

ASIA STUDY TOUR AND SEMINAR

Three credit hours

"A truly global perspective is essential for anyone who aspires to succeed in today's world. Such perspective can help you develop a healthy tolerance towards different cultures and practices. The ability to tolerate different values and to adapt will serve me and many others well in the new global working environment."

- Western executive based in Hong Kong

OBJECTIVE

This educational study tour and seminar visits several culturally diverse Asian countries. Rapidly growing human populations, increasing population movement, and expectations of accelerating economic development characterize the region being visited. The following countries have been included in the program at various times: Indonesia, India, Myanmar (Burma), Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, China (including Hong Kong), Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines.

The rationale behind the program is that many transnational organizations from America, Australia, and the region see a growing need for a mobile workforce with improved cross-cultural communication and people management skills, and a better understanding of the economic and political realities of the region. The program will sensitize participants to the need to develop these skills and thus become a more valuable human resource in the future, and more adaptable to constant change in an increasingly interdependent world.

Participants will develop an improved ability to effectively communicate within various cultures and gain an understanding of the cultural norms related to working in that society that affect the success or otherwise of international organisations operating within each country.

As the program progresses, participants will synthesize the information obtained so that by the time the post-tour seminar concludes, they will be able to conceptualize a model for successfully working in a culture other than their own. This model could be applied not only in Asia, but also in other parts of the world.

Themes

The following themes will be studied in some depth.

Sustainability: There is increased evidence, both within human habitats and general ecosystems, of mounting environmental degradation. The potential for such degradation is growing and its effects will reach far beyond the region itself, as demonstrated by the forest fires in Indonesia a few years ago. Fortunately the human capacity for enlightened environmental management is also increasing. While this theme will have a social and environmental focus, other majors will get as much benefit from identifying the historical, cultural, economic and political issues involved in two case studies — the *Hill Tribe Peoples*, a socio-economic study based at the Chiang Mai Sustainable Development Studies Center, Chiang Mai University, Thailand, and *Good Roots III*, a anthropological/socio-economic study in the La Union region of the Philippines, supported by Caltex (Philippines) Inc. and the Institute for the Study of Earth and Man at Southern Methodist University, Dallas Texas.

Participants will gain an understanding of the following issues:

- Ecological interconnectedness
- Relationships between environment, human population growth and distribution
- Relationships between environment and economic development
- Social and political consequences of environmental degradation
- Available systems of environmental management

Political Economy: Rapid economic, political and demographic change in the region is placing new demands on established systems as subsistence economies give way to industrial market economies. Populations, especially urban populations, are increasing almost exponentially in some cases. Physical and social environments are changing, often for the worse, while, paradoxically, expectations are rising, in many instances beyond currently sustainable levels.

This theme will examine:

- management of foreign exchange risks, and political risks prior to investing;
- current international trade and investment environments in each country;
- globalization of competition;
- the concepts of competitive and national advantage, and protection, impacting on firms involved in global trade;
- the linkages among policy formulation, implementation and evaluation; and
- the need for multidisciplinary strategies.

Organisations participating in the program include the *Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade* (Australia), which will provide historical political and economic briefings in each country.

Leadership: The aspirations of all countries in the region are fundamentally dependent on economic development. National boundaries are becoming increasingly irrelevant in international business with the globalization of communication and exchange. Regional alliances are both increasingly important and increasingly complex and provide a new challenge for emerging leaders in each country in the region at a time when xenophobia is increasing, particularly concerning western economic and political practices, but also concerning the dominance of one ethnic group over another within the same country.

Leadership is a word coined in western literature and a concept about which much has been written. Many leadership paradigms draw their strength from western examples — but there are clearly leaders in other cultures.

This theme will explore:

- some of the products of each culture encountered — beliefs, values, symbols and artistic forms — and as a consequence,
- how leadership is understood and practiced at various levels of society in the Asian environments being visited.
- Further elaboration concerning leadership practices in Australian Aboriginal communities is available for participants choosing to spend further time in a remote desert community in Western Australia.

METHOD OF TEACHING

In each country visited, guest speakers will outline:

- its history, culture, social and business customs;
- the current economic outlook and business/legal/political environment, especially for foreign organisations, as understood by the Australian Embassy;
- how transnational organisations choose to operate in that country as a consequence.

Participants will be required to keep a journal as well as a pictorial record of the study tour using a specially prepared study book that will be supplied during the pre-tour orientation.

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment is through presentations and participation in formal discussions during the study tour (30%); a presentation of an aspect of the political/economic outlook for one of the countries visited, at a seminar during the study tour (10%); a photo essay (10%) and the electronic submission of a 10,000 word written paper (50%) on an approved topic, the two latter being due within 6-weeks of the conclusion of the study tour.

READINGS

Required of all participants:

Thunder from the East: Portrait of a Rising Asia by Nicholas D Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2000).

World on Fire by Amy Chua (Anchor Books, 2004).

The following books will travel with the group and be accessible to all participants during and after the study tour.

A Common Core: Thais and Americans by John Paul Fieg, revised by Elizabeth Mortlock (1989)

Considering Filipinos by Theodore Gochenour (1990)

Doing Business Internationally - The Resource Book to Business and Social Etiquette Training Management Corporation (1999)

Encountering the Chinese – A Guide for Americans by Wenzhong and Grove (1991)

Figuring Foreigners Out by Craig Sorti (1999)

Only in the Philippines by Poch Suzara (1999)

Sex Slaves; the trafficking of women in Asia by Louise Brown (2000)

Turning Bricks into Jade by Wang, Brislin, Wang, Williams and Chao (2000)

When Culture Collide - Managing Successfully Across Cultures by Richard D. Lewis (1999)

Also helpful especially for first time travelers, would be the **Lonely Planet Guides** for each country.