

I studied abroad at Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan. During my spring semester abroad, I took three classes, including Intensive Japanese, Japanese Popular Culture, and Race, Gender, & Class in Japanese Society. As a biology major, there were little or no natural science courses to take, so I chose to take various liberal arts courses. Most English taught courses at Sophia consist of a mix of Japanese and international students from all over the world, creating a unique and diverse environment for academic discourse. The classes are usually less rigorous relative to Boston College, however the Intensive Japanese course series, compared to the regular set of Japanese courses, is a very intense eight-credit course where students take classes for three hours every day followed by a large load of coursework and projects. This course is an effective way of learning Japanese quickly, however it comes at the cost of reduced time for exploring the beautiful city and culture that Japan has to offer. Due to the intensity of this course, along with Boston College's sixteen-credit requirement, there is very little time to do research, internships, or part-time jobs while studying abroad. Thus, depending on the priorities of the student, the Intensive Japanese courses may or may not be an optimal choice as a language course. However, the course definitely brings massive improvement in all aspects of Japanese language fluency.

In terms of extracurricular activities, I participated in several as a path to get to know more Japanese students, as it can be very convenient and tempting to quickly befriend other English-speaking international students when arriving at Sophia University. Although this is definitely not bad, students should strive for a balance. I participated in English-Japanese exchange programs, where international and Japanese students have the opportunity to learn

about each other, and several hiking and adventure clubs, which provided plenty of opportunities to explore local areas.

As an abroad student, the immersion experience itself was absolutely amazing. I lived in a traditional Japanese-style dormitory of almost all Japanese students, and conversed with locals on a daily basis as I lived in central Tokyo. The Japanese are extremely kind and very willing to accommodate for others. Furthermore, the country itself is full of beautiful architecture and landscapes, setting it apart from the US. Japanese culture and tradition is extremely interesting, and those who choose to study in Japan will definitely not return to Boston College empty handed.

The goal of the Fung program is “to help students develop as well-rounded, intercultural-competent, and globally conscious citizens,” and Japan has definitely given me such an experience. I believe mutual understanding between different cultures and peoples is the gateway to creating a more cohesive global community devoid of hate. By immersing ourselves in new cultures and demonstrating a willingness to learn, we become more open-minded and conscious individuals. Such mindset is also needed to become a better leader, as open-mindedness is necessary to better understand one’s environment and make proper decisions. After my abroad experience, I have considered pursuing further studies in Japan in order to continue my efforts in creating a mutual understanding between cultures. Although my future professional plans are not set, I see potential in searching for new options in Japan as well because of the positive experience of my time abroad.



This is a picture of me standing in front of a 1:1 size Gundam at Diver City in Odaiba, Tokyo. I am a big Gundam fan, and seeing this monument has been one of my dreams for a long time!