to become more engaged in the language I would just read what interested me the most. I started with poetry and jumped in. I got the context, and I was able to see the differences in words that way. From there, I got into Spanish music and just immersed myself. I looked for answers to questions like, What's behind these words? Who's behind these words? I made cultural connections to the language that informed what I was learning and enhanced my relationship with it.

Over time during my studies, I saw more and more how decontextualized language teaching can be problematic when you have unequal relationships between people and populations. When language is presented as this depersonalized thing, you don't see the relationships. It affects what languages people learn, how people engage, how people perceive these languages and their speakers and often in unequal ways. Because of the dominance of the English language, all of the knowledge and understanding of students who speak languages other than English often goes unappreciated or unacknowledged.

For me, when teaching and designing courses, I try to create opportunities for making connections between culture, language, and people. I emphasize learning about speakers of different languages as much as possible. Even in an academic context, what counts as academic language in the United States is different than what counts as academic language in China, India, Mexico, Chile, and Russia. And so, it's been important to understand the diversity of perspectives in order to broaden ours.

Q: With the recent redesign of the EAP program, English for Academic Purposes, how do you see the new curricula of EAP I and EAP II responding to this idea of "Language and Social Justice?"

A: One of the first changes I made to the courses is to their titles. Prior to these changes they were named only by number: English "one" and "two." For me, this seemed like one of the least engaging ways to present them. And yet this has been a tradition at colleges all over—it was the norm: Writing I, Writing II. This sequencing is reflective of the decontextualized models I spoke about before, referring to courses as levels of language rather than connecting them to culture and to people.

So in the first course, Writing Across Cultures, I started with guiding questions to help students engage with the culture of the language, discover and understand central themes, develop written communication, and develop awareness of themselves as writers and scholars in this new space and culture.

Since most of the students in EAP courses have both lived experience and academic experience outside of the

United States, the focus of the first course is examining how culture and communication relate. The common text is called *Speaking of Culture*, and it's sort of an introduction to cultural anthropology. So students are really cultural anthropologists in this course, and we talk about, in detail, how culture has been defined. We use this text to explore academic definitions of culture, ethnicity, race, and different types of categorizations of people to understand these relationships. Defining these terms and the common themes are the first step to contextualizing language. We then relate those themes to personal examples of people with different cultural backgrounds. The US is pluralistic, multicultural, and diverse. These are terms that students will be engaging in across other courses, especially in discussing important social issues in Sociology and History. Throughout this process, students not only understand different cultural backgrounds and the history of various peoples and cultures within the US, they start to learn more about themselves and how they fit into that context.

In the second course, *Academic Writing in the United States*, those central themes about culture and communication are carried over, but there's an increased focus about entering the culture of your discipline or area of study. Within the broader context of cultures in a University, disciplines and areas of studies have their own cultures and, by extension, have their own vocabulary, ways of speaking, and ways of writing. As a linguist, if I were to write for a publication, the expectations for my paper would be very different than the expectations for a chemist's. And so in this course, students not only discuss culture and communication, but also conduct research projects within their academic area of study or in defining their interests toward an academic area of study.

Q: In leading this shift in RELI toward contextualizing language teaching, how have your lived experiences informed and inspired this work?

A: I come from a multilingual background, particularly with my mom's family. I spent holidays and summers with them, surrounded by several different linguistic and cultural influences. My grandfather spoke Lithuanian and English, and my grandmother spoke Ukrainian, Russian, some Polish and English. They had such varied backgrounds that they became sort of the neighborhood translators. As someone brought up in this environment, it became a strong foundation for operating within multiple languages. For me, I was really interested in learning my family's languages, but they weren't offered in my school. I took up what was offered and began learning Spanish, and from there, I began studying Linguistics. Still, the rich background of my family was my foundation—literally planting the seed.

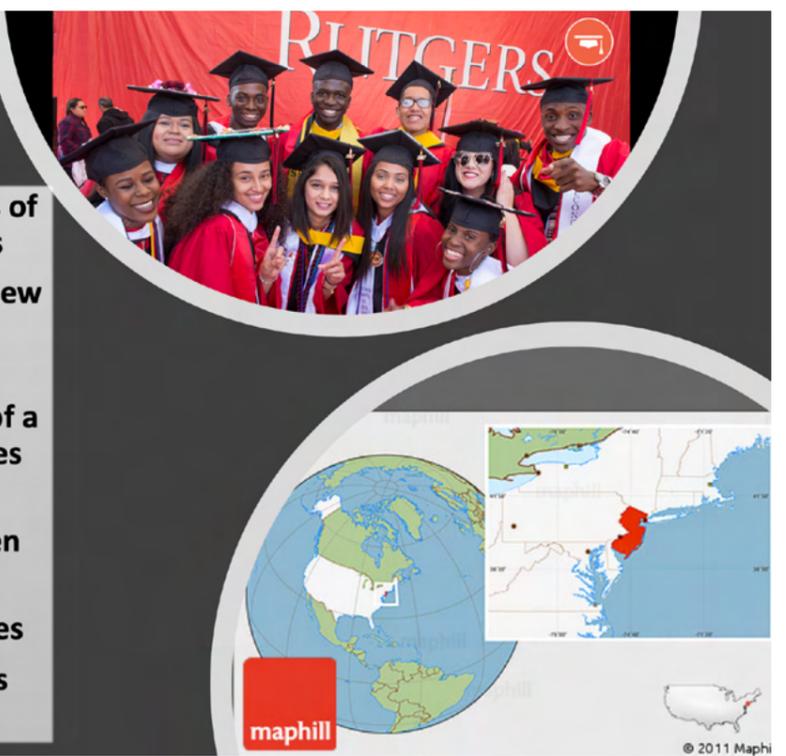
Everything we're interested in, every engagement even in our academic work, is all an extension of our story. And that's sort of a foundation for the RELI courses, especially our first-year courses. So that students entering into this this new space in the University as readers, writers,

and scholars can understand that academic writing and everything we do, really, is an extension of our story.

Q: Lastly, here at RELI we aim to support our students not only in their writing but in their entire international and cross-cultural experience. Do you have any words of wisdom for international students attending Rutgers for the first time?

A: When entering a new academic setting, especially within a new cultural setting, you can easily feel overwhelmed with feelings of what you do not know. However, you are all expert communicators with unique interests and knowledge about many subjects! You will not only have the opportunities to expand upon your expertise, but you will also be able to share it with classmates and professors as you develop within your academic major. Prior to your first day, reflect on a past school project or assignment of which you felt immensely proud. Why do you think you excelled on that assignment? How does it reflect your strengths as a student? How does it reflect your interests and passions? Defining your strengths, interests, and the knowledge you bring as you begin your studies will help you to focus on what you do know, so that anytime you feel overwhelmed, you can return to this list for motivation and support.

Why Focus on Culture?



- Cultural Studies examines patterns of group values, beliefs, and practices
- You are becoming a member of a new group and community: Rutgers University
- You are also becoming a member of a larger community: the United States
- Culture greatly influences communication: written and spoken
- Cultures influence each other to create new knowledge and practices
- Understanding other cultures helps you understand your own



Guiding Questions and Outcomes

Writing Across Cultures	Academic Writing in the U.S.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How do we define culture and cultural identity? ○ How do cultural factors affect written communication and reader expectations? ○ How do these factors influence your writing style in English? ○ Demonstrate an understanding of rhetorical strategies implemented across a variety of texts ○ Implement rhetorical strategies and critical analysis ○ Identify and complete steps and strategies essential to the writing process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is expected of student writers at a university in the United States? ○ How does this compare to the expectations of writers in other languages and contexts? ○ What is expected in different majors and disciplines? ○ Plan and write texts that incorporate valid and unbiased information ○ Develop greater academic sentence variety, more complex structures, and an understanding of the conventions of Academic English structure

Global Conversations @RELI: The New Podcast by Rutgers English Language Institute

Arete Bouhlas



Photo of flags by Andrew Butler, sourced from Unsplash.

Culture Shock, (noun): the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone who is suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes (Oxford Languages, 2020). Anyone who has traveled or found themselves in a “new” environment knows that experiencing an unfamiliar culture can range from exhilarating to terrifying, depending on how similar the unfamiliar culture is to the traveler’s comfort zone. However, with some practice, the easier and more gratifying exploring new cultures becomes.

In an effort to reimagine culture shock, the Rutgers English Language Institute (RELI) is launching a [new podcast series](#) exploring what happens when we leave our comfort zone to experience something unfamiliar, and how it can help us to create community. Inspired by “Global Conversations”, a limited virtual-event series produced by RELI during the 2020/2021 academic year which connected students, faculty and the greater Rutgers community during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the podcast aims to further these connections, while also exploring why we should embrace culture shock.

Leading this effort are Professor Nela Navarro, Associate Director of RELI, Dr. Mihaela Caponegro, Assistant Professor in the Rutgers Writing Program, and a group of 6 student interns, selected from RELI’s classes: Lingsong An, Zheyu Cui, Dinghao Li, Stephanie Loy, Ou Ying Qin, Yuxin Xing. “Our internship course seeks to inspire our multilingual students to share these perspectives with the Rutgers community,” said Dr. Caponegro. “I wanted to design a project that creates opportunities for our multilingual international students to fully understand the importance of their voice in the community, and to practice developing their exceptional resources beyond the classroom.” While the EAP internship has been a steady feature in the Rutgers Writing Program for several years, this semester the objective of the course was adjusted to reflect the incredible experiences that multilingual students bring to the Rutgers’ community. “The current EAP@RELI internship taught and supervised this academic year by Dr. Caponegro, provided a unique opportunity for EAP students to engage in creative community-building projects such as the inaugural EAP podcast, ‘Global Conversations @RELI’,” noted Prof. Navarro. “The work of the internship plays an important role in RELI’s mission to cultivate global communities, and the broader Rutgers University goal of enhancing its status as a 21st-century global university.” Rutgers international students have a more extensive education experience by default because they come into close contact with two or more types of education throughout their academic journey. While in many instances, and often in the classroom, these experiences are downplayed and overlooked, at RELI they are valorized and encouraged.

Throughout the course of the virtual Fall 2020 semester, the interns and Dr. Caponegro met to discuss the trajectory the internship would take – its goals were two-fold: creating community for Rutgers international and multilingual population, especially students who were new to RELI’s courses, and to create a project (the podcast) that could continue to grow the community once the internship was over. “Building community is incredibly important because of the social support it gives students. It can be extremely comforting and helpful to have others that can help you out, and also students who may be acclimating to a new environment as well who you can relate to. Our podcast episodes also talk about the importance of social supports from friends and family, and being open to talking about our struggles with others,” said Loy, a junior Psychology major.

The interns chose the theme of culture shock for the podcast, as it is something that everyone experiences at some point in their lives. “Cultural shock is broad, and I know some individuals may have anxiety when facing cultural shock. It is normal, and practice can make you feel better,” said Cui, a junior in the Rutgers Business School. From traveling to a new country, to living on a college campus to starting a new job, culture shock changes our perspective, more often for the better. “Firstly, each culture has its own unique aspects, which means that we should respect those ‘unusual’ manners from different cultures,” said Li, a sophomore majoring in Supply Chain Management. “Also, as long as we would like to have a try, getting into another culture is not as difficult as we imagined.” By being open-minded and welcoming, these experiences can help us to create a feeling of fellowship, while allowing us to grow as individuals.

The interns were involved in every aspect of creating and producing the podcast. They were responsible for curating the list of interviewees – choosing individuals who could speak frankly about their social and cultural experiences inside and outside of the United States - collaborating on the list of interview questions, recording and editing their individual interviews, and of course, troubleshooting. “The difficulty is that in my group, we had three different time zones,” stated Cui. “We used our group chat a lot, and we check each other’s schedules and shared the work so that we won’t be overwhelmed.”

Each intern grew from the experience, gaining confidence, polishing their public speaking and group communication skills, as well as increasing their tech savviness. “The internship has really helped me become more comfortable with collaborating with others. I loved being able to talk to the other interns and work with them to create something that we could be proud of like the ‘Global Conversations’ [series] and our podcasts,” noted Loy.

We invite you to join our RELI community by engaging with “Global Conversations @RELI”, and reimaging how you feel about culture shock.

The New Year of
our family
welcome 2021

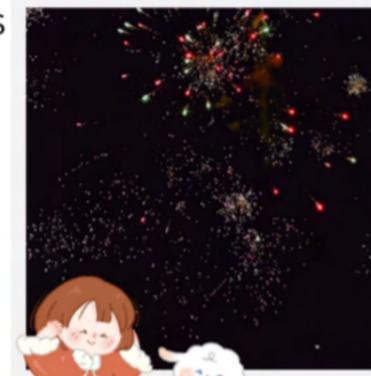
By Julia Zhan

Feb/09/2021

My mother and my grandmother are worshipping their ancestors. It is not only to educate children and grandchildren to show filial piety to their elders, but also to hope that their ancestors can bless their own descendants.

Feb/11/2021

February 11th is New year's Eve this year. Setting off firecrackers means to bid farewell to the old and welcome the new, and take an auspicious sign.



New year's Eve dinner is a day when relatives eat together. It means happiness and fulfillment, reunion and reunion.

Feb/12/2021

The whole family gets together during the Spring Festival.



The most important program of the Spring Festival: Spring Festival Gala Evening



Feb/10/2021

Hanging the word "Fu" implies a lot of blessings in the new year. And sticking Spring Festival couplets means to ward off evil spirits and ward off disasters and welcome blessings.



Feb/26/2021

Lantern Festival is also a festival for family reunion. And eating dumplings is also an important custom of this festival.



Spring



2020.01.21 10:11AM I took a walk with my father and we saw the sun is rising.



2020.04.10 17:42PM When I got home in the afternoon, I found the pear blossom in the community. So happy!



2020.04.12 16:21PM On the way to the library, I found that today's weather is so neat.



2020.04.15 18:16PM I went to the park with my friend, the beautiful peach blossom also appeared!

2020.01-2020.04

Xinjiang

Spring in my hometown is always very short. Maybe last week was still has snow and cold, and next week the trees began to take on green leaves. The most obvious sign of spring is that there are more bird calls in the community and you can smell the fragrance of various flowers everywhere when you walk on the roadside. Xinjiang is very cool in spring and that's my favorite temperature. It's neither as hot as summer nor as cold as winter. Besides, spring is the season for all things to recover. It makes me feel full of vigor and vitality. Seeing the recovering plants trying to germinate will bring me a good mood for the day. In my community in the spring can see many kinds of flowers, like dandelion, morning glory, peach, pear, Elaeagnus, lilac... Even in my community there are mulberry trees, when spring comes, when the temperature began to pick up, mulberry trees began to blossom and bear fruit, the mulberry will fall on the road of the community, the stone road will be dyed black. The garden of the community also grows a kind of wild vegetable with red stem, which is very delicious when mixed with sauce. Oh, by the way, there are many elms in my hometown. Every spring elm seeds grow on the trees. It's a delicious dish to steam.

The moon is so big in summer!

sunset glow

Traffic lights in summer

Soft clouds

The sunset in park

Snow mountain in summer

The grassland of jiangbulake

Summer camping

Golden rapeseed

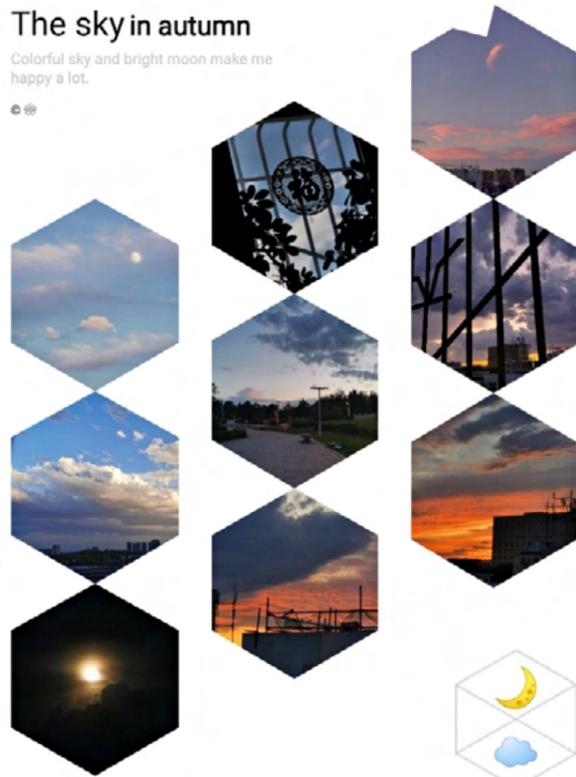
Life in summer

The weather starts to get hot in summer. The most obvious feature of summer is that it gets much later when it gets dark at night. Sometimes it doesn't get dark at 10:30 at night. The sky in summer is different from the white sky in winter. Maybe the climate is becoming warmer, the sky in summer is becoming bluer and clearer. This season is the best time to go out. Xinjiang is an area with many natural scenic spots. It's really wonderful to go to the mountains to watch the natural beauty in summer. You can not only have a happy trip, but also take the opportunity to escape from the hot. In summer, Xinjiang is green except desert and Gobi. Vegetable fields and mountains are occupied by green plants. On the way out in Xinjiang, you can see many fields, such as sunflower field, cotton field, lavender field and so on. Although the photos I listed are not enough to include all the beautiful scenery in Xinjiang, but I believe these photos are enough to show you the beauty of Xinjiang.



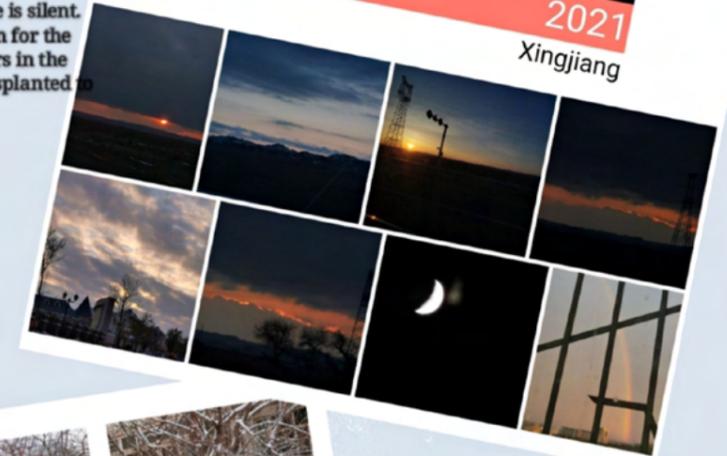
The sky in autumn

Colorful sky and bright moon make me happy a lot.



Sky in winter

Xinjiang's winter is dry and cold, the day is short and the night is long. The sun may not rise completely at 10 a.m. Occasionally, when I go to school in the morning, I can still see the moon before it sets. Xinjiang is in the north of China, so snow is a common thing for the kids who live in here. If there is no snow in any year, we should be surprised. After the snow, the hometown is white, the sky is not as blue as the other three seasons, as if all life is silent. The leaves on the trees have fallen for the long time, and the delicate flowers in the community have already been transplanted to



Sponsor PITU

2021

Xinjiang

Winter

PITUNEWS

2021

Snowflakes can make people's soul calm down.



to the special shed by the staff. I think, in this vast white community, the most vitality things are these children who run and play with snow in the community. Snow, no doubt, brings new fun to children, they can play a lot with snow and ice, such as outdoor skating, skiing, snowman, snowball fights, etc. Of course, the happiest thing in winter in Xinjiang is that every household has heating. Even if it's cold outside, you will be cured by the heating temperature when you get home.

Chinese Braised Pork in Brown Sauce

Julia Zhan

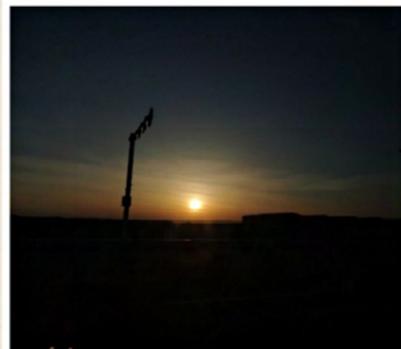
Sunrise & Sunset



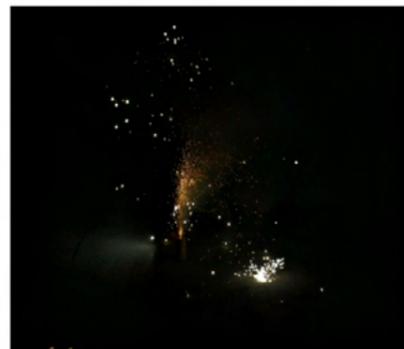
2020.01.27 19:20PM It's time for dinner! What a beautiful color of the sky!



2020.03.10 8:00AM It's time for class! Although it's morning, the moon still very big and bright!



2020.02.28 19:41PM It's time to go home. Now, I am near the Gobi desert, the sunset was so magnificent!



2021.02.14 22:02PM **Firework!** Happy new year!

PITU
2020-2021

Although the four seasons in Xinjiang are different in length, they are easy to distinguish. Every season has its unique side: the new shoots in spring, the beautiful scenery in summer, the golden leaves in autumn and the snow in winter. A thousand poets have a thousand Hamlets in their hearts, and everyone feels different when they come to Xinjiang. Xinjiang is mysterious, huge and beautiful. The experience here is different from what I feel in any other area because it is closest to nature. Even though I have grown up, I still have no chance to visit many places in Xinjiang. If I can, I hope I can experience Xinjiang with my friends and record the unique four seasons in Xinjiang by our point of view.

Chinese Braised Pork in Brown Sauce

- 500 grams of pork belly.
- 50 grams of sugar.
- 20 grams of dark soy sauce.
- 2 grams of salt.
- 50 grams of yellow rice wine.
- Gingers and scallions.



HAPPY

1. Blanching: cut the pork into small pieces, put cold water in the pot, put the small pieces of pork into the medium-sized pot, boil it for 2 minutes, remove the meat and rinse.

2. Put oil in a pan, add sliced ginger and garlic cloves to stir-fry the fragrance and stir-fry the pork until the pork is scorched yellow, about 8 minutes. (Important), pour in the excess oil (can be used to stir-fry vegetarian dishes very fragrant).

3. Pour in rice wine, soy sauce, granulated sugar, stir well and add shallot. Add water with pork belly, about 1000ml, boil over high heat, cover the pot and simmer over medium heat for 30 minutes. Be sure to open the lid to ventilate in a big fire, and then turn to a small fire. Make sure the pot is in a boiling state so that the braised meat can be stewed. You can adjust the time according to the situation of your own pot, and continue to stew until it is well done and don't overcook it.

4. Remove scallions and gingers, add salt, and cover over high heat for about 10 minutes. (when you collect the juice, you have to look at the pot and stir-fry it from time to time to prevent it from sticking to the pan. Just a little soup will do.)



Crab Fishing in Houston

Peiyuan Song



Photo of a blue crab in a container by Matt McClain, sourced from The Washington Post.

Because my brother was in college in Houston, I basically spent over a month in Houston every summer before COVID-19 came along. During this one month vacation, I enjoyed my daily life like an American resident and tried what I had never done before. In the summer of 2019, my brother suggested to me that we go crab fishing on the beaches around Houston. Fishing for crabs, this word is a new word to me, I thought we might use a big net or fishing rod to catch crabs. But until the day of the crab fishing, the tools I used were unexpected. A chicken leg, a piece of string, a small fishing net, and a pair of shorts that won't get wet in the sea are all you need to get started.

I tied the root of the chicken leg with a rope, and then took the chicken leg into the sea where the water depth is about the middle of the thigh, because this is generally the area where the crabs move. Then put the chicken legs on the bottom of the water and wait, but it should be noted that the chicken legs should be far away from people, otherwise they may be injured by crabs. Then began to wait, when the crabs on the bottom of the sea will be attracted by the taste of chicken legs. Generally, when the thread in the hand feels dragged, it means that a crab has been hooked, but at this time, it is not possible to lift the chicken leg directly out of the water, because the crab may escape, and it should be allowed to eat a

few more bites. Crab fished out. This is a complete crab fishing process. Maybe there are usually many people here to fish for crabs. The crabs also know that you can eat in this area, so there are a lot of crabs caught that day, about 17 crabs.

And the crabs on the Houston beach are very different from the ones I've seen in Asia, even though they're in the swimming crab category (*Portunus*). The Houston crab has blue edges compared to the grey body of the common crab and is larger than the Asian swimming crab. This crab is called blue crab, and it is a native of the Atlantic coast of the United States. When the crabbing is over in the evening, it's time to enjoy the fruits of the day's work. Using this very fresh crab to cook is the easiest: just wash the crab into the pot, put a spoonful of salt and some ginger slices, fire and boil for more than 10 minutes, a pot of delicious crab out of the pot. The meat of each crab is very plump, whether in the leg or in the shell, without any dipping, the crab meat is very delicious, with a light sweet taste. Crab roe has a bright yellow color, which makes it look more appetizing than the dark yellow of the crab bought in the supermarket.

Recommendation of Special Dishes in Chongqing

Yuqin Hu

肥肠鸡
Chicken & tripe

Main material: Chicken
+ Tripe
It tastes spicy and salty. The large intestine inside is very clean after many times of cleaning. The meat quality of chicken is very good.
There are also hand-made long noodles, potatoes, taro, kelp and other side dishes.



There is a special requirement of the store that it will not add food to the pot after serving because heating will destroy the original taste.



牛肉火锅

beef soup pot

2

The main ingredients are beef and cabbage, which is a kind of eating method similar to hot pot. It looks spicy, but it mainly has the smell of pepper. The beef is very delicious.



My favorite one



尖椒兔



How can rabbits be so cute and delicious?!



The main materials are pepper, Chinese prickly ash and rabbit meat.



Rabbit with Hot peppers

The rabbit meat of this dish is very q-shaped and tastes very spicy. It is suggested to go with soup or drink. (it's not recommended for people with a sensitive stomach, but I like the taste so much that I have to eat it even if I have a stomachache.)

How to Create a Poem

Poems

Should be written on a special day

The weather is sunny or rainy

Or it was snowing

Afternoon

Wrapped in a blanket sitting at the window

Keep a cup of tea or coffee by your side

Look out the window,

Hang out for a while

Observe the changing shape of clouds in the sky

Or listen to the sound

Of dense rain falling on the glass and soil

Also, you can see

How the neighbor's children are making snowmen

Then turn off the computer

Holding a pen and a blank paper

Brew emotions

Ready to create

Ariel Bai

Home Poem

Yuer Lan

If home has a color
I think it should be yellow
like the garden strewn with Osmanthus
like the glow of a shiny linoleum umbrella
like the crispy while greaseproof paper soaked by doughnut
if home has a sound
I think it should be melodious
like a tree of birds singing
like melodious sound of erhu
like laughters from the children
if home has a taste
I think it should be fragrant
like the fresh grass in spring
like the aromas of summer flowers
like the sweet of autumn fruits
if only
I can still go back to my home which i miss day and night



Photo of orange flowers by Di Né, sourced from Unsplash.



Spring



White in winter,
 Hiding everything.
 New Year has been a while,
 But spring doesn't show.
 Now it's April,
 But it snowed three times in a row.
 The child looked out the window,
 Only trunk and soil.
 Wind hit his face,
 The light in eyes extinct.
 Suddenly,
 Something is chirping outside,
 Looking for the voice in a withered land.
 A bird with winter jasmine,
 Stubborn blooming in the wild wind.
 Don't worry, kid.
 Winter is gone,
 Spring will come.



Picture retrieved from <https://xw.qq.com/cmsid/20210329A04UYL00?f=newdc>

Early Morning Poem

Jiayi Liu

“Tick tock”

Raindrops fall

Birds began to chirp in the trees

The city is already functioning in the early morning

Vehicles cut through the watery roads causing ripples

The sun shines brightly through the glass windows

Busy people bring noise and bustle

Alarm clock goes off

“Ring ring.”



To Wanderer

Slow down, at the end of the day

Enjoy the sunset on your way

Spreading, shrouding, falling

It heralds the approach of night, waiting

Maybe you will be afraid of the dark and

frustrated

Maybe you will be disappointed for there is no

more light

☆ *it will come*

hope is always there, even if a little late

After a brief night, the dawn will finally appear

It is the beginning of being yourself again, to be

your own life painter



Crystal . Xie



Rutgers English Language Institute (RELI)

The Rutgers English Language Institute (RELI) supports multilingual English language learners in all stages of their academic careers: pre-undergraduate, undergraduate, graduate, and professional. We strive to create a community of university partners by fostering cross-cultural and cross-linguistic programming across Schools and Programs, contributing to Rutgers University's efforts to become a truly global institution.

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