



INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF
RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

IARU GSP Working Committee Meeting 2017

5.2 Feedback from GSP 2017 Students



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Florin Langer, UC Berkeley Student

ETH1

- I applied to the ETH Sustainability Summer School in Mountain Forests and Risk Management with the naive idea that I would bring technical knowledge in computer science, geospatial information science, and forest silviculture to come up with a radically new plan for managing a place I'd never studied. As I would quickly learn, I was actually there to learn about all the methodologies already being applied to the region from the people who actually thought them up and all the factors they had to take into consideration. The School was so refreshing in that way—we were not pressured to produce, but rather encouraged to observe and synthesize and discuss the opposing viewpoints, drawing from our various disciplines.
- The program was planned so well to where when I felt representation of a certain aspect of mountain forests and communities to be lacking, we were introduced to someone researching or managing that very topic to try to condense everything he or she thought we should know into a 90-minute presentation. The interdisciplinary group facilitated my learning so much more than I thought would be the case. Instead of obfuscating technicalities behind disciplinary jargon, each person was conscious to explain ideas in basic but complete terms for everyone, a skill that is so useful in any kind of work.
- I learned from someone in the program about Switzerland's strong constitutional laws ensuring support for all Swiss citizens; however, it seems so much more costly to support citizens in remote mountain areas. This is the predicament I focused on. After fieldwork with the nonprofit Bergwaldprojekt constructing tripods and fences and paths to reforest barren spots of mountainsides above villages in the Tamina Valley to protect them, reading case studies on what these communities contribute, and of course discussing with the other students and some stakeholders, I was able to contribute to an informed project on the subject that did not exactly match my ambitious original goal of creating a full-fledged solution but was so much more valuable in that it took into account the history of mountain regions, what is currently being done there, and especially the interests of the various people involved.
- Although the title of the program implies a focus on environmental sustainability, I found the program to give me such a valuable look into the society of rural and urban Switzerland—and how they are all interconnected. Getting to meet students, foreign and domestic, of ETH and other European and international universities gave me a valuable look into their dynamic: the struggles foreigners have fully integrating with a language barrier and the countering welcoming nature of the Swiss despite that. I made great friends whom I was repeatedly humbled by, and I gained a new appreciation for the international and interdisciplinary collaboration being undertaken at ETH in the field of sustainability and beyond.

ETH1



Janine Balistreri, UC Berkeley Student COP2

- “I do not have any negative comments. I thought the program was well organized, it provided a mix of outings, both cultural, educational, and social. The course itself was very informative, and I feel that I gained more confidence in the area of research. On the other hand, having to come up with a research proposal in such a short time was a little daunting, but we had plenty of assistance from instructors, and it all worked out nicely in the end. I also enjoyed the diversity of the students, who came from all over the world.”

COP2: Interdisciplinary Aspects of Healthy Aging



COP1: Cultural Rights: A Promising Global Discourse?



ANU1: Mobilising Research

- “I learned academic skills in how to present and how to convey research.” – UCPH student

CAM1: Visions of the Future

- “Regarding the topic of vision of the future, it was not that clear what I could expect from the lectures but it was perfect enough since the topic is quite broad and I loved the diversity of lectures we had. It was a very nice to not be restricted by the topic of the course but having the possibility to debate in a wide range. All the prerequisites and the course structure were perfectly clear before the course started.
- Besides the very well organized course and schedule, the instructors were often present throughout the course and we also had weekly meetings with them. So if there would have been any problem or open question, we could have addressed that in one of the meetings or just ask our instructors at any time for help.” – ETH Zurich student

TOK1: Introduction to the Japanese Language

- “I feel that the course instructors were very knowledgeable, professional and patient in their teaching which made the course very enjoyable and effective.”
- NUS student

TOK2: Sustainable Urban Management

- “In my opinion, the course was paced suitably as an introductory course to civil engineering and urban planning in the context of a sustainable Japan. The assessment was fairly laid back, and there were a wide range of instructors every lecture, which was a particular strength.” – ANU student
- “I was both challenged by and am proud of travelling for the first time off of my continent alone and facing an unfamiliar place and culture; I am especially proud because of the interactions I managed to have, helping me settle and establish even in that short space of time.
- The global perspective was a powerful aspect that I had never had in my learning before. It was great to understand how other places in the world are dealing with their own and global issues.” – UCT student

TOK3: Japan in Today's World

- “It was a great time that I could learn from very knowledgeable professors and study with excellent peers.” –UCB student
- “All the lecturers/ instructors for this course were very open to taking any questions without hesitation, and they answered them in a very kind and succinct manner. Everyone was near to excellent in explaining the core areas in their respective lectures.” – UTokyo student

TOK4: Nanoscience

- “It was a fantastic opportunity to meet people from such different scientific backgrounds, I am normally quite shy but I managed to make quite a few friends on the course and I hope to keep in touch with them.” – Oxford student

UCB1: Beahrs Environmental Leadership Program



PKU



OXF1: Global Challenges of the 21st Century



NUS1: Southeast Asia in Context



NUS2: Animals and the City



UCT: Sustainable Water Management in Africa

- “Even though I am in humanities I still made the report and presentation on a subject completely new to me” – UCPH student
- “Excellent – informative and practical.” – UCT student

YAL1: The Sustainable Preservation of Cultural Heritage

- “My course instructor is very knowledgeable in the field of cultural heritage. He provided much opportunities for us to engage with top personnel and professors working in the field as well.” – UTokyo student
- “I study art history, a theoretical subject. The course allowed me to explore practical issues related to heritage preservation.” – Cambridge student
- “The course provided me with the opportunity to truly be my own person. I felt very comfortable around my classmates and could be who I really was, and be accepted for that. The community was overall very supportive of my learning which made my engagement very positive.” – ANU student