

There are very few western trained lawyers with any genuine understanding of Chinese law, history and culture and by studying at Beida, one can begin to gain an understanding of China's past and to learn about the development of law and the increasingly important role that law will play in shaping China's future. To those considering doing the exchange at Peking University, I wholeheartedly recommend the course to you and wish you all much success in the future.

Established in 1898 as the oldest law school in China, Peking University enjoys the reputation of being the number one university in a country of 1.3 billion people. In the unprecedented process of globalization, Chinese law becomes a necessary knowledge and instrument for those who have business, cultural, academic and political encounters with China. To meet the increasing demand for understanding Chinese legal system. The curriculum at Beida covers the major fields of Chinese law. The program offers both unique insights in Chinese legal system and exciting experience in China. The best way of studying the legal system of a foreign country is to stay and live in the society while studying the rules and legal operations in that society. Therefore, this LL.M. Program does not only provide all courses and materials in English, but also the unique opportunity to get insight views of Chinese legal system and the society through close contacts with Chinese students, legal professionals and common people.

Many of the teachers there have lived and studied overseas, so they had a good understanding of what I wanted to get out of my time at Beijing. They were also very helpful and generous with their time. Moreover, classmates from many different countries and backgrounds formed a diverse and cosmopolitan study body within a supportive environment. One of the many advantages I gained during my time there was the new friendships and professional

contacts I made. The exchange program has not only opened many professional doors for me, perhaps more importantly it has resulted in binding friendships and relationships that I truly value and which I am sure will continue to grow and deepen over the rest of my life. The exchange program has been invaluable both in terms of providing a solid foundation in Chinese law, but also in developing a network of leading Chinese academics and practitioners that I can call upon to discuss issues of Chinese law when I need to. Besides the obvious academic benefits of the program, spending time in Beijing provides one with the opportunity to learn more about China's history, culture and its people. Trying to develop an understanding of Chinese law without the necessary context provided by these other fundamental aspects of Chinese society would be almost impossible; such context can really only be understood and appreciated by spending time in China.

The philosophy behind the content of the program is two-fold. First, it conveys some of the underlying cultural and social underpinnings of the Chinese legal system. Subjects such as Chinese Judicial Systems and General Information of China explore Chinese culture through a legal lens. Second, the program delivers knowledge about the modern Chinese commercial legal regime through subjects like Company Law, Civil Law, Civil and Commercial Dispute Resolution and Intellectual Property. The teaching faculties have excellent backgrounds in academic research and teaching, with most having experience at some of the world's other leading universities such as the law schools at Harvard, Oxford, Yale, Cambridge and Berkeley. The faculty possess a deep understanding of both Western and Chinese legal cultures and are well prepared to lead discussion about not only China's legal system but of legal systems around the world. Class size is also intentionally restricted to no more than twenty with the expectation

that faculty and students engage in spirited and active interaction. We wish to give our students every opportunity to share with China's top legal minds in a very small group environment.

Study Abroad Reflection

In the Fall of 2011 I participated in the UC Hastings-Beijing University Law School Exchange Program. I departed for Beijing from San Francisco in mid-August and lived and studied in Beijing for four months until the end of December. While at Beijing University, also known as *Beida*, I received instruction in several fields of Chinese law from a number of extremely accomplished and well respected Chinese legal scholars. The language of instruction was English. The classes that we took largely mirrored the Chinese domestic equivalent of an American 1L course load. The subjects of study included Constitutional Law, Administrative Law, Civil Law, Company Law, and Criminal Law. I was also fortunate to get Beida to agree to allow me to take a language course in Mandarin Chinese . This turned out to be an invaluable tool for helping me to improve the quality of my written and spoken Chinese while in Beijing.

The students in the Beida international legal exchange program represented a diverse array of nationalities. We studied alongside law students and legal professionals from Canada, Japan, France, Germany, Korea, the UK, and more. Indeed, the diverse and individually accomplished pool of fellow students that we were introduced to ended up being one of the most enriching aspects of the entire experience.

It was a very special thing to be able to spend time studying at Beijing University. The institution is the oldest of its kind in China and the country's most prestigious academic institution by far. Since its founding it has played a considerable role in the course of recent Chinese history and has produced a number of major historical and national figures. The Beijing University Law School is a font of pioneering and often iconoclastic legal scholarship and a number of the professors we had the opportunity to study under are deeply involved, at a national

level, in the wave of legal reform that China is currently undergoing. The name *Beida* appears to carry considerable weight among the Chinese people. It is the ultimate academic destination for the ambitious parents of Chinese students all over the country. Association with Beijing University, or the equally prestigious neighboring Tsinghua University, carries enormous cache within professional and academic circles in China.

The city of Beijing is absolutely exploding in size and density. The already considerable subway system is in the process of doubling. The roads and highways teem with millions of careening automobiles and gasoline powered scooters. Construction is a twenty-four hour a day enterprise and the whole city seems to vibrate a rolling boil of economic activity. Whole sections of the city are leveled and rebuilt in record time; it is constantly reinventing itself. At the same time the city of Beijing is literally choking under a nearly unfathomable miasma of corrosive smog that blocks the sun and the sky, occasionally shuts down the highways and airports, deposits a layer of soot on every surface and plagues the health and wellbeing of the people. The seemingly unlimited destructive potential of the human civilization has never been on greater display than in the urban centers of modern China. The city of Beijing is one of the great epicenters of human activity in the modern world, and it is simultaneously fascinating and terrifying in its proportions.

Regarding my overall impressions of the UC Hastings-Beijing University Legal Exchange Program—The Chinese certainly run their universities and their law schools differently than we do here. Even at their top university it frequently seemed like elements of the program were somewhat haphazardly thrown together at the last second. The quality of the instruction was good and the professors are a great research, especially in a one-on-one setting. But they were also occasionally held back by a fluency in the English language that sometimes

made it difficult for them to be as engaging as were are used to here at Hastings. Altogether I am happy with my choice to participate in this program. I learned about China, about Beijing, about their legal system, their language and their people and I had a great experience as well.

Fall 2011

Study Abroad Experience

I spent the Fall 2011 semester at Beida. For the most part, it was a positive experience and I am very grateful to have been given the opportunity to study abroad in China, however, there were a few aspects of the program itself and Beijing in general that detracted from the overall experience.

Generally, Beida's classes and professors were pretty good. Many of the professors in the program are very well respected within their fields and are exceptional teachers. In particular, the Chinese Company Law, Administrative Law, and Criminal Law/Criminal Procedure Law professors were excellent, and the Chinese Constitutional Law and Civil Law professors were not bad either. The classes were informative, well structured, and I learned a great deal about many subjects that I am genuinely interested in. The class schedule was also well designed to give us ample opportunity to study and travel.

The administration, however, was so disorganized that it severely diminished my perceived value of the program. And while I was warned about this to a degree prior to going to Beijing, I felt that the warning I received was inadequate in relation to the level of disorganization. The administration was generally unhelpful, resulting in countless hours wasted running around trying to register for and find classes, a process that by now, after years of providing this Exchange/LLM program, should not have been the case. All field trips organized by the administration, including a trip to a law firm, a park and a customs inspection bureau in Beijing, were put together in a haphazard way with (seemingly) little effort on the part of the school, almost as if the administration really did not care about how the students perceived the program or what the students learned from the experience. Worst of all, apparently, there were

many speakers that came to PKU Law School to give presentations and talks throughout the semester that the administration did not feel was noteworthy enough to inform the Exchange / LLM students about. All of this was truly disappointing, not only to myself, but to most of the other students in the program as well.

Beijing is also not the most pleasant of cities in China. While I had been there in years past and was prepared for the sprawl, I was unprepared for the depressing effect that the pollution, which has gotten so bad recently that it felt almost toxic, would have on me. That being said, I did manage to enjoy most of my time in Beijing and am grateful for the opportunity I was given to focus my studies in an area of law that I hope to practice in and be in a position to improve my Chinese language abilities during a semester in law school, as well as meet and develop connections with potential future colleagues that share my interests and career goals.

I learned a great deal during my semester in China, and while much of what I described above as my “experience” may sound rather negative, and I certainly could have benefited from more preparation of what to expect, I did find the semester abroad to be a positive experience in many ways.