American Values:

An EFL Course Adapted from *Explorations in American Culture*

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*\*This teaching material has taken excerpts from several articles pertaining to culture in general and specifically to American culture and adapted them for use in an English as a Foreign Language context. All citations can be found below.*

Sources Used for this Material:

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### Lesson 1: What is culture?

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. What is culture?
   1. Brainstorm a list of concepts/ideas/things that make up culture.
2. List two cultural values which are important to you. Do these values reflect those of your native culture? Why or why not?

3. How does culture impact society? The individual?

4. Is culture a good thing? A bad thing? Or just a thing? Explain your answer.

5. Is it possible to not have a culture? What would that look like?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary** | **Definition/Notes** |
| Interrelate |  |
| Collective |  |
| Programming |  |
| Distinguish |  |
| Category |  |
| Attitudes |  |
| Generation |  |
| Fuzzy |  |
| Assumptions |  |
| Orientations |  |
| Policies |  |
| Conventions |  |
| Interpret |  |
| Ideology |  |
| Weep |  |

**Text**

Look at the following definitions of and quotes about culture. Consider the characteristics of culture that they each draw attention to:

Quote #1:

All objects, all phases of culture are alive. They have voices. They speak of their history and interrelatedness. And they are all talking at once! --Camille Paglia

Quote #2

‘[Culture] is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.’ --Hofstede

Quote #3

“You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them.”

-- Ray Bradbury

Quote #4

“We seldom realize, for example that our most private thoughts and emotions are not actually our own. For we think in terms of languages and images which we did not invent, but which were given to us by our society.” -- Alan W. Watts

Quote #5

“Individual cultures and ideologies have their appropriate uses but none of them erase or replace the universal experiences, like love and weeping and laughter, common to all human beings.”

--Aberjhani

Quote #6

Culture is ‘... the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.’ --Matsumoto

Quote #7

‘Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour.’ -- Spencer-Oatey

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. Do you know any other quotes about culture?
2. After reading the above quotes, does your definition of culture change? If so, how does it change? If it doesn’t change, why doesn’t it change?
3. Do all of the quotes have a positive view of culture? If not, which ones do not see culture as a positive thing?
4. Why is culture so hard to define?
5. What do people mean by “losing a culture”? Can one really lose a culture? What does that look like?

**Compare and Contrast**

\*take five minutes and brainstorm concepts/ideas/values that belong to Chinese, American and both cultures.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Chinese Culture** | **Both Cultures** | **American Culture** |
|  |  |  |

**Expansion**

Debate:

Position A: Learning about other cultures is not necessary for a language class.

Position B: Learning about other cultures is necessary for a language class.

**Homework (Choose one of the assignments below)**

1. Imagine you are a teacher at language school and you are trying to convince the principal to add a culture class to the curriculum. Write a page argument detailing why a culture class is necessary for the language students.
2. Write a one-page paper either in support for or against the following statement:

“The world would be a better place if there was one world culture”

### Lesson 2: Personal Control Over the Environment

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. Are there some things that you think humans are simply incapable of achieving? In other words, not so long ago, many people would have said Man will never fly. Explain.
2. Should Man attempt to control/alter mother nature? Can you think of some examples of this happening? What were the results?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary** | **Definition/Notes** |
| Fate |  |
| primitive |  |
| naive |  |
| fatalistic |  |
| Superstitious |  |
| take initiative |  |
| potentially |  |
| first and foremost |  |
| compelled |  |

**Text**

Americans no longer believe in the power of Fate, and they have come to look at people who do as being backward, primitive, or hopelessly naive. To be called "fatalistic" is one of the worst criticisms one can receive in the American context; to an American it means one is superstitious and lazy, unwilling to take initiative in bringing about improvements.

In the United States people consider it normal and right that Man should control Nature, rather than the other way around. More specifically, people believe every single individual should have control over whatever in the environment might potentially affect him or her. The problems of one's life are not seen as having resulted from bad luck as much as having come from one's laziness in pursuing a better life. Furthermore, it is considered normal that anyone should look out for his or her own self-interests first and foremost.

Most Americans find it impossible to accept that there are some things which lie beyond the power of humans to achieve. And Americans have literally gone to the moon because they refused to accept earthly limitations.

Americans seem to be challenged, even compelled, to do by one means or another (and often at great cost) what seven-eighths of the world is certain cannot be done.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. What does this line mean: "And Americans have literally gone to the moon because they refused to accept earthly limitations"? Do you agree? Explain.
2. Are you fatalistic? Is Chinese society, generally speaking, fatalistic?
3. Can you think of examples or situations in which fatalism would be either good or bad?
4. How much of your life do you feel you have the power to control? What aspects do you think are out of your control?
5. Do you think poor people in China are poor because of bad luck or because of laziness? Explain. What about in the U.S.?
6. How do you feel about people who are always looking out for their own self-interests? Can you think of instances in which doing so is either beneficial or harmful?

**Compare and Contrast**

\*According to the above text, how do you think an American would explain the results of the following incidents/situations. How would you explain the results?

1. A tornado destroys a small village.
2. A man is late to a meeting because if a traffic jam and as a result is fired.
3. A woman helps a stranger who has dropped his things and as a result the stranger rewards her with $1,000,000 dollars.
4. A child was playing in a lake, which had no swimming signs posted, and was attacked by an alligator.
5. An injured veteran of the Iraq war begs for money because he cannot find employer who will hirer a cripple.

**Homework**

1. In one page, summarize a news story in which man attempted to conquer/control nature.

### Lesson 3: Change

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. Rank these values in the order of the importance that they would play in building a "perfect" society: stability, continuity, change, tradition, improvement, and progress.
2. Do you agree with the following statement: "any change is good change"?
3. What is the biggest change that you have made in your life? How did you feel after you made the change?
4. Do you know people who fear change? Why do you think they fear it?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary** | **Definition/Notes** |
| indisputably |  |
| disruptive |  |
| stability |  |
| heritage |  |
| irrelevant |  |

**Text**

In the American mind, change is seen as an indisputably good condition. Change is strongly linked to development, improvement, progress, and growth.

Many older, more traditional cultures consider change as a disruptive force, to be avoided if at all possible. Instead of change, such societies value stability, continuity, tradition, and a rich and ancient heritage – none of which are considered very important in the United States.

These first two values – the belief that we can do anything and the belief that any change is good – together with an American belief in the virtue of hard work and the belief that each individual has a responsibility to do the best he or she can do have helped Americans achieve some great accomplishments. So, whether these beliefs are “true” is really irrelevant; and what is important is that Americans have considered them to be true and have acted as if they were, thus, in effect, causing them to happen.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. There are hundreds of American songs with the word change in the title. Can you think of any Chinese songs that focus on change? Are they positive or negative songs?
2. Do you think Chinese society values change? Why or why not?
3. Do you believe that all people have the potential to be equal through the virtue of hard work?
4. Why is change associated with development? Can you have development without change?
5. Is there such a thing as too much change?

**Compare and Contrast**

**\***brainstorm a list of positive effects of change and conservation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Values of Change** | **Values of Conservation** |
|  |  |

**Expansion**

Debate:

In Modern China, the word "development" can be found almost anywhere and following various adjectives. For example, scientific development, economic development, social development, etc. There is no doubt that China has developed rapidly in recent years, but not all people agree that development and change didn't come without its negative consequences.

Position A: Argue for the positive aspects/results of change and development.

Position B: Argue that change and development has led to negative results.

**Homework**

1. Write one page about a change in either your life or in China that resulted in a positive outcome. Be sure to highlight the reasons that it was a positive outcome.
2. Write one page about a change in either your life or in China that resulted in a negative outcome. Be sure to highlight the reasons that it was a negative outcome.

### Lesson 4: Time and its Control

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. Do you manage time or does time manage you? What’s the difference?
2. Does time flow or do we flow through it? What’s the difference?
3. How do you feel about time? Does it go by slowly or quickly? Explain.
4. Do you feel a strong urge to control your own time?
5. What are some verbs in English that can be used to modify the word time? For example, "take" time. How many can you think of in Chinese?
6. Do you think there are any differences in the way Chinese and Americans view time? Explain.

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary** | **Definition/Notes** |
| predetermined |  |
| interpersonal |  |
| abruptly |  |
| absolutely |  |
| detained |  |
| expending |  |
| proverbs |  |
| delayed gratification |  |

**Text**

Time is, for the average Americans, of utmost importance. To the foreign visitor, Americans seem to be more concerned with getting things accomplished on time (according to a predetermined schedule) than they are with developing deep interpersonal relationships. Schedules, for the American, are meant to be planned and then followed in the smallest detail.

It may seem to you that most Americans are completely controlled by the little machines they wear on their wrists, cutting their discussions off abruptly to make it to their next appointment on time. Americans’ language is filled with references to time, giving a clear indication of how much it is valued. Time is something to be “on,” to be “kept,” “filled,” “saved,” “used,” “spent,” “wasted,” “lost,” gained,” “planned,” “given,” “made the most of,” even “killed.”

The international visitor soon learns that it is considered very rude to be late--even by 10 minutes--for an appointment in the United States. Whenever it is absolutely impossible to be on time, you should phone ahead and tell the person you gave been unavoidably detained and will be a half hour – or whatever – late.

Time is so valued in America, because by considering time to be important, one can clearly accomplish more than if one “wastes” time and does not keep busy every minute. This philosophy has proven its worth. It has enabled Americans to be extremely productive, and productivity itself is highly valued in the United States. Many American proverbs stress the value in guarding our time, using it wisely, setting and working toward specific goals, and even expending our time and energy today so that the fruits of our labor may be enjoyed at a later time. (This latter concept is called “delayed gratification”.)

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. How do you feel about the American concept of time described above?
2. After reading the examples of verbs in English to modify time, can you think of some examples in which there is no counterpart in Chinese.
3. What are the potential negative consequences of being so concerned with time?
4. Nietzsche raises the following question: If all moments of time recurred eternally, so that you would relive them again and again, forever, would you see this as a joyful thing or as the greatest weight? If this were true, how would you change the way you are living your life right now, what you plan to do with it tomorrow? Would you accept what you are doing if you had to do it again and again forever?

**Expansion**

"Anthropologists list the toughest things to cope with in a foreign land. Second only to language is the way we deal with time"--Lienhard. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

**Homework**

1. Read the following article. Bring two questions about the article to be discussed at the beginning of the next class.

Clipped already: http://www.businessinsider.com/how-different-cultures-understand-time-2014-5

### Lesson 5: Equality

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. Place these three terms in the order of importance: authority, status, equality. Justify your ranking.
2. If you invited a foreign guest over to your house for dinner would you treat them differently (better/worse) than if you had invited a Chinese guest over to your house? If so, how would it be different? If not, why not?
3. Do you feel like equality exists in the world?
4. What does it mean to be treated equally?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary** | **Definition/Notes** |
| cherish |  |
| status |  |
| rank |  |
| secular |  |
| assertion |  |
| virtually |  |
| civic |  |
| authority |  |
| class |  |
| sense of security |  |
| reassuring |  |
| insulted |  |
| aversion |  |
| deferential |  |
| conversely |  |
| newcomers |  |
| personal indignity |  |

**Text**

Equality is, for Americans, one of their most cherished values. This concept is so important for Americans that they have even given it a religious basis. They say all people have been “created equal.” Most Americans believe that God views all humans alike without regard to intelligence, physical condition, economic status or rank. In secular terms this belief is translated into the assertion that all people have an equal opportunity to succeed in life. Americans differ in opinion about how to make this ideal into a reality. Yet, virtually all agree that equality is an important civic and social goal.

The equality concept often makes Americans seem strange to foreign visitors since seven-eighths of the world feels quite differently. To most of the rest of the world rank and status and authority are seen as much more desirable considerations – even if they personally happen to find themselves near the bottom of the social order. Class and authority seem to give people in those other societies a sense of security and certainty. People outside the United States consider it reassuring to know from birth, who they are and where they fit into the complex system called “society.”

Many highly placed foreign visitors to the United States are insulted by the way they are treated by service personnel (such as waiters in restaurants, clerks in stores or hotels, taxi drivers, etc).

Americans have an aversion to treating people of high position in a deferential manner, and conversely, often treat lower class people as if they were very important. Newcomers to the United States should realize that no insult or personal indignity is intended by this lack of deference to rank or position in American society. A foreigner should be prepared to be considered “just like anybody else” while in the country.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. Do you think you would prefer to be treated specially when you arrive in the US or just like everybody else? Explain your answer.
2. Do you think that certain people should be treated differently from others? Explain.
3. Do you treat service workers (taxi drivers, waiters, store clerks, etc) differently from other people?
4. Do you think people are really treated equally in America? What about in China? Explain.

**Compare and Contrast**

\*Work with a partner to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of an equal society and a society that’s treatment is socially stratified.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Advantages | Disadvantages |
| Equal Society |  |  |
| Socially stratified treatment |  |  |

**Expansion**

\*Fill out the following survey. Then discuss your scores with your partner.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Somewhat Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Somewhat Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. It is appropriate to joke around with your teacher. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. You have no problem engaging in small talk with the attendant at the local convenient store. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. If you earn more than someone you feel as if you should pay for the meal each time you go out to eat with that person. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. You would greet the Mayor of the city differently than your neighbor’s cousin. |  |  |  |  |  |

**Homework**

1. Record your daily interactions with people over the next day. Write a report describing who you encountered and how you interacted with the person.

### Lesson 6: Individualism and Privacy

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. Which term do you think better describes you: individualistic or cooperative?

2. Is privacy important in your life? Do you often get privacy?

3. Do you think the word privacy in Chinese is a positive, neutral, or negative term?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary** | **Definition/Notes** |
| Renaissance |  |
| marvelously |  |
| precious |  |
| homogeneous |  |
| privacy |  |
| ultimately |  |
| vote |  |
| political parties |  |
| election |  |

**Text**

The individualism that has been developed in the Western world from the Renaissance onward, beginning in the late 15th century, has taken its most exaggerated form in the 20th century United States. Here, each individual is seen as completely and marvelously unique, that is, totally different from all other individuals and, therefore, particularly precious and wonderful.

Americans think they are more individualistic in their thoughts and actions than, in fact, they really are. They resist being thought of as representatives of a homogeneous group, whatever the group. They may, and do, join groups – in fact many groups – but somehow believe they are just a little different, just a little unique, just a little special, from other members of the same group. Furthermore, they tend to leave groups as readily as they enter them.

Privacy, the ultimate result of individualism, is perhaps even more difficult for the foreigner to comprehend. The word “privacy” does not even exist in many non-Western languages. If it does, it is likely to have a strongly negative connotation, suggesting loneliness or forced isolation from the group. In the United States, privacy is not only seen as a very positive condition, but is also viewed as a requirement which all humans would find equally necessary, desirable and satisfying. It is not uncommon for Americans to say – and to believe – “if I don’t have at least half an hour a day all to myself, I would go stark raving mad!”

Individualism, as it exists in the United States, does mean that you will find a much greater variety of opinions (along with the absolute freedom to express those opinions anywhere and anytime) in this country. Yet, in spite of this wide range of personal opinion, almost all Americans will ultimately vote for one of the two major political parties in the next election. That is what is meant by the earlier statement that Americans take pride in claiming more individualism than, in fact, they actually have.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. What does it mean to be an individual?
2. What does it mean to belong to a group?
   1. What responsibilities comes with belonging to a group?
3. Do you see yourself first and foremost as an individual or as just one member of a larger group? Explain your answer.
4. Is there such a thing as too much privacy?
5. The above reading says Americans take pride in claiming more individualism than they actually have. Can you think of something that Chinese people take pride in when maybe they shouldn’t?

**Compare and Contrast**

Compare and contrasts the benefits and drawbacks of individualistic and collectivistic societies.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Individualistic | Collectivistic |
| Benefits |  |  |
| Drawbacks |  |  |

**Expansion**

1. Self-Reflection:
   1. Think about the last three days.
   2. Make a list of the things that you did in each of the last three days.
   3. Now mark each thing as either individualistic or collectivist.
   4. Work with a partner to compare your lists and explain your findings.
   5. Share your findings with the class.

**Homework**

1. Write one page comparing and contrasting the benefits and drawbacks of individualistic societies.

### Lesson 7: Self-Help Concept

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. Do you know what "rags to riches" means?
   1. Are there any rags to riches stories in your culture?
2. Do you think Chinese people firmly believe in the possibility improving social status and wealth through hard work and effort? Why or why not?
3. Do you think it's easy to move up the social ladder in China? Do you think it was easier or more difficult in the past?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary** | **Definition/Notes** |
| whatsoever |  |
| social system |  |
| relatively |  |
| social ladder |  |
| composite |  |
| prefix |  |
| self-conscious |  |
| self-denial |  |
| self-esteem |  |
| self-restraint |  |
| self-sacrifice |  |
| equivalent |  |

**Text**

In the United States, a person can take credit only for what he or she has accomplished by himself or herself without any outside assistance. Americans get no credit whatsoever for having been born into a rich family (In the United States, that would be considered “an accident of birth”). Americans pride themselves in having been poor and, through their own sacrifice and hard work, having climbed the difficult ladder of success to whatever level they have achieved - all by themselves. The American social system has, of course, made it possible for Americans to move, relatively easily, up the social ladder, whereas this is impossible to do in many countries.

Take a look in an English-language dictionary at the composite words that have the word “self” as a prefix. In the average desk dictionary, there will be more than 100 such words, words like self-aware, self-confident, self-conscious, self-contented, self-control, self-criticism, self-deception, self-defeating, self-denial, self-discipline, self-esteem, self-expressions, self-importance, self-improvement, self-interest, self-reliance, self-respect, self-restraint, self-sacrifice--the list goes on and on. The equivalent of these words cannot be found in most other languages. This is perhaps the best indication of how seriously Americans take doing things for one’s self. The “self-made man or woman” is still very much the ideal in 20th century America.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. How many self- words can you think of in Chinese? Try to list them by translating them in English.
2. Do you think Chinese people take pride in being "self-made"?
3. Do you believe that hard work can overcome anything? Why or why not?
4. Do you know what plagiarism is? How do you feel about copying someone else and not giving them credit?
5. Nothing is original because it all has been done before. Do you agree with this statement?

**Compare and Contrast**

1. Compare and contrast the life of a poor person and a rich person.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Poor Person | Rich Person |
| Home Life |  |  |
| School Life |  |  |
| Social Life |  |  |
| Career |  |  |

**Expansion**

1. Look at the comparisons made above. Have a debate about whether or not a person can really “change their stars”.
   1. Person A: People are born into a social class and can only move up with luck.
   2. Person B: With hard work a person can be anything they want to be.

**Homework**

1. Write one page describing the purpose of high school. However, in the first half of the page write it from a rich students perspective, and or the second half write it from a poor kids perspective. If you think these perspectives are the same, write the second half explaining why you think they are the same.

### Lesson 8: Competition and Free Enterprise

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. Is competition good or bad? Explain your answer.
2. Do you think it’s fun to compete? Why?
3. Would you rather compete or cooperate with someone? Why?
4. Do you think the Chinese classroom is competitive? In what way?
5. Do you have any competitive friends? What are they competitive about?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary** | **Definition/Notes** |
| assert |  |
| fostered |  |
| U.S. Peace Corps |  |
| Third World |  |
| distressing |  |
| universal |  |
| peculiarly |  |
| free enterprise |  |
| evidence |  |
| fields |  |
| diverse |  |

**Text**

Americans believe that competition brings out the best in any individual. They assert that it challenges or forces each person to produce the very best possible. Consequently, the foreign visitor will see competition being fostered in the American home and in the American classroom, even on the youngest age levels. Very young children, for instance, are encouraged to answer questions for which their classmates do not know the answers.

You may find the competitive value disagreeable, especially if you come from a society which promotes cooperation rather than competition among individuals. But many U.S. Peace Corps volunteers teaching in Third World countries found the lack of competitiveness in a classroom situation equally distressing. They soon learned that what they had thought to be one of the universal human characteristics represented only a peculiarly American (or Western) value.

Americans, valuing competition, have devised an economic system to go with it – free enterprise. Americans feel very strongly that a highly competitive economy will bring out the best in its people and ultimately, that the society which fosters competition will progress most rapidly. If you look for it, you will see evidence in all areas – in fields as diverse as medicine, the arts, education, and sports – that free enterprise is the approach most often preferred in America.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. Do you think the free enterprise system works? Has it worked in China?
2. Do you think competition brings out the best in people? Explain.
3. Have you ever heard of the Peace Corps? Do you think they play a positive role in the world? Does China have a similar organization?
4. Is Chinese society and economy overly-competitive? Explain.

**Compare and Contrast**

1. Compare and contrast competition and cooperation in a school setting.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Competition | Cooperation |
| Benefits |  |  |
| Drawbacks |  |  |

**Expansion**

1. Look at what you wrote above. Do you think that these points apply to the following areas?
   1. Business
   2. Research
   3. Government

**Homework**

1. Read the article on the following website and write a one page summary.

http://www.helwyssocietyforum.com/?p=5647

### Lesson 9: Future Orientation

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. Do you think more about the past, present or the future? Explain your answer.
2. Do you think the future will be happier than the present? Why or why not?
3. Do you think the people around you, such as your parents, grandparents, friends and family are happy in their life right now? Or do they say that happiness will come in the future?
4. How much do you discuss historical events with your friends? Family?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary** | **Definition/Notes** |
| inevitably |  |
| devalue |  |
| unconscious |  |
| worthwhile |  |
| executing |  |
| futile |  |
| sinful |  |
| philosophical |  |

**Text**

Valuing the future, and the improvements Americans are sure the future will inevitably bring, means that they devalue the past and are, to a large extent, unconscious of the present. Even a happy present goes largely unnoticed because, happy as it may be, Americans have traditionally been hopeful that the future would bring even greater happiness. Almost all energy is directed toward realizing that better future. At best, the present condition is seen as preparatory to a later and greater event, which will eventually culminate in something even more worthwhile.

Since Americans have been taught to believe that Man, and not Fate, can and should be the one who controls the environment, this has made them very good at planning and executing short-term projects. This ability, in turn, has caused Americans to be invited to all corners of the earth to plan and achieve the miracles that their goal-setting can produce.

If you come from a culture where talking about or actively planning the future is felt to be a futile, perhaps even sinful, activity you will have not only philosophical problems with this very American characteristic but religious objections as well. Yet it is something you will have to learn to live with while you are here, for all around you Americans will be looking toward the future and what it will bring.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. How do you feel about looking forward to the future? Is looking forward to the future too much ever considered a bad thing?
2. Are there some things that should be planned and others that shouldn't? Explain.
3. What period of life do you think is the best--childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, or old age? Why? In your opinion, when do each of these periods begin and end?

**Compare and Contrast**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Value the Past | Value the Present | Value the Future |
| Characteristics |  |  |  |
| Positive Aspects |  |  |  |
| Negative Aspects |  |  |  |

**Expansion**

1. How might one’s orientation (past, present, future) impact their view of the following issues:
   1. Education
   2. Family
   3. Food
   4. Entertainment

**Homework**

1. Write one page comparing and contrasting the benefits and drawbacks of living in a future oriented society.

### Lesson 10: Action and Work Orientation

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. What percentage of one's life should be spent in leisure?
2. Americans say, "work hard, play hard." What do you think this statement means? Do you agree?
3. At what age does one need to work the most?
4. What do you think of people who get ahead without hard work?
5. Is it good to be a workaholic? Can you think of any other “aholic” words?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Vocabulary | Definition/Notes |
| waking life |  |
| leisure |  |
| workaholic |  |
| addicted |  |
| syndrome |  |
| corporations |  |

**Text**

“Don’t just stand there,” goes a typical bit of American advice, “do something!” This expression is normally used in a crisis situation, yet, in a sense, it describes most Americans’ entire waking life, where action – any action – is seen to be superior to inaction.

Americans routinely plan and schedule an extremely active day. Any relaxation must be limited in time, pre-planned, and aimed at “recreating” (as in the word “recreation”) their ability to work harder and more productively once the recreation is over. Americans believe leisure activities should assume a relatively small portion of one’s total life. People think that it is “sinful” to “waste one’s time,” to sit around doing nothing or just to “daydream.”

Such a “no nonsense” attitude toward life has created many people who have come to be known as “workaholics,” or people who are addicted to their work, who think constantly about their jobs and who are frustrated if they are kept away from them, even during their evening hours and weekends. When such a person finally takes time away from work to go on vacation, even the vacation will be carefully planned, very busy and active.

The workaholic syndrome, in turn, causes Americans to identify themselves wholly with their professions. The first question an American will generally ask another American when meeting them for the first time is related to his or her work: “What do you do?” “Where do you work?” or “Who (what company) are you with?” America may be one of the few countries in the world where it seems reasonable to speak about the “dignity of human labor,” meaning that doing hard physical labor is dignified and something to be proud of. In America, even presidents of corporations will engage in physical labor from time to time and in doing so, gain, rather than lose, respect from others for such action.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. What are some of the first questions Chinese people ask each other when meeting for the first time?
2. Do you think doing hard labor in China is a dignified occupation? Why or why not?
3. Would a president of a corporation in China ever perform physical labor with his employees? Why or why not?
4. Do you know any workaholics in your life?
5. How do people become workaholics?

**Compare and Contrast**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Work Oriented | Pleasure Oriented |
| Benefits |  |  |
| Drawbacks |  |  |

**Expansion**

1. Think about people in your life, are they more work oriented or pleasure oriented. Explain why you think they are one or the other.

**Homework**

1. Write a one-page story about the negative effects of a work oriented society.

### Lesson 11: Informality

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. Do you greet your friends and your teachers differently? If so, how is it different? If it’s the same, why is it the same?
2. In what situations would you dress up? In what situations would dressing up be silly?
3. What situations do you consider to be formal? Informal? Explain why they are formal or informal.

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Vocabulary | Definition/Notes |
| formal |  |
| informal |  |
| casual |  |
| symphony |  |
| superior |  |
| official |  |
| unsettling |  |
| compliment |  |
| insult |  |

**Text**

If you come from a more formal society, you will likely find Americans to be extremely informal and, you will probably feel, they are even disrespectful of those in authority. Americans are one of the most informal and casual people in the world, even when compared to their close relative – the Western European.

As one example of this informality, American bosses often urge their employees to call them by their first names and even feel uncomfortable if they are called by the title “Mr.” or “Mrs.”

Dress is another area where American informality will be most noticeable, perhaps even shocking. One can go to a symphony performance, for example, in any large American city nowadays and find some people in the audience dressed in blue jeans and short-sleeved shirts.

Informality is also apparent in Americans’ greetings. The more formal “How are you?” has largely been replaced with an informal “Hi.” This is as likely to be used to one’s superior as to one’s best friend.

If you are a highly placed official in your own country, you will probably, at first, find such informality to be very unsettling, even disrespectful. Americans, on the other hand, would consider such informality as a compliment! Certainly it is not intended as a personal insult, and you should not take it as such.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. Why do you think Americans are so informal? Do you think it has anything to do with the country's history?
2. Would you say the majority of your current life is in a formal or informal setting?
3. Can you think of some words in English which would be used in formal settings?
4. Do you think it is important to show deference to those in higher positions than yourself? Why or why not?

**Compare and Contrast**

Think about a time when the following places could be considered formal or informal.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Formal | Informal |
| Restaurant |  |  |
| Home |  |  |
| School |  |  |
| Concert |  |  |
| Park |  |  |

**Expansion**

1. Debate
   1. Person 1: You think being formal is never necessary.
   2. Person 2: You think there are certain times or situations that should be formal.

**Homework**

1. Think of an example of an event that could be both formal and informal. Describe how you would act different in each situation (formal vs informal). Be sure to illustrate how others are also acting according to the situation.

### Lesson 12: Directness, Openness and Honesty

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. How important is it to you to "save face?"
2. Would your friends consider you a blunt, or direct person?
3. How do Chinese people deliver bad news to others? Do you think it is similar or different in American culture?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary** | **Definition/Notes** |
| subtle |  |
| ritualistic |  |
| conveying |  |
| uncomplimentary |  |
| evaluations |  |
| bluntness |  |
| saving face |  |
| urge |  |
| insincere |  |
| hints |  |
| intermediary |  |
| manipulative |  |

**Text**

Many other countries have developed subtle, sometimes highly ritualistic, ways of informing other people of unpleasant information. Americans, however, have always preferred the most direct approach possible. They are likely to be completely honest in delivering their negative evaluations, and to do so publicly. If you come from a society that uses the indirect manner of conveying bad news or uncomplimentary evaluations, you will be shocked at American bluntness.

If you come from a country where saving face is important, be assured that Americans are not trying to make you lose face with their directness. It is important to realize that an American would not, in such cases, lose face. The burden of adjustment, in all such cases while you are in this country, will be on you. There is no way to soften the blow of such directness and openness if you are not used to it, except to inform you that the rules have changed while you are here. Indeed, Americans are trying to urge their fellow countrymen to become even more open and direct. The large number of “assertiveness” training courses that first appeared in the United States in the late 1970’s reflects such a commitment.

Americans consider anything other than the most direct and open approach to be “dishonest” and “insincere” and will quickly lose confidence in and distrust anyone who hints at what is intended rather than saying it outright. Anyone who, in the United States, chooses to use an intermediary to deliver the message will also be considered “manipulative” and “untrustworthy.”

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. Generally speaking, it is said that Chinese people use indirect modes of communication, whereas Americans are very direct in their communication. However, there are always exceptions to the rule. Can you think of examples in which Americans may be indirect and Chinese direct?

2. Some would argue that the U.S. is becoming less direct than in the past due to the "politically correct" atmosphere in society? Are there some topics that are politically correct in China?

3. Do you think being indirect equals being dishonest?

4. When was the last time you lost face? Do you think an American would lose face in a similar type of situation?

**Compare and Contrast**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Speak your Mind | Soften the Blow/ Avoid the topic | Why? |
| Your friend’s father has died. |  |  |  |
| You don’t like the you’re your friend prepared for you. |  |  |  |
| Your friends girlfriend/boyfriend is cheating. |  |  |  |
| Your friend made an English mistake |  |  |  |
| Someone owes you money |  |  |  |
| Your friend’s zipper is undone. |  |  |  |

**Expansion**

1. The above situations all involve your friend. Imagine that instead of your friend, you are talking to the people below, how do your answers change?
   1. Boss
   2. Teacher
   3. Parent
   4. Colleague
   5. Classmate

**Homework**

Read the following article and write a one-page summary.

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/americans-less-direct-business-than-usually-thought-tournier-%E5%B8%AD%E4%B9%90%E8%96%87

### Lesson 13: Practicality and Efficiency

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. Do you do things that are not practical?
2. Is there a thing as too efficient?
3. Do you think it's better to be efficient or perfect? What’s the difference?
4. Do you think theoretical knowledge or experience gained from knowledge is more important? What’s the difference?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Vocabulary | Definition/Notes |
| theoretically oriented |  |
| pragmatism |  |
| aesthetically |  |
| orientation |  |
| anthropology |  |
| belittling |  |
| subjective |  |
| rational |  |
| objective |  |
| assessments |  |
| sentimental |  |
| merits |  |
| trial-and-error |  |

**Text**

Americans have a reputation for being an extremely realistic, practical and efficient people. The practical consideration is likely to be given highest priority in making any important decision in the United States. Americans pride themselves in not being very philosophically or theoretically oriented. If Americans would even admit to having a philosophy, it would probably be that of pragmatism.

Will it make any money? Will it “pay its own way”? What can I gain from this activity? These are the kinds of questions that Americans are likely to ask in their practical pursuit, and not such questions as: Is it aesthetically pleasing? Will it be enjoyable? or Will it advance the cause of knowledge?

This practical, pragmatic orientation has caused Americans to contribute more inventions to the world than any other country in human history. The love of “practicality” has also caused Americans to view some professions more favorably than others. Management and economics, for example, are much more popular in the United States than philosophy or anthropology, and law and medicine are valued more than the arts.

Another way in which this favoring of the practical makes itself felt in the United States is a belittling of “emotional” and “subjective” evaluations in favor of “rational” and “objective” assessments. Americans try to avoid being “too sentimental” in making their decisions. They judge every situation “on its own merits.” The popular American “trial-and-error” approach to problem solving also reflects the practical approach. This problem-solving approach, actually invented in the United States, suggests listing several possible solutions to any given problem, then trying them out, one-by-one to see which would be most effective.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. When you do something, do you often ask yourself what you will gain from the activity or do you do it just because you or someone else thinks that you should be doing it?
2. When was the last time you used the "trial-and-error" approach to solve a problem?
3. How do you assess the value of something--in monetary terms of in some other unit of measure?

**Compare and Contrast**

1. Look at the following situations, how would one react rationally and emotionally to each one.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Rationally | Emotionally |
| Failing a test |  |  |
| Breaking up with a girlfriend or boyfriend |  |  |
| Receiving an award |  |  |
| Losing a job |  |  |
| Being invited out to part on a weekday. |  |  |

**Expansion**

\*Fill out the following survey. Then discuss your scores with your partner. Do you think your responses make you a more or less rational person? Why?

1. Strongly Agree
2. Somewhat Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Somewhat Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Things in my life are different than they should be. |  |  |  |  |  |
| People can make you upset. |  |  |  |  |  |
| I can’t stand certain things in my life. |  |  |  |  |  |
| I need to think well of myself before I can do certain things. |  |  |  |  |  |
| How I feel depends on how people treat me. |  |  |  |  |  |
| You can’t trust someone after they have violated your trust. |  |  |  |  |  |
| People need to be concerned about other people’s opinions. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If I do something good I should be rewarded. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If it feels right it must be right, if it feels wrong it must be wrong. |  |  |  |  |  |
| I must find order and predictability in life. |  |  |  |  |  |

**Homework**

1. Think about one of your family members. Is the family member more of a rational person or are they driven by their emotions? Write one page describing how you view this person. Be sure to provide examples.

### Lesson 14: Materialism/Acquisitiveness

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. What can you know about a person by looking at what he/she owns?
2. Do you know someone who defines themselves by their things?
3. Will you replace an object if it’s not broken? Give an example.
4. How are your shopping habits different from that of your parents?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Vocabulary | Definition/Notes |
| materialistic |  |
| industrious |  |
| interpersonal relationships |  |
| Consider |  |
| Intent |  |
| Priority |  |
| Obtain |  |
| Possessions |  |
| Innovation |  |

**Text**

Foreigners generally consider Americans much more materialistic than Americans are likely to consider themselves. Americans would like to think that their material objects are just the “natural benefits” which always result from hard work and serious intent – a reward, they think, which all people could enjoy were they as industrious and hardworking as Americans.

But, by any standard, Americans are materialistic. This means that they value and collect more material objects than most of the world’s people would ever dream possible to own. It also means they give a higher priority to obtaining, maintaining and protecting their material objects than they do in developing and enjoying interpersonal relationships with people.

The modern American typically owns:

􀀁 one or more color television sets

􀀁 a smart phone

􀀁 an electric hair dryer

􀀁 a laptop

􀀁 a clothes-washer and dryer

􀀁 a vacuum cleaner

􀀁 a powered lawn mower (for cutting grass)

􀀁 a refrigerator, a stove, and an oven

􀀁 one or more automobiles

Since Americans value newness and innovation, they sell or throw away their possessions frequently and replace them with newer ones. A car may be kept for only two or three years, a house for five or six before trading it in for another one.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. Are there any advantages for a society to be materialistic?
2. What makes a society materialistic?
3. Do you think you are materialistic? Why or why not?
4. What does the typical modern Chinese person own? How is that list different from the typical Chinese person 20 years ago? 30 years ago?
5. Is materialism a bad thing? Why or why not?

**Compare and Contrast**

1. The opposite of a materialism is idealism. Discuss with a partner how a materialistic and idealistic person would view the following things:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Materialistic | Idealistic |
| Grocery Shopping |  |  |
| Clothes |  |  |
| Furniture |  |  |
| Entertainment |  |  |
| Jewelry/Perfume/Cologne |  |  |
| Cell Phones |  |  |

**Expansion**

1. Imagine a society that reaches the apex of materialism, what would that look like? Work with a partner to describe all facets of society.

**Homework**

Read the article in the link below and write a one-page summary.

Clipped: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/15/psychology-materialism\_n\_4425982.html

### Lesson 15: Meeting new people: Do’s and Don’ts

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. What do you usually talk about when you first meet someone?
2. What are some things that you should usually not talk about with people you just met?
3. What are the do’s and don’ts of meeting new people in China? Are these do’s and dont’s different for different people? Explain your answer.
4. Can you guess the do’s and don’ts of meeting new people in the U.S.?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Vocabulary | Definition/Notes |
| stance |  |
| lukewarm |  |
| eager |  |
| exchange |  |
| appreciate |  |
| (have) common ground |  |
| hilarious |  |
| freak out |  |
| engage |  |
| reveal |  |
| tangential |  |
| trigger |  |
| shooting the breeze |  |

**Text: Small Talk**

**Have approachable body language.** If you want to make a person feel comfortable, the best thing to do is to have an "open stance" and to direct your body toward that person without being too forceful. Just make eye contact, don't cross your arms, and face your shoulders toward that person. This will make the person feel like you're giving him all of your attention and that you're not just lukewarm about talking to him. Maintain the right distance from the person.

* Put away your phone.
* Though you should look eager to talk to the person, don't look too eager.

**Give a friendly greeting**. If you're seeing someone you already know, just say hello and greet her by her name: "Hi, Jen, it's good to see you." This is simple and direct and lets the person know you're excited to talk. If you don't know the person, introduce yourself first so you feel more confident and in control of the conversation. Just say, "Hi, I'm Marla, what's your name?" Repeat the person's name when she tells it to you, and she'll feel more special.

**Keep things light and positive.** Conversations are just as much about an exchange of energy as an exchange of information. To make great conversation and great small talk, you should keep things light, fun, and positive. If you're upbeat, ready to smile at a moment's notice, and laugh over things that aren't *that* funny, then you'll make the other person want to keep talking to you -- even if you're only talking about your favorite brands of yogurt.

**Start with a small compliment.** Just a simple, "I love your shoes -- where did you get them?" can get you into a fun conversation about shoe shopping. Even if the compliment doesn't lead anywhere, it will still make the person feel more appreciated before you start discussing other subjects. You can also use this move earlier, as a way to actually introduce yourself to someone.

**Find common ground.** Common ground doesn't mean that you and the other person are both die-hard horseback riders. It can just be as the fact that you've both had to deal with a lot of bad weather that week. Anything that the person can relate to and that establishes a connection, however tenuous, can be considered common ground. And just because you don't want to talk about the weather, remember that the "small stuff" can lead you to talk about the things that matter to you. Here are some ways to establish common ground:

* "Professor Hoffer is hilarious."
* "Ashley throws the most amazing parties."
* "Can you believe all of this rain?"

**Reveal something about yourself.** Once you've established some common ground, you can use it to elaborate and say something a bit more personal. You shouldn't say something so personal that it freaks the person out, like, "I've actually been in love with Professor Hoffer for the last five years," but you can ease in to talking about yourself just a bit more. Here are some examples:

* "He's the best teacher I ever had. He's basically the reason I'm an English major."
* "I actually met Ashley last year, when Ben took me to her Great Gatsby party."
* "The rain is just awful. I'm training for a marathon and had to do my long runs on the treadmill -- it's the worst."
* "Whenever I'm at this cafe, I just really feel like I'm in the zone. Maybe it's the intense drip-coffee -- but seriously, I feel like I can work for hours here."

**Engage the other person.** Now that you've established common ground and have revealed something about yourself, it's time to engage the other person and get her talking by asking her to reveal some information about herself. Don't ask anything too personal, like asking about the person's health, religion, or political views. Just keep it light and fun and ask open-ended questions about the person's interests, job, or surroundings. Here are some examples:

* "How about you? Are you an English major, or are you here for Professor Hoffer's crazy stories?"
* "Did you go to that party, or is this your first time here? It was fun, but I drank too many mint juleps."
* "How about you? Has the rain kept you from doing anything fun this week?"
* "Do you come here to do some work, or are you just reading for fun?"

**Follow up with a question or statement.** The person's response will influence whether you follow up with a question, a statement, or a joke. Try to find a balance between questions and statements. Too many questions will make the person feel like he's being interrogated, and too many statements won't give the person room to talk.

**Take the time to listen.** Really listening to things that the person says can help you pinpoint new common ground and to steer the conversation in a more fun or productive direction. The person may make a small comment that's tangential to your question or topic, so keep your ears open and see if something the person says can trigger a new line of conversation. Here are some example of how two people can pick up on cues and steer a conversation in a new direction to connect on a deeper level:

**Open up (but not too much).** By the end of the conversation, you could reveal something more about yourself, however small, whether it's your obsession with your cat, your passion for yoga, or just your thoughts on your favorite band's new album. Have the person walk away knowing something about you, which could make you connect on a deeper level and make the person think you weren't just shooting the breeze.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

* 1. What advice given above do you think is the most important? Least important? Why?
  2. What topics do you prefer to discuss with new people that you meet?
  3. Have you ever met someone who provided too much personal information too fast? What happened?
  4. How often do you make small talk with people other than your friends?
  5. Why do people engage in small talk?
  6. Do you like small talk? Why or why not?

**Compare and Contrast**

\*Look at the following topics and people. Write and “S” if you think the topic is suitable for the person or an NS if you think the topic is not suitable for the person. Explain your answer with your partner.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Friend | Intimate Partner | Child | Teacher | Acquaintance | Parent |
| Future Plans |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Weather |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Romantic Break up |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Personal Illness |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Recent meal |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Gossip |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Grocery Prices |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| School Grades |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Favorite Movie |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Daily Routine |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Regret |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Healthy Habits |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Expansion**

1. Practice small talk using the following conversation starters.
   1. It sure has been raining a lot lately.
   2. Those are some really nice shoes.
   3. Did you see the game last night?
   4. Have you been to the new mall on Qin Xian street?
   5. Did you see the new movie that just came out?

**Homework**

1. Think about a time when you had an awkward conversation and write one page about what happened.

### Lesson 16: University Life

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. What springs to mind when you think of University life in the U.S.?
2. What do you think is the biggest difference between college in the U.S. and college in China?
3. Why do you think so many Chinese students want to study in the U.S.?
4. What is the role of the university in society? How is this different from the role of High School?
5. The experiences outside of the classroom and the chance to learn to live independently during college is more important than the education you receive there. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Vocabulary | Definition/Notes |
| Etiquette |  |
| Hands-on |  |
| Delve |  |
| Swing by |  |
| Accessible |  |
| Competitive |  |
| Bustling |  |
| Remote |  |
| breadth |  |

**Text**

Coming to the [United States for college or graduate school](http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/studying-in-the-united-states) can introduce cultural differences that even the most prepared students might not expect. From classroom etiquette to campus life, studying at a U.S. school can be quite a different experience from learning in another country.

Here are three things that are often suggested for international students to expect when going to an American university.

**1. Classroom differences:** A U.S. education—particularly at the graduate level–may be more hands-on and interactive than what you've experienced in another country, which could come as a shock to new students who haven't prepared beforehand.

"Be informed about how the life of being a student [is]," recommends Diah Wihardini, a native of Indonesia who's studying education at the [University of California–Berkeley](http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/university-of-california-berkeley-1312). "Here, you are expected to be an independent learner [and] have to have more upfront knowledge of what is going to be expected of [you]."

The work isn't necessarily harder, she says, but it's different. For example, students in the United States may take fewer courses but delve much deeper into the subject material than they might in Indonesia.

In class, students also may be expected to speak up more than in their home countries. Having to "perform" in class or being invited to swing by professors' office hours afterwards came as a surprise to Anne Berg, a student from Denmark who's also studying at UC—Berkeley.

"Professors are accessible, and you can actually talk to them," she notes.

But channels for open communication also mean that, in class, her professors demand "real discussion," rather than simply lecturing. To thrive in an interactive class setting, "you have to have some sort of competitive edge, or you'll get rolled over," Berg says. "If you go to the U.S., you have to be competitive."

**2. City disparities:** From the bustling streets of New York City to the wide and flat plains of Kansas, it's impossible to geographically define the United States with a single term. That can come as a surprise to international students who haven't researched the area they'll soon be calling home, says Anton Padin Deben, a student from Spain.

Some students "come from big cities around the world to the countryside of the U.S.," he notes. "You think you're going to a very good school—which is true—but then there's this very big shock."

Since coming here to study engineering, Deben has spent time at both [Texas A&M University—College Station](http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-engineering-schools/texas-a-m-university-college-station-look-02174) and the [Colorado School of Mines](http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-engineering-schools/colorado-school-of-mines-02030), two schools with very different locations, geographical features, and climates.

Though he speaks fondly of his time studying at Texas A&M, Deben says the school's remote setting made for an initial adjustment period—until he found friends with cars who could drive him beyond the limits of the college town. No matter where you'll be studying, "You have to do a [lot of] research before you do anything," he recommends.

Investigating the city you're going to be in will also help you get a rough idea of what you'll be paying for housing and meals. A month's rent or a dinner out near Berkeley is more expensive for Indonesian student Wihardini, she says, than for her friends who study in more remote locations.

**3. Cultural barriers:** Growing up in Guatemala, Maria Jose Aldana studied the history of many cultures outside of her own, including (but not limited to) the United States. So she was surprised when many of her U.S. classmates at the [University of Denver](http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-graduate-schools/university-of-denver-127060) didn't have a similar breadth of world knowledge.

"I sometimes think we study more about the U.S. and other countries—I thought more people would know about Guatemala," says the economic development student. "My expectations were higher."

The lack of knowledge may be to blame for some insensitive—though perhaps unintentional—comments she's heard from Americans about her appearance and heritage. Though it's sometimes hurtful, Aldana says she's learned to be flexible and has opened up to those who express interest in her culture.

"The idea is to try to engage in a dialogue," she says.

But uncomfortable run-ins haven't characterized the experience for all the Fulbright students interviewed. For Denmark's Berg, the United States has been "a very warm and welcoming culture," she says.

That might be part of the reason behind her final tip for students trying to decide if studying in the United States is right for them: "Do it," Berg says. "It's just an amazing experience."

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. What have you heard (or seen) about American universities?
2. What do you think is the biggest difference between Chinese and American universities?
3. What do you think of someone who does not go to college?
4. How much faith do you put into the university rankings? Why?

**Compare and Contrast**

How do you think Chinese and American universities differ in the following aspects?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Chinese Universities** | **American Universities** |
| Teachers |  |  |
| Homework |  |  |
| Course Difficulty |  |  |
| School Life |  |  |
| Room & Board |  |  |
| After school |  |  |

**Expansion**

1. Work with a partner to make a list of changes that you would like to see at your current school. What are the changes? How would you go about making the changes? Be specific.

**Homework**

1. Research a university that you are interested in attending in the U.S. Look at the school section of the university website. Read the information provided and write a one-page summary.

### Lesson 17: Perceptions, Prejudices and Tolerance

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. Do you think Americans are more tolerant of differences than Chinese? Explain.
2. What are some common prejudices of Americans? What are some common prejudices of Chinese?
3. Do you know what a stereotype is? Think of some common American and Chinese stereotypes.
4. Have you ever been the victim of some type of prejudice? Explain.
5. Do you think it’s acceptable for Chinese to marry people from other races and cultures?
6. Do you think it is acceptable for people of the same sex to marry?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary** | **Definition/Notes** |
| Stems out of |  |
| Conscious |  |
| Nurtured |  |
| Propagated |  |
| Assert |  |
| Feudal system |  |
| Genocide |  |
| Repercussion |  |
| Spearhead |  |

**Text**

Racism has been a part of human history since ancient times. It stems out of a tendency to create racial stereotypes on the basis of race, color, nationality, religion and other factors. Often racial discrimination is practiced without even being conscious of it being nurtured and propagated. This happens because our society and its forbearers have successfully managed to plant the seeds of discrimination into our consciousness long before we were able to assert our choices. The feudal system in the middle ages can be recounted as a significant practice of racism. Slavery and serfdom have been identified as the blackest spots on the face of human civilization. In fact, some of the most outrageous incidents of genocide took place as a severe repercussion to racism. Be it the Holocaust in Germany or McCarthyism in the United States of America.

The status of a second-class citizen offered to people of a darker tone in America, England and elsewhere gave rise to transatlantic slaves. The Anti-Apartheid movement spearheaded by Nelson Mandela highlighted the plights suffered by the ‘blacks’ in South Africa over a long period of time. The very demarcating terms ‘whites’ and ‘blacks’ play along the lines of binaries, which in turn create a sense of superiority and inferiority among people. The heart of the matter is despite intense and severe struggles by the likes of the late Nelson Mandela among others, discrimination on the basis of ones’ racial identity rules the roost even to this very day.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. Where does the reading suggest racism comes from?
2. How do people become racist?
3. Can the government do anything to stop racism?
4. What is the difference between being racist and prejudice? How are they the same?
5. Do you know anyone who is racist? Why do you think this person is racist?

**Compare and Contrast**

Look at the list of people below, what stereotypes are associated with them. Then discuss why these stereotypes are associated with these people.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Person** | **stereotypes** | **Why?** |
| Africans |  |  |
| Japanese |  |  |
| Americans |  |  |
| Villagers |  |  |
| Trust-Fund Babies |  |  |
| People from ChengDu |  |  |
| People from Beijing |  |  |
| Bankers |  |  |
| Policeman |  |  |

**Expansion**

Debate:

Person 1: Racism and prejudices will always exist.

Person 2: We can find a way to stop racism and prejudice.

**Homework**

1. Write one page about a story of racism that occurred in China. You should include what happened in the story and what the result of the incident was.

### Lesson 18: Struggles integrating into American Culture

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. Do you have friends or family who have gone to America? How did they describe the experience?
2. What are some of the negative aspects of moving to America that you have heard?
3. Have you ever had trouble integrating into a new group? For example, did you ever move to a new school and have to make friends all over again? What were some of the obstacles you encountered and how did you overcome those obstacles?
4. Can you think of potential problems of Chinese trying to integrate into US culture? What about some of the problems of Americans trying to assimilate or integrate into Chinese culture?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary** | **Definition/Notes** |
| Fit in |  |
| Pirated |  |
| Cramming |  |
| Notorious |  |
| Antisocial |  |
| Giggles |  |
| Jaw dropping |  |
| Exhilarated |  |
| shunned |  |

**Text**

In this guest posting, Yeran Zhou, an 18-year-old from Shenzhen in southern China, reflects on his first semester in the U.S.

*Mr.* Zhou blogs for the Daily Illini a student newspaper at the *University of Illinois.*

On August 14, 2010, I boarded a 14-hour flight to America, leaving China for the first time.

I had never been to America before, but people always said I would fit in, mainly because I argued with my teachers and insisted I wanted to be a filmmaker. So when I was 10, my parents had sent me to weekend classes taught by foreign tutors. After school I spent all my pocket money on **pirated** Hollywood DVDs and watched every episode of *Friends*. Soon I concluded that America was a rich and cool country with lots of kids like me.

In ninth grade, I got a taste of how life would be if I stayed on in Chinese education when I took the *Zhongkao*, a two-day-exam to determine which high schools we could go to. A year of test **cramming** exhausted me. Upon graduation, the principal told us a harder, **crueler** test – the  *Gaokao* – awaited us in three years. And that was when I decided I had to go abroad.

My high school in Shenzhen had a tradition of sending students overseas. Every year some would come back and tell their stories. They said that Chinese students in the U.S. were notorious for only hanging out with each other, but “it can’t be helped.” So when I arrived in America, I was eager to set myself apart from my Chinese peers. I took literature classes, went to dance parties, learned **Ultimate Frisbee** and blogged for the college newspaper. In other words, I couldn’t wait to be American.

But as it turned out, movies and sitcoms didn’t prepare me for everything in America. In the first week on campus, I was shocked by everyone’s fear of being labeled “**antisocial**.” Closing the dorm doors was strictly forbidden, and eating alone was to be avoided at all cost. In **orientation**, there was “Speed Friending,” an activity that turned my brain into an alphabet soup of names and faces.

Back in China, things had worked very differently. Our class of 40 students spent every day together for three years. No one was anxious to make new **acquaintances**, but everyone always had a couple of **intimate** friends to talk to.

My old Chinese friends had discussed **politics** and **philosophy**, but my new American friends exchanged **puns** and jokes. American humor was a mystery to me, so a few anxious **giggles** were usually my only contribution to their conversation. But eventually I discovered that Americans weren’t that hard to impress. “In China there’s no minimum drinking age and I used to get drunk after class,” I would remark **casually,** and watch their **jaws drop**.

Meanwhile, the classes were showing me America in a new light. My law professor was **infuriated** by how often American lawyers put the wrong people in jail. A large part of my literature class was devoted to all the bad things America did to women, immigrants, **Native Americans** and black people. During discussions my classmates **confessed** that they somehow felt guilty about being American and growing up in an all-white neighborhood.

I was **exhilarated**. After all those years spent in a Chinese **curriculum**, hearing people criticize their own country in class was **liberating**. With this new freedom to think for myself, I grew more curious and confident every day. I also discovered a passion for books and writing, and spent night after night reading in the library.

I was adjusting to life in America, but it came with a price. In order to distinguish myself I **shunned** my Chinese peers, who mostly stayed to themselves. Often I pretended I didn’t speak Chinese at all. One month into the semester, I hadn’t made a single friend from my own country, yet the newspaper editor asked me to blog about Chinese students in America. So I set off to reconnect with my Chinese classmates.

For weeks, I sought them out at coffee shops, in **cafeterias**, and even on a Chinese **social networking website**. They told me they were **isolated**, troubled or **sleep-deprived**.  Some were terrified of reading and writing assignments. Others were frustrated by not being able to fit in.

A senior engineering student, for example, told me that it was his father who had made the decision to send him abroad, who chose his school and major, prepared all the paperwork and even wrote the application essay. After coming to America, he avoided all contact with non-Chinese people and spent most of his time alone in the dorm room.

Like him, many Chinese students had been sheltered all their lives. Schools and parents had protected them from life’s choices and uncertainties. Then, suddenly, they found themselves in America, alone and unprepared, **caught in a swirl** of **incomprehensible** foreignness.

At the end of my first semester, I no longer tried to pretend to be the same as my American friends. But neither could I say that I truly understood my Chinese peers. So I decided to keep on writing, to tell the stories of my Chinese classmates that they wouldn’t otherwise tell, so that one day the world around me might **reconcile**.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. Why do you think the author pretended not to be able to speak Chinese?
2. What does the saying, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do” mean? Do you believe this? Why or why not?
3. Do you know any foreigners in China who have integrated into Chinese culture? Why do you think they have or have not integrated?
4. Do you think it’s important to integrate into your host countries culture? Why or why not?

**Compare and Contrast**

\*Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of integrating into another countries culture.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Integrate | Don’t Integrate |
| Advantage |  |  |
| Disadvantage |  |  |

**Expansion**

1. Imagine that you are writing a guide for foreigners who want to integrate into Chinese culture. Make a list of the top ten things that foreigners must learn or do to be accepted by the Chinese culture. Be ready to explain/defend your list.

**Homework**

1. There are many stories of Chinese students travelling to America for school. Find a story on the internet and write a one-page summary of the student’s experience abroad. Be ready to share this in class.

### Lesson 19: Culture Shock

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. What is culture shock?
2. What fears might you have if you were to move to another country?
3. What would you miss most about China if you moved abroad?
4. What do you know about American culture that you would not be able to accept?
5. What’s the longest amount of time that you’ve spent away from home? What was that experience like?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Vocabulary | Definition/Notes |
| Clinical |  |
| Stimulating |  |
| Overwhelming |  |
| Anxious |  |
| Hanging out |  |
| Temporary |  |
| Genes |  |
| Contradictory |  |
| unsettling |  |

**Text**

**What Is It?**

Culture shock isn't a clinical term or medical condition. It's simply a common way to describe the confusing and nervous feelings a person may have after leaving a familiar culture to live in a new and different culture. When you move to a new place, you're bound to face a lot of changes. That can be exciting and stimulating, but it can also be overwhelming. You may feel sad, anxious, frustrated, and want to go home.

It's natural to have difficulty adjusting to a new culture. People from other cultures (whom you'll be hanging out with and going to school with) may have grown up with values and beliefs that differ from yours. Because of these differences, the things they talk about, the ways they express themselves, and the importance of various ideas may be very different from what you are used to. But the good news is that culture shock is temporary.

**What Causes Culture Shock?**

To understand culture shock, it helps to understand what culture is. You may know that genes determine a big part of how you look and act. What you might not know is that your environment — your surroundings — has a big effect on your appearance and behavior as well.

Your environment isn't just the air you breathe and the food you eat, though; a big part of your environment is culture. Culture is made up of the common things that members of a community learn from family, friends, media, literature, and even strangers. These are the things that influence how they look, act, and communicate. Often, you don't even know you're learning these things because they become second-nature to you — for instance, the way you shake hands with someone when meeting them, when you eat your meals each day, the kind of things you find funny, or how you view religion.

When you go to a new place, such as a new country or even a new city, you often enter a culture that is different from the one you left. Sometimes your culture and the new culture are similar. Other times, they can be very different, and even contradictory. What might be perfectly normal in one culture — for instance, spending hours eating a meal with your family — might be unusual in a culture that values a more fast-paced lifestyle.

The differences between cultures can make it very difficult to adjust to the new surroundings. You may encounter unfamiliar clothes, weather, and food as well as different people, schools, and values. You may find yourself struggling to do things in your new surroundings that were easy back home. Dealing with the differences can be very unsettling; those feelings are part adjusting to a new culture.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. Do you know anyone who has experienced culture shock?
2. What do you think can be done to avoid culture shock? Can it be avoided?
3. What might the symptoms of culture shock be? How can you overcome those symptoms?

**Compare and Contrast**

\*In this book you have learned a lot about American culture. Make a list comparing and contrasting American and Chinese culture. Add three more areas to compare.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | American Culture | Chinese Culture |
| Family |  |  |
| Food |  |  |
| Work |  |  |
| Perception of Time |  |  |
| Entertainment |  |  |
| Friends |  |  |
| School |  |  |
| Perception of Future |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Expansion**

1. Look at the list above. Discuss with your partner which one would be the easiest for you to adjust to? Which one would be the most difficult? Be sure to explain why.

**Homework**

1. Write a one-page plan on how you would try to overcome culture shock.

### Lesson 20: Reverse culture shock

**Pre-Reading Discussion**

1. What is reverse culture-shock?
2. How do you think moving to another culture would change how you view your own culture?
3. Do you know anyone who has lived abroad for a long time and then returned? Did they change as a person? How did they change?
4. Why would it be difficult to move back to your home country after living abroad for a long time?

**Vocabulary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary** | **Definition/Notes** |
| Expatriation |  |
| Daunting |  |
| Euphoria |  |
| Subtle |  |
| Precisely |  |
| Unanticipated |  |
| Stomping grounds |  |

**Text**

Just like expatriation, repatriation has its psychological phases that are unexpected and daunting. Most notably, encountering reverse culture shock when returning home is a surprising situation that's overlooked by both expats returning and their businesses calling to come home. Like culture shock, reverse culture shock has a number of stages; imagine this to be a U-shape curve. At first, you may be excited to return home – seeing friends and family members, wearing the rest of your wardrobe, and eating at your favorite restaurants. This initial euphoria eventually wears off, and that's when you find yourself feeling out of place in your own culture. This is the experience of reverse culture shock; it's the bottom of the curve and often the roughest part. The good news is, although it may take time, you *will* begin a gradual adjustment back towards feeling comfortable with where and whom you are.  
**How reverse culture shock happens**

“Reverse culture shock is experienced when returning to a place that one expects to be home but actually is no longer, is far more subtle, and therefore, more difficult to manage than outbound shock precisely because it is unexpected and unanticipated,” says Dean Foster, founder and president of DFA Intercultural Global Solutions, a firm that specializes in intercultural training and coaching worldwide.

Foster explains that expats learn over their time in a host country “...to behave and think like the locals, to greater or lesser degrees, while on international assignment.”

“By the time most traditional international assignments come to an end several years may have passed, providing the international assignee a significant amount of time to learn new patterns of behavior and thought necessary to fit into their host country.”   Foster points out that expats returning home are “shocked into the realization that they have in fact changed substantially, usually when they encounter their home culture upon repatriating. Both they and their home culture have changed, and this is often the first time that expats have had the opportunity to experience any of these changes.”  
**What is reverse culture shock?**

As strange as it sounds, expats become less and less familiar with their home stomping grounds. Returning brings a blanket of fog on perception, like an audience member walking around in a setting that’s familiar but still unreal. Robin Pascoe, author of *Homeward Bound*, writes: “Re-entry shock is when you feel like you are wearing contact lenses in the wrong eyes. Everything looks almost right.” Simply put, being an expat is such a lengthy and deep international experience it brings about great professional and personal changes. Old norms and values from your home country are viewed from a fresh perspective, and expats and their families see things in a new light; something like Dorothy going from black and white to Technicolor. In addition, expats can begin to feel frustrated or confused when their close friends and family are anything but curious and intrigued about their experience. After all, the expat was gone to a foreign land for years, with sights, sounds and smells exotic and new.   
Expats returning home can expect their top re-entry challenges being:

* Boredom
* No one wants to listen
* You can’t explain
* Reverse homesickness
* Relationships have changed
* People see 'wrong' changes
* People misunderstand you
* Feelings of alienation
* Inability to apply new knowledge and skills
* Loss/compartmentalisation of experience

**How to deal with reverse shock**Share your experience with others  
Although you might feel like no one wants to listen, there will be close ones who will support you with open ears and honest interest.   
Start a blog, contact friends you made as an expat, or write articles – find new ways to incorporate your urge to share stories with an audience who will listen intently.  
Maintain your style and stay international  
Things might be different, people (including yourself) might have changed, but this doesn’t mean a 'repat' should give up character and interest learned from abroad just to fit in. Maintain your lifestyle, from the food you ate abroad to the nature of your evolving personality.   
“Remember that being flexible and expecting the unexpected helped you get through the difficult times abroad. The same attitude can help you back home,” says the Office of International Studies at Northeastern University.   
“Reverse culture shock is a transition, and an important learning experience. Use this time to rebuild relationships, interests, and your new worldly self.”  
Keeping an international perspective is a special skill not to take for granted or put away. Read international magazines and foreign newspapers, or access news from your host country via websites and forums.

**Post-Reading Discussion**

1. Do you think you would experience reverse culture shock? Why or why not?
2. What do you think is worse, culture shock or reverse culture shock? Why?
3. Can you think of other ways to help overcome reverse culture shock?