

SSIP2023 Activity Logs

This is the blog that the interns wrote during the program. Content and Theme for “Japanese Studies” and “Cross-Cultural Workshop” are subject to change.

SSIP 2023 Opens with a Blast (6/20)



This year's SWU Summer International Program (SSIP) is exceptional because this is the first time in four years (since COVID-19) that it was hosted in person! Yesterday, June 20, 2023, SSIP had its Opening Ceremony, Orientation, and Welcome Party, which was incredible!

The program started off with the Opening Ceremony. The university's chancellor, Dr. Mariko Bando, was sharing some inspiring opening remarks. The participants from abroad, Showa participants, interns, and staff were then introduced.

During the orientation, participants reviewed the rules, regulations, and other important program information. They then participated in a guided tour of the beautiful Showa campus.



Saving the best for last, the Welcome Party was so much fun! There was an assortment of Japanese snacks and drinks. Everyone introduced themselves as an icebreaker and learned some survival Japanese. Finally, the exchange students played an amazingly fun game of Jeopardy! The Jeopardy consisted of categories related to Japanese culture and history, and the winning team received Hello Kitty folders as a prize!

Overall, SSIP 2023 is off to a great start!

Japan Studies Class and CCW start (6/21)

The program's second day began with a Japan Studies lecture on “Traditional Performing Arts: Kabuki” by Professor Oyatsu. She introduced different characteristics and aspects of Kabuki and explained the Kabuki play the students will see at the National Theater.



The participants were interested in Kabuki, as many saw it for the first time. Though it may have been a bit difficult to understand the technical terms and expressions of Kabuki, the videos and photo materials helped the students better understand them.

Now that they have some knowledge of Kabuki, they are more excited to go to the theater to see it.



After the Kabuki class, students had their first Cross-Cultural Workshop(CCW). Professor Onmura leads this workshop. This was the first interaction between international students and SWU students. Therefore, the class was conducted mainly with ice-break activities. For example, they played a game to remember names, Janken, Acchi Muite hoi, and Chocolate Confession. Chocolate Confession is a group activity played by four people. After choosing three marble chocolates, participants gave each color of chocolate a theme, and they talked about it. The confession themes include their favorite hobbies, things that surprised them recently, things they can't live without, etc. They got to know each other very well. It was a great cultural exchange for them.

Three Japan Studies Classes (6/22)

The third day of SSIP had three excellent Japan Studies classes, “Japanese Economy and Labour Market” by Professor Yashiro, “Japanese Calligraphy” by Professor Amemiya, and “Japanese Pop Culture” by Professor Shigematsu.



The first period was about the “Japanese Economy and Labour Market.” Professor Yashiro talked about Japanese financial matters, employment issues, and declining birthrate. These problems are also common in other countries as well. In that regard, all of the participants listened to the lecture closely!!



The second period was “Japanese Calligraphy.” Many exchange students had never tried “Calligraphy” before, but thanks to the assistance of the SWU students, they all enjoyed using the calligraphy brush and ink!! Finally, the participants chose their favorite Kanji characters and wrote them on “Uchiwa” fans. They were able to take their fans home as a special souvenir.



The third period was “Japanese Pop Culture.” This class was taken with SWU students. Professor Shigematsu talked about Japanese anime and comic books, a famous Japanese pop culture. They learned about various manga, anime, and films produced and directed by Hayao Miyazaki of Studio Ghibli. Many students were fascinated to learn about one of Japan’s renowned anime directors, which is translated into different languages worldwide.

Exploring Traditional Japanese Places: Asakusa and Kabuki Theater (6/23)



Today, the participants visited Asakusa, where they can experience traditional and modern Japanese culture.



Inside the Senso-ji Temple of Asakusa, there was an opportunity to pray in front of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. They also tried Omikuji, the fortune-telling paper, and discovered interesting differences between the Japanese and English explanations of fortune. Some of the students received the “best luck(Dai-Kichi 大吉)! After that, they enjoyed shopping and eating on Nakamise-dori Street, which connects Kaminarimon and Senso-ji Temple.



After exploring Asakusa, they headed to the National Theater to watch a Kabuki play. Thanks to the Kabuki lecture, they understood more and saw the story in more detail. The performance they watched was called "Nihon Furisode Hajime," a heroic tale of the Japanese myth. While enjoying the play, they learned about the special effects and structures of the Kabuki theater, such as Suppon, Hanamichi, and Mawari Butai.

Move on to the Final Presentation Project (6/24)

Today, the students had CCW classes! Professor Onnmura organized groups for SWU students and international students and finally met their group members!

In the morning, they played ice-breaking games, such as finding common points and building paper towers. They got to know each other by discovering shared interests, regardless of our backgrounds, and discussing how to build a tall paper tower. During the paper tower game, the groups competed to create the tallest towers using their creativity. The group that won first prize built a paper tower over 170 cm tall! That's awesome!



Since it was the students' first time working together, they learned valuable tips for teamwork while engaging in group challenge games!

After the lunch break, the students went on field research to explore something interesting that encompasses Japanese culture. Each student had different viewpoints, so the final presentations will most definitely going to be internationally intriguing. Can't wait to see the final presentation!

2nd week starts (6/26)

Today, the group had one Japan Studies class and a field trip to the Ghibli Museum.

In the Japan Studies class, the focus was on social problems and social work. Professor Noda provided insights into Japanese social issues, including the aging population, child abuse, income inequality, and potential solutions. Following this, participants discussed the challenges faced by their respective countries in the group. Diverse opinions were expressed since the participants hailed from various nations. For example, while some countries exhibited a gender gap, others did not face it to the same extent. Towards the end, each group selected a specific social problem and presented potential solutions. One group emphasized the need for employment opportunities and wage equality for immigrants, suggesting that government policies and support should be in place to address this issue.



After lunch, international students are excited to visit the Ghibli Museum in Mitaka. They were excited as it was their first time to visit there. Exhibitions and short films showcasing the enchanting world of Ghibli were experienced.



Already halfway through the program (6/27)

Today, a field trip to Shibuya Sky and Japan studies class is conducted.

In the morning, they went to Shibuya Sky, located on the rooftop of Shibuya Scramble Square. It was cloudy and raining a little in the morning, but they could go up to the 42nd floor. They had to go inside because the rain was getting heavier, but they enjoyed the stunning view of Tokyo.



After that, Professor. Fujimori gave a lecture on religion in Japan. The lecture was about religion in contemporary Japanese society. Students learned about the nature of religion in Japan and how it is believed now and past.



The exciting content was about life events in Japan. For example, there is the Omiya Mairi and Glowing-up 7-5-3 Festival. That was new for the students. In addition, Japan is considered to be deeply rooted in Buddhist thought, but Christianity has also influenced it. For example, many people hold their weddings in chapels.

After the class, they watched “Tokyo Story” for an upcoming lecture. This black-and-white film from post-war Japan gave us an understanding of Tokyo and family relations at the time.



First tea ceremony experience (6/28)

Today there was a tea ceremony and field work as a CCW.

Before the tea ceremony, Ito-sensei gave a lecture, and she talked about history, Zen Buddhism, and the essence of the tea ceremony. It was also interesting to see Buddhist teachings combined with Ghibli movies.



In the tea ceremony, first, Ito-sensei demonstrated how to serve, drink and behave. Then every student had Japanese traditional sweets and experienced serving and having tea.



According to the teacher, the purpose of the tea ceremony is to focus on oneself and create a pleasant atmosphere. Understanding the concept and conduct of the tea ceremony may be challenging initially, but something new would have been learned.

In the afternoon, fieldwork was conducted as CCW. Each participant worked in a group, and their progress toward the final presentation went smoothly.

The last day of Japan Studies class (6/29)

Two Japan Studies classes were held today. This marked the final Japan Study class for students in the Global Lounge.

The first class focused on Tourism in Japan. Professor Mihara discussed the distinct characteristics of the four seasons and the various regions that have emerged in Japan. Subsequently, the discussion topics included Japanese hot spring culture, natural surroundings, historical context, cuisine, and bathing etiquette, among others.



The theme of the second class is that film. Students spent most of their time discussing the film they had seen, Yasujiro Ozu's Tokyo Story. They discussed such things as how "Tokyo Story" differs from other films that they have seen.



Toyosu Market & TeamLab (6/30)

After checking out the National Olympics Memorial Youth Center, they went to Toyosu Market and TeamLab!!!

Firstly, they went around Toyosu Market freely. There are many exhibits related to the market and restaurants there. Therefore, they had lunch there, enjoying sushi, seafood bowls, and other dishes.



After Toyosu Market, the students went to TeamLab Planets. TeamLab is a digital art museum located in Toyosu and is famous not only among Japanese but also among foreigners. There are then four large artwork spaces and two gardens. Students took pictures and enjoyed the unique digital art!

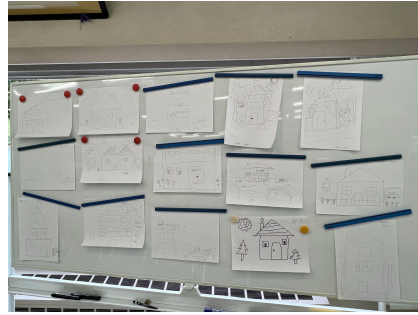


After enjoying TeamLab, they moved to Tomei Gakurin, located in Kanagawa prefecture. They will prepare for their final presentation.

CCW preparation in Tomei Gakurin (7/1)

Today, they have 4 CCW classes and a Yukata-wearing activity!!!
In CCW class, there were some interesting activities.

Firstly, students drew an ideal dream house with no verbal communication. In pairs, they drew their ideal house with a pen together without communicating. The result is an interesting or different house from what one might imagine!



Next, students drew the correct pictures that the Professor told a representative of each group. Only 1 stroke per person, each team drew a picture. They worked together to draw pictures. This also became an exciting activity.

Thirdly, students guessed the picture's correct order that the professor distributed. They were not allowed to look at other students' pictures. Therefore, they needed to describe the picture's characteristics. It was difficult, but in the end, they lined up in the order of most of the correct answers.



After dinner, international students and SWU students wore Yukata! International students managed to put it on with SWU students' help. They were so beautiful.



Rehearsal and Summer Activity (7/2)

On the second day of Tomei Gakurin, the students finalized their presentation and rehearsed! They communicated and cherished their opinions with each other well. In rehearsals, the professors commented on some of the weaknesses each group found and could improve them!

And very joyful activities were held in the afternoon! The first one is Watermelon Smashing which is a Japanese traditional summer game. The students have great control though they put a towel over their eyes so as not to see where the watermelon is. After successfully smashing it, they enjoyed the juicy watermelon very much!



Other than the watermelon, students did fireworks after the dinner! The weather was perfect, and the place was perfect to enjoy such a summer-representative activity. They were fascinated by the sparkle and shiny fireworks and enjoyed taking pretty pictures. Through these activities, they deepened their friendship and made special memories with friends from around the world in Japan.



Kamakura Trip (7/3)

After checking out from Tomei Gakurin, it was time to visit Kamakura by bus. Kamakura is one of the historical and tourist spots. Therefore, students were looking forward to visiting there.

The first sightseeing started with Koutoku-in. There is a Kamakura Daibutsu (The Great Buddha of Kamakura). It is known as one of the symbols of Kamakura. Students enjoyed viewing the interior of the Great Buddha, and buying Omamori and some souvenirs.



Next, the students went to Tsuruoka-Hachimangu and visited the shrine, drew a fortune slip, and wrote an Ema, a wooden plate on which people write their wishes.



After visiting Tsuruoka-Hachimangu, they had 3 hours of free time. They enjoyed eating around Komachi Street and buying souvenirs. Some students went to the Kanzashi shop, which sells Japanese accessories women use to do up their hair. The shop owner was so kind that they could try it on. They looked so happy wearing it, and it was a good experience for the students. They had an enjoyable time on this trip.



The Last Day of SSIP (7/5)

Today was the last day of SSIP! The schedule included a final presentation, a closing ceremony, and a farewell party.



The day kicked off with the CCW final presentations; eight groups presented exciting aspects of Japanese culture that they had discovered through fieldwork. Each group comprised members from different countries and approached the topic with interesting perspectives. For example, there were topics such as the fully equipped "Ekinaka," "the "Otohime," and the "Mogurido," which gave them a chance to carefully consider things they would usually miss and learn about their charms.

After the presentation, it was time for the closing ceremony. First, Chancellor Bando gave a speech, followed by an awards ceremony. Each student received certificates from Dr. Bando and was praised for their hard work in SSIP. Then, representatives of Showa students and international students gave a speech.



Lastly, a farewell party was held, and the special time was enjoyed. A video was played in the middle of the program, reviewing their activities. Although it was only two and a half weeks, it was a very special program for both international and SWU students. The hope is to see each other again in the future.