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Fulbright-Hays Seminars Abroad: China History and Culture 2007  
Burnt Hills--Ballston Lake High School  
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**TITLE OF CURRICULUM PROJECT:**

Mr. B's China Blog

**WEB ADDRESS:**

<http://admin.bhbl.neric.org/~dbesozzi@bhbl.org/FOV2-0002873F/FOV2-00024242/>

**ONE PAGE SUMMARY OF THE UNIT/PROJECT:**

This project was designed to provide students and educators with the opportunity to share in the experience of visiting China as a Fulbright–Hays Seminars Abroad participant. In addition, the project was completed in “real-time” as I traveled throughout China during the summer of 2007. As a result, students and educators at the Burnt Hills–Ballston Lake High School, Schenectady County Community College, and my neighbors and fellow community members, were afforded the opportunity to “virtually” travel with me as I explored China’s history and experienced contemporary China.

Although not truly a first-hand experience for readers of the blog, it was the next best thing. By utilizing the internet and a variety of software applications, I was able to maintain daily communication with my students and colleagues back in the United States. Daily reflections on experiences, notes from lectures, photographs, and captured video, were all uploaded to a daily blog maintained in FirstClass on my home school’s server. Additionally, I was able to video-conference free of charge almost daily with family, friends, and colleagues using Skype telephone software and a web cam. Although initially reluctant to rely on a technology-laden approach to completing this project, I quickly discovered that China had come a long way since I had last visited the country in 1989. In fact, one of the most significant outcomes of this experience was the realization that China is one of the most “wired” and technologically-savvy countries in the world. I therefore decided that my students and colleagues needed to experience that realization by participating in this web-based endeavor to share my experiences.

I began the blog as early as the first day, during our initial orientation program in San Francisco. Ironically, it was in San Francisco that I experienced significant technological setbacks that seemed to suggest that the web-based approach might be doomed to failure. However, on the first day in Beijing, connecting to the internet occurred with far fewer difficulties than in the United States. In fact, video conferencing via Skype worked very well. Immediately, I began to post text and images to the blog. Within days, I was able to upload video to the blog as well, helping to enhance the usefulness of the completed product.

In terms of content, the blog consisted of daily reflections on my experiences. As a result, students and educators who read the blog could share in those experiences — everything from excitement over visiting historic attractions to suffering bouts of illness and discomfort. As the days continued into weeks, and the engaging activities became more numerous, I began to keep a record of major topics and themes. Those topics and themes were chronologically maintained as we traveled from Beijing to Xian, Xian to Guiyang, Guiyang to Shanghai, and then finally Shanghai to Hong Kong. Although some of these topics and themes overlap, the overlap was minimal and often reflected the unique characteristics of

that particular region of China. As a result, there are numerous themes and topics discussed in the blog, making it a useful tool for an educator looking to explore either China's past or present. In fact the topics ranged from Neolithic China, through the Revolution, and up to the present. Additionally, themes ranged anywhere from serious environmental issues to fast food. As a result, there is a great deal of flexibility in how the completed blog can be used. A teacher of ancient China will find resources on Shang dynasty bronze technology, while a teacher of earth science will find information on contemporary Shanghai's rapid urbanization. A student interested in AIDS will find lecture notes on the topic and its impact in China, while a student athlete will be able to explore the upcoming 2008 summer Olympics.

All of these themes and topics, and many more, are found in the blog and reflect my own newly expanded understanding of China. As an educator who has devoted his life to the study and teaching of China, I was further enlightened by my experiences as a Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad participant in China. I am confident that the students, educators, and fellow community members who access and utilize this blog will also share in that enlightenment.

**GRADE LEVEL:**

High School, 9-12

**KEY (ESSENTIAL) QUESTIONS/QUERIES:**

- How has China changed in the last 25 years?
  
- What are some of the major issues facing the People's Republic of China today?
  
- What are the major political, economic, and social issues related to China that are of interest to young people in the United States today?
  
- What topics related to the study of China would be relevant to the New York State Global History and Geography curriculum?

**BACKGROUND NOTES:**

The background notes I maintained while in China were the result of my participation daily lectures and activities. Using a laptop that I brought along on the trip, I was able to take extensive notes during lectures. In addition, I kept a daily journal of my activities. The notes and journal entries became the basis of the blog that is my culminating project.

**STANDARDS:**

The New York State Social Studies standards were the basis for my curriculum project (note: only standards 2 – 5 were relevant to my exploration of China):

Standard 2 - World History: use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

Standard 3 - Geography: use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth's surface.

Standard 4 - Economics: use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources, how major decision-making units function in the U.S. and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and nonmarket mechanisms.

Standard 5 - Civics, Citizenship, and Government: use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the U.S. and other nations; the U.S. Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- To introduce students to a variety of topics, themes, and issues related to the study of China.
- To examine the broad scope of history in China by examining both historic and contemporary issues.
- To explore the dynamic changes experienced by the People's Republic of China over the last twenty-five years.
- To introduce students to technology-based resources for the study of China.

**MATERIALS:**

Blog Website: the final product, "Mr. B's China Blog – Summer 2007", is located at the following web address: <http://admin.bhbl.neric.org/~dbesozzi@bhbl.org/FOV2-00024241/FOV2-00024242/>

The blog contains a variety of text, photographs, and video all created as part of the Fulbright-Hays experience. In addition, web links were added which allow students to examine a variety of web-based materials related to the topics discussed in the blog (this task will be an ongoing endeavor throughout the school year 2007–2008).

Themes/Topics List: listed below are many themes and topics discussed throughout the blog that were created as part of my experiences as a Fulbright-Hays Scholar in China. The following lists are divided up by the cities that were visited as part of the program:

**Beijing:**

democracy  
education  
teacher training  
Temple of Heaven  
Tiananmen Square  
Forbidden City  
Beijing's Drum Tower  
Hutongs of Beijing  
The Great Wall  
Wu Shu (martial arts)  
suicide in China  
Liulichang District  
fast food

environmental issues  
Beijing's Capital Museum  
2008 Olympics  
migrant workers  
Chinese food  
art  
Jesuits in China  
China Daily newspaper  
Old Summer Palace  
AIDS in China

**Xian:**

Xian - then (1986) and now (2007)  
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)  
Neolithic China (Banpo)  
Xian Hot Springs  
Xian Incident (1936)  
terracotta soldiers  
Xian's Great Mosque

**Guiyang:**

Tianxingqiao (Heavenly Star Park)  
Huangguoshu Waterfall  
Longgong (Dragon Palace) waterfall  
Tianlongpao village  
Three Heavenly Platforms Temple  
ethnic minorities in Guizhou Province  
the Long March

**Shanghai:**

China's Foreign Policy  
religion  
the Nationalists  
Sun Yat-sen  
urbanization in Shanghai  
Suzhou  
scholar gardens  
the Grand Canal  
silk manufacturing  
ancient bronze artifacts  
Shanghai's Mag-Lev train

**Hong Kong:**

Hong Kong handover Anniversary  
education reform in Hong Kong  
legal reforms in Hong Kong  
post-handover social transformation in Hong Kong  
Hong Kong's container port economy

Skyscrapers in Hong Kong  
the art and archaeology of China

**STRATEGIES:**

Several strategies are applicable to this project:

- Students can be assigned to read the blog from start to finish.
- Students can search the blog for specific themes/topics that are of interest to them in their study of China.
- Students can use the blog and its resources (text, photographs, and video) as the basis for expanding the blog by researching additional topics.
- Students can contribute to the expansion of the blog by researching additional web resources, the links of which can then be added to the blog (this will be part of the ongoing initiative to expand the blog during the school year).

**ASSESSMENT (EVALUATION):**

Quizzes or tests can be generated to evaluate student understanding of the themes and topics addressed in the blog. At this time, no formal evaluation has been created, allowing flexibility on the part of educators who use the blog to create appropriate assessments of their students' use of the resource.

**FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:**

The blog will be maintained as a long-term resource. As a result, periodic updates will be made to ensure that the blog remains consistent with contemporary changes in China's political, economic, and social development. Students will have the opportunity to contribute to this process by conducting research on the themes and topics discussed in the blog. By contributing additional information, as well as web links and related resources, the blog should be capable of sustaining itself for several years to come.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

Additional web resources, in the form of links to related content, will be added to the blog on an on-going basis.

**REFERENCES:**

Currently, the blog consists of primary source reflections and notes written by David Besozzi, author of this curriculum project, and participant in the Summer 2007 Fulbright–Hays Seminars Abroad Program.