



Okayama University **EPOK Final Essays** EPOK Student Forum 2014 Spring

2014 Aug 6th (Wed) 10:00~12:00
L-café (General Education bldg. Annex)



EPOK student Forum Schedule スケジュール (Presenter in order 発表者発表順)		EPOK Closing Ceremony EPOK修了式	
10:00	2014Spring EPOK Forum 開会		2014Spring EPOK 修了式 開会
10:05	個人発表 SABLAN, Aldwin John Blanco University of Guam	11:30	開会のことば 田口雅弘 グローバル・パートナーズ副センター長教授 Opening remarks Prof.TAGUCHI Deputy Director, Center for Global Partnerships & Education
10:10	個人発表 SRINGAMMUANG, Punyawee Mahidol University		
10:15	個人発表 YANG, Teng University of South Australia	11:35	修了証書授与 Presentation of a diploma SABLAN, Aldwin John Blanco (University of Guam) ABDUL NASIR, Nadiah (University of South Australia) YANG, Teng (University of South Australia) SRINGAMMUANG, Punyawee (Mahidol University) ENGLISH, Colette Isabel (California State University, Monterey Bay) MOORE, Taylor-Ann Miyoko (California State University, Monterey Bay) LYDON, Shelby Nicole (California State University, Monterey Bay) JACKSON, Joshua Robert (California State University, Monterey Bay) WEINRICH, Krystle Mae (San Jose State University) SCALISE, Robert Gregory (Arizona State University) BROWN, Kathryn Leigh (Arizona State University) FIECHTNER, Elizabeth Ann (Arizona State University) DRAPER, Joshua Michael (Appalachian State University) THORHALLSSON, Solrun Alexia (Appalachian State University) SIMONDS III, John Day (Appalachian State University) TSAI, Angel I-Ju (New York State University Stony Brook) LEPLEY, Arthur Yves Bernard (University of Edinburgh) PETROVA, Mila Georgieva (University of Sheffield) MIZERIJA, Gabriela (University of Sheffield) NUALTARANEE, Supatra (Kasetsart University)
10:20	個人発表 ENGLISH, Colette Isabel California State University, Monterey Bay		
10:30	グループ発表 MOORE, Taylor-Ann Miyoko California State University, Monterey Bay LYDON, Shelby Nicole California State University, Monterey Bay THORHALLSSON, Solrun Alexia Appalachian State University SCALISE, Robert Gregory Arizona State University		
10:45	個人発表 JACKSON, Joshua Robert California State University, Monterey Bay		
10:50	グループ発表 BROWN, Kathryn Leigh Arizona State University PETROVA, Mila Georgieva University of Sheffield		
10:55	個人発表 FIECHTNER, Elizabeth Ann Arizona State University		
11:00	個人発表 DRAPER, Joshua Michael Appalachian State University		
11:05	個人発表 SIMONDS III, John Day Appalachian State University		
11:10	個人発表 TSAI, Angel I-Ju New York State University Stony Brook		
11:15	個人発表 MIZERIJA, Gabriela University of Sheffield		
11:20	個人発表 NUALTARANEE, Supatra Kasetsart University		
11:25	個人発表 WEINRICH, Krystle Mae San Jose State University		
11:30	2014Spring EPOK Forum 閉会	11:40	修了生より一言 Messages
		11:50	閉会のことば 田口雅弘 グローバル・パートナーズ副センター長教授 Closing remarks Prof.TAGUCHI Deputy Director, Center for Global Partnerships & Education



~EPOK 2013 - 2014~

◇◇ 平成 26 年 8 月 修了生 ◇◇

平成 26 年度 4 月 期 受入 生

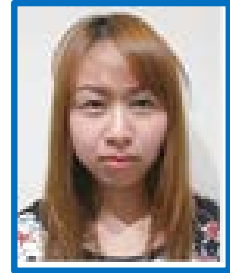
◎グアム大学
The University of Guam
Aldwin Sablan
(エイジェイ)



◎南オーストラリア大学
University of South Australia
Nadiyah Abdul Nasir Teng Yang
(ナディア)



◎マヒドン大学
Mahidol University
Punyawee Sringammuang (ガム)



平成 25 年度 10 月 期 受入 生

◎カリフォルニア州立大学モントレイベイ校
California State University, Monterey Bay

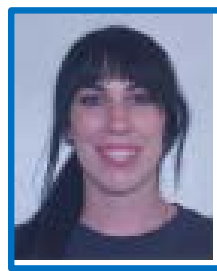
Colette English
(コレット)



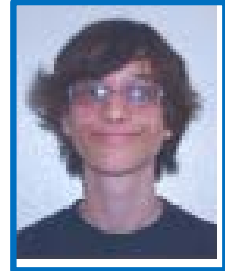
Taylor-Ann Moore
(テイラーアン)



Shelby Lydon
(ライドン)



Joshua Jackson
(ジョシュ)



◎サンノゼ州立大学
San Jose State
University
Krystle Weinrich
(クリステル)

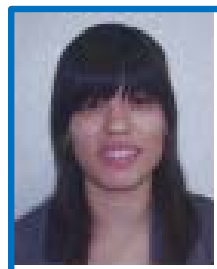


◎アリゾナ州立大学
Arizona State University

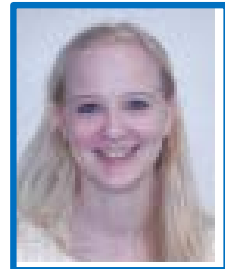
Robert Scalise
(ロビー)



Kathryn Brown
(キャサリン)



Elizabeth Fiechtner
(エリ)



◎アパラチアン州立大学
Appalachian State University

◎ニューヨーク州立
ストーニーブルック大学
Stony Brook University

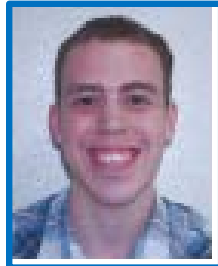
Joshua Draper
(ジョシュ)



Solrun Thorhallsson
(ソラ)



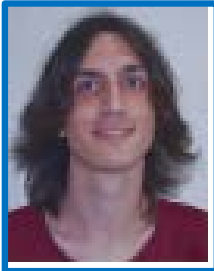
John Simonds
(ジョン)



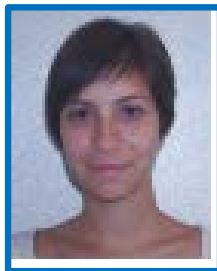
Angel Tsai
(エンジェル)



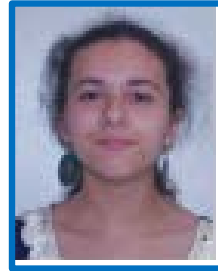
◎エディンバラ大学
The University of Edinburgh
Arthur Lepley
(アサ)



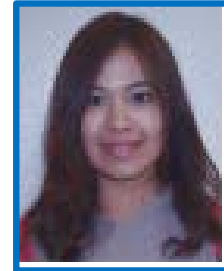
◎シェフィールド大学
The University of Sheffield
Mila Petrova
(ミラ)



Gabriela Mizerija
(ガビー)



◎カセサート大学
Kasetsart University
Supatra Nualtaranee
(ジャム)



継続生 Continuing Students

◎ノーザンアイオワ大学
University of Northern Iowa
Michael Nachtigal
(マイケル)



◎グアム大学
The University of Guam
Daniel Tangonan
(ダニエル)



Eric Rabago
(エリック)



◎アデレード大学
University of Adelaide
Yasmin Bottos
(ヤスミン)



◎チュラロンコン大学
Chulalongkorn University
Pitsinee
Purtngooluerm
(ピーム)



Boonyaporn
Wannasiri
(ブレオ)



Benja
Daomasratsamee
(ワー)



◎東北師範大学
Northeast Normal University
Yue Meng
(エイミー)



SABLAN, Aldwin John "AJ" Blanco
University of Guam

Last year January was my first time coming to Japan, my thoughts and experience? I love the country of Japan. When I was young, my mother was always affiliated with some sort of Japanese organization that dealt with both Japan and Guam. We would have Japanese students come to Guam to experience homestay and the island's culture and lifestyle there. At that time, I didn't care about the Japanese language or what was exposed in front of me; little did I know that it would affect me more than I thought. Since then, I'm been taking the language of Japanese very serious because I want to be able to able speak, write, and read in Japanese better than I do now.

I have been studying Japanese for a total of 2 and half years, but this EPOK experience that I was able to be a part of has revealed to me that this occurrence gave me a sample of what I can really do with my Japanese. In Guam (or in any other country), it is difficult to try and practice or speak a new language when the people who are around you are either not in the same interest or do not speak it at all. One can only do so much to help themselves. Luckily, coming to Okayama has raised my awareness and proficiency of trying to improve my Japanese. All thanks to Okayama University and the EPOK program.

When I got here, I wasted no time. I was still at the state of mind that I would only stay here for 5 months, so I had to make the best of this happening and enjoy it to the fullest. What did I do? I put myself out there and try to reveal that I want to learn Japanese. I joined the Judo club, a basketball circle, helped out when I can at L-café with Okadai Japanese students who wanted to learn English. I did all these things to help my Japanese to try and become better. I talked to all the people who I became affiliated with and became friends with them. They had the same goal as I did, but just in a different language. It was a simple compromise. I helped with their English and they helped me with my Japanese.

I have to be honest though. When I applied for the Student Exchange Program, I wanted to go to Japan for sure but have the choice either Tokyo or Osaka. When I was told I was going to Okayama, I had asked, "What's that?" It makes me laugh every time I think about that moment. Fortunately, I had friends who did the same program and they gave me advice and guidance to help me make the most out of my stay in Okayama. The funny thing is, if I could do it all over again.....I would in a heartbeat and still choose Okayama every time! ☺

The EPOK program has given me so much that I can't appreciate it more than enough. I have met some of the greatest people here, enjoyed an awesome campus and faculty, and enjoyed a quiet but serene area in Japan which is Okayama. I had met awesome teachers and been a student of their teaching enthusiasm in which I wish we had them in Guam. I made awesome friends to keep in touch, in case I ever come back to visit again. Last but not least, got familiar with Okayama and what it has to offer in the event if I should ever live or work here!

It is just sad to be going back to Guam, when I have made this place for the last 5 months my home. I wish I was able to stay for another semester and enjoy this encounter to its fullest, but obligations back at home call for me and I have to return. I will never forget this experience and all the memories I have made in Okayama. In the near future, I hope to become some sort of ambassador for Guam or translator and work in Japan. If that ever happens, I will never forget Okayama and what it has done for me. Thank you!

Nadiyah Abdul Nasir
University of South Australia

Although I only had four months here in Okayama, I benefitted a lot from this EPOK experience. I am grateful that OkaDai has given me the opportunity to be here and I am amazed at the extent the University went through to make sure we were settling well.

I learnt a lot about the Japanese society through living here and while I cannot be here long enough to experience and learn more, I have gained a better understanding of how and why Japanese people behave a certain way.

In general, most Japanese people I have met in Okayama are kind, helpful and hospitable. I am happy to say that I haven't encountered serious bad experiences with the people in Okayama. While I find that people are generally nicer here than the other bigger cities, I realised that they are not used to mixing with foreigners.

I was lucky to have been in a basketball circle outside of the university and this gave me an opportunity to meet other students from other universities here in Okayama. Through this circle, I discovered that language can be a very huge barrier. While most were accepting of me and although sometimes conversations with some of them were somewhat like 'dog and duck' talking, there were some who didn't really want to communicate with me despite my efforts of speaking Japanese. They were quite 'close-minded' in a sense that they were not open to any form of communication just because they 'don't know English' and were quick to make that as an excuse. This was one of the eye-opening experiences for me in terms of interacting with people and made me realise that not everyone will be open to interacting with international people.

Another thing that I have come to appreciate more is the fact that Okayama is a really calm and peaceful city to live as a student. When I first came here, I realised there isn't much entertainment here and I was disappointed in that. However, I quickly appreciated the peace and tranquillity Okayama has to offer after spending a few exhausting days in Tokyo during Golden Week. I have come to love the location and size of our rooms in Kuwanoki Dormitory. I loved the fact that we have the room, toilet and kitchen facilities to ourselves because it is more cosy and comfortable that way. Okayama is also an easy city to cycle around and although I miss driving, I liked how we could cycle around without strict rules such as putting on helmets and bicycle lanes. Cycling around also made me feel like a local and in a way, made me feel belonged.

I may not have the opportunity to stay here longer, however I am determined not to let my experiences here go to waste. I will continue to study more Japanese with my EPOK experiences in mind as motivation. I have yet to figure out what I would like to do in the future, but being part of this EPOK programme will definitely play a huge part in my future decisions.

Nadiyah Abdul Nasir

私のしてんからの「日本」:岡山でのこうかんりゅう学のけいけんからわかったこと

私は岡山に来て 4 ヶ月しかいませんでしたが、このりゅう学せいかつからおおくのことをまなびました。私は岡山大学に来ることができたということにとてもかんしゃしています。

日本に住むことで日本社会のことがわかりはじめ、日本人がどのようにふるまい、そのりゅうをよりりかいすることができました。

たいていの私のであった日本人は優しく、しんせつでした。かれらといっしょにいてわるいけいけんは一どもしませんでした。かれらはまたとかいに住んでいる日本人よりきほんてきに優しくかったです、外国人とまじわるけいけんがあまりなさそうにかんじました。

私はかがいかつどうとして、バスケットボールのサークルに入ることができ、岡山大学の学生いがいの学生とも会うきかいがありました。とてもたのしかったです。

岡山の町は、しずかできれいでした。私は岡山のへいわなところが大好きです。私はまたくわの木りょうや、岡山をサイクリングすることも好きです。なぜならそれらのかつどうで日本らしさを感じることができたからです。

私がオーストラリアにもどったとき、このけいけんをむだにはしません。私は日本語のべんきょうをつづけるつもりです。しょうらい、何をするのかはまだきめていませんが、このりゅうがくけいけんは、しょうらいをきめるたいせつなできごとであると思っています。

SRINGAMMUANG, Punyawee
Mahidol University

EPOK is the exchange program that opens a chance for international students to study in Okayama University. I think that this program has many advantages for people who interest in Japanese language and culture.

From EPOK I study not only Japanese language but also Japanese culture. In my Japanese class I learn Japanese grammar and conversation. This class is very useful because all students can adapt the lesson and knowledge learned from class into their daily life in Japan. Moreover in the study of Japan class I have a chance to visit many places in Okayama. I learn many things such as the tradition of Japanese tea ceremony and Japanese history. It is a good memory because all students can have fun from these field trips and in the same time we can learn Japanese language and culture. I furthermore have an opportunity to participate in home stay program provided for EPOK students. By staying with host family, I can truly learn and understand Japanese culture and society. My host family is very nice and friendly. They teach me both academic and non-academic stuffs. I learn new technical vocabularies from them since my host families are doctors. I also learn how to make sushi for the very time. It is fun and interesting. I really appreciate the time that I spend with my host family. In Okayama University I meet lots of good Japanese and non-Japanese friends. We do many things together and it is very valued memory.

Before I came to Japan, my goal is to learn Japanese language and meet new friends. From this EPOK program I believe that I can accomplish my goal and my Japanese language is better. Therefore, for those people who are thinking about coming to Japan to study, I can suggest from my own experience that EPOK is a very good and interesting program.

SRINGAMMUANG, Punyawee

EPOK とは、岡山大学短期交換留学プログラムということです。このプログラムに通じて、岡山大学と協定を結んだ海外大学の学生たちは、岡山大学に留学することができます。日本語と日本文化に興味を持っている方に、とても役立つプログラムだと思います。

私は EPOK のおかげで日本語だけではなく、日本文化も様々勉強しました。具体的に言うと、日本語は日本語授業で文法や会話などを勉強しました。授業から得たこれらの知識を適応して日本での日常生活に活用できるので、とても役立ちます。日本文化の場合は、日本文化や岡山の観光地を見学する、Study of Japan という授業で勉強しました。この授業で、私は茶道や折り紙や畳作りなどの経験を得ました。ホームステイも行きました。日本人の家族と住んでいると、日本文化や日本社会をもっと理解できました。私のホストファミリーはとても明るくて優しかったです。それに、お医者さんの家族なので、用語を色々教えてくれました。学問的なことだけではなく、日常的なこともいっぱい教えてくれました。例えば、寿司を作り方です。とても楽しかったので、感謝しました。それに、これらの活動に通じて、岡山大学での他の留学生と友達になって、いっしょに楽しい時間を過ごせました。全部は、かけがえのない思い出になりました。

日本に留学する前に、私の目的は日本語と日本文化を勉強することと、たくさんの友達ができることです。EPOK のおかげで、私の日本語はよくなったし、日本文化もいっぱい体験したし、それに、友達もたくさんできました。つまり、全部の目的が達成しました。それで、日本に留学したいと思っている方に、この EPOK という素晴らしいプログラムをぜひおすすめしたいと思います。

YANG, Teng
University of South Australia

EPOK experience in Okayama has been helping me deepen and changed my view of Japan, I believe the experiences I had so far in Japan will play an important role in my life long. The culture and tradition have been well-preserved where you might be able to tell through a number of festivals all over the year. In Japan, I have the chance to talk to local Japanese and get to know Japanese lifestyle and their values, way of thinking and culture. The majority Japanese people are really friendly. I really enjoy shopping in Japan, because they always offer the best service to the customers, that's why Japan attracts a million people coming over to Japan for traveling and shopping, not only because of culture and history here, but also because of the services they offer. What's more, One of the best thing about Living in Japan today is everything that so approachable. You can find the vending machine, 24 hours stores everywhere. Furthermore, in term of the public transport, Shinkansen is such convenient that is high speed with frequently running within an hour. And it always come in on time and never delayed even the bus and subways, they are very impressive. Hence, it reflects that the high technology has involved everywhere in Japan daily life.

There are a lot of dynamic cities in Japan, such as Tokyo, Kyoto, Kobe, Osaka, Okayama and so on. Okayama is really good for education, because it is a quite and peaceful city without too much hustle and bustle that students are able to stay focused on their study.

And all the experiences I went through that changed my view of Japan in different ways. Before I come to Japan, I barely know anything about real Japan, all the knowledge about Japan I gained all come from internet, web and some thing. The information might be with biases on the internet until I am here in Japan and tasted the life style here. You never know how good it is until you go through all of it. I have

met all the lovely people in Japan, tasty food everywhere, all the story and memory are almost perfect.

From my perspective, the EPOK experience would make huge contributions to my goal in the future, the experiences had broaden my horizon, I feel a different way of thinking which gives me more room to touch the world. Furthermore, it helps me open up to become a Japan lover. I would definitely come back to visit Japan.

In conclusion, I really enjoy and had good time during my stay in Japan. I have to say a massive thank you to the EPOK program, which has really outstanding system for exchange student, it is very helpful and useful that all exchange student have two designed tutors and advisors to get individual help and advise, and I am very lucky to have the opportunity to participant in the this exchange program.



ENGLISH, Colette Isabel
California State University, Monterey Bay

Although this is my second time visiting Japan, through the EPOK program I was able to experience so much more of this unique culture. Of course I enjoyed traveling around Japan, but the EPOK program let me experience culture and social interaction with the locals that lived in Okayama. This was not something I could have learned just by visiting the country as a tourist.

Before coming to Japan I wasn't really a social person, but since engrossing myself in the Japanese culture and interacting with people in Okayama, I slowly started opening up to people. In Japanese class we not only learned Japanese but also small tidbits of Japanese culture, values, and traditions in our lessons. For example around Christmas and New Years' time we go to learn how Japan celebrates these holidays. Although I did learn a great deal of Japanese culture in my various classes, I think I really came to understand cultures through daily interactions with the people. I think the largest impression Japan left on me was just how much of a hospitable country it is. People go out of their way to help you when you are in trouble. Considering that I traveled quite a lot I have many examples of random stranger helping me out when I'm in a bad situation. During the winter break I and 2 friends, Krystal and Gabby, went to Okinawa for 1 week. On one of our trips Krystal and I took a bus pretty much to the middle of nowhere to do some snorkeling at a famous snorkeling area. When we had finished our snorkeling lesson we had around a 30 min. walk back to the bus stop, and when our snorkeling instructor saw us walking back he offered us a ride back to the bus stop. After he dropped us off and while we were waiting for our bus to come I went to get some ice cream and realized that I left my phone in his car. To make a long story short I was able to get ahold of him with the help of many other generous strangers. He told me that he was willing to drive all the way to Naha the next day to drop off my phone just out of the kindness of his heart. I'll probably never forget that act of kindness. I know the point of the EPOK program was to increase my knowledge of Japan and its culture, but because of the variety of exchange students, I also came to learn about many other countries and their cultures.

When I graduate college I want to return to Japan like many of my friends. With the knowledge and experience I've gained this year from Okayama's EPKO program, when I eventually return to Japan, the skills I've learned can be used to enhance my future experiences. I am so grateful for the opportunity I was given with the EPOK program and I will be sad to leave Okayama, but I won't be gone for too long.

ENGLISH, Colette Isabel

5年前日本を訪れたのに、こんどこそ、EPOKのために最後の時より、今年の本
の経験がおもしろかったです。例えば EPOKU のために日本の習慣と文化を経験する
ようになりました。そして私はたくさん旅行をするようになりました。一人旅できたら、
困れば、日本人と話せました。私は普通の観光客のよう日本を経験すれば、別に何も習
わないと思います。EPOK の経験は面白くて、楽しくて、たくさんものを習うように
なりました。

日本に来る前に、私はあまり社会的な人でわないけど、日本へ来て以来、たくさんの
友達を作っています。そして毎日日本人と話すなければならないから、自信がつけまし
た。言うまでもなく、日本の授業で日本語を勉強したけど、日本の文化、習慣、休日な
どを勉強しました。例えば、クリスマスの時期の間に、授業で先生は日本野クリスマ
スの文化と習慣をはなしました。びっくりしたことに、クリスマスの間に日本人はケーキや
フライドチキンを食べます。それは面白いの話だと思います。日本の授業の間にたく
さんの文化と習慣を習ったのに、日常生活でモットの習慣と文化を習うと思いました。
日本へ来て以来、日本は安全で、丁寧な国に気づきました。困れば、私に助けることだ
ろう。今年たくさんの場所に旅行したら、色々な例と考えます。冬休みの間に、友達と
一緒に沖縄に行きました。1週間ぐらい沖縄に旅行しました。3目の日友達と一緒にス
ノーケリングをしていました。バス停からスノーケリングまでは30分ぐらい歩いてい
ます。スノーケリングの後でバスで歩き始める時スノーケリングの先生は私たちに「バ
ス停まで乗らせて行ってあげる」言いました。スノーケリングの先生を立ち去った後で
車の中で iPhone は忘れことを気づき
ました。結局私は彼に電話をしました。多分不便なのに、彼は私に iPhone を返しまし
た。

EPOK の目的は日本語の話し、聞き、読み、を日本の文化と習慣の知識を増えるのに、
他のものも習うようになりました。EPOK はアメリカ人だけじゃないから、私はフラ
ンス人、オーストラリア人、ドイツ人、中国人、韓国人、ロシア人、台湾人、英国人、な
どの国と中間を習いました。

私は卒業の後で、日本に帰りたいです。EPOK のため、日本に帰る時、簡単なこと
に、日本に住むと思います。ありがたいことに、EPOK に入りました。アメリカに帰る
とき寂
しいけど、来年こそ日本に帰ります。

MOORE, Taylor-Ann Miyoko
California State University, Monterey Bay

There are countless amounts of things that I have learned after coming to Okayama University. Things about Japan, the culture, language, the people, but most of all, I have learned about myself. Overall, I think that coming to Okayama has been one of the most incredible experiences of my life and I've learned so much and grown as a person as well.

In high school and college, while learning Japanese, we were often not taught about the culture of Japan. If we did learn, the information was often outdated as our teachers were typically older people and teaching straight from a book. I thought I had a rather firm grasp on the culture of Japan and what typically happens here, but after coming and living here for the past ten months, I learned how wrong I was. Like any culture, Japan has a rich past and an ever growing future. In the United States, students typically learn about the old culture of Japan, things like tea ceremonies, sumo, flower arrangement, and things of the like. However, after actually living in Japan, Okayama specifically, we were all able to learn about a Japan that you don't see in text books.

Living in Okayama has definitely changed my outlook on Japan. Okayama is so unlike anywhere that we learn about in books or on TV. Typically, if someone were to think of the youth culture in Japan, they think of Tokyo or Osaka, places they see in movies or TV. Although that is a fairly accurate depiction of young Japan, living in a place a little less popular has really opened my eyes to a different way of life that people experience here in Okayama. Before moving here, I never really put any thought into the fact that there are different dialects, ways of thinking, dressing, and living. Okayama is a place like no other and in my opinion it has become my "true" Japan. Because I was able to actually meet people and create lasting friendships, I was able to find out about how the youth of Japan really acts. There are so many things-countless, that I have learned about myself by living in Okayama. Okayama is not only the castle town that I was taught about online, but also a growing city filled with so many different people. Because I live in the inner city of Okayama, I get to see and meet a lot of younger people, college students, and working people, I am able to actually learn about the people of Japan rather than the abstract things you see on TV. By becoming friends with Japanese college students I was able to fully deepen my understanding of Japan.

My goal my entire life was to work in Japan as an English teacher. By being able to live in Japan for the past year, I was able to realize that what I want to do really is possible. I was also able to test the water and find out that I really do want to return to

Japan and pursue my dreams. If I had not done the EPOK program, I would not have had the confidence to try and return to Japan and live here as a working adult. Although I know that I can never get this time as an EPOK student back, I can say that I am so fortunate to be able to have lived in Japan for a year through it. Even if and when I return to Japan, I will forever be thankful for the EPOK program.

MOORE, Taylor-Ann Miyoko

日本に来た以来に、たくさんことを学びました。岡山にとって、たくさんことを学びました。アメリカでもたくさんことをしたと思ったものの、日本に来たのは「本当の日本」のことを学べられました。

日本の文化とか言葉とか日常生活を知りたいから、日本に来たのは良かったと思います。アメリカで私は日本語を勉強したが、日本の若者カルチャーを全然勉強しなかった。アメリカでは、古い文化だけ勉強しました。でも、岡山に住んでいるから、ほかの文化も見えました。だから、今、たくさんの若者カルチャーをも知ります。

岡山市と岡山大学で、いろいろな人を会えました。フリータとか学生とか社会人など会えたら、今の日本のことを学べられました。それから、この人たちを会えたら、本当にうれしいです。たくさん分かったことがあります。岡山に来たことは私の考えることを変わります。日本に来た前、日本の日常生活があまり知らなかった。今、他の表現とかファッションとか人間関係など考えられます。日常生活の習慣も変わったと思います。アメリカに住むテイラーアンと日本に住むテイラーアンは別の人になったと思います。なぜか分からない、日本に住むことはができれば、私はもっといい人になったと思います。もし、岡山に住まない、本当の日本ことを学ぶは無理だと思います。もし、日本に来ない、いろいろな大切なことを学ぶチャンスがないと思います。

日本語を勉強した以来、私はいつも日本で英語の先生になりたいです。日本に来たまえ、私は本当に日本に行くかどうか分からなかったです。でも、EPOK ができれば、私の夢もできるだと思います。岡山に住む後、私のやる気ももっともっと大きくなりました。私の日本語の先生たちのような先生になりたいと思います。全ての会った日本語の先生は優しく、いつも笑顔で助けてくれた人たちだと思います。その上、先生は日本語だけ教えたくらなかった、日本の生活になじむ方法も教えてくれました。このような先生に絶対になりたいと思います。もし、EPOK ができなかつた、そのやる気ができないかもしれない。だから、EPOK に感謝がたくさんあります。

LYDON, Shelby Nicole
California State University Montrey Bay

When I came to Japan, I had tried to prepare myself for the culture shock that I knew would come. I had taken classes at my home university to learn Japan's history, it's culture, but until now I had really never experienced it first-hand. By living here, I discovered a variety of new things about Japanese people and especially about the Japanese language. Since I learned my Japanese primarily through textbooks, it was really interesting to learn new words that are used in every-day speech by people who are a similar age as me. In Okayama specifically, I learned about Okayama dialect, and that there are deep cultural roots here, roots that are engrained in places like Okayama Castle and Korakuen. I learned about the story of Momotaro, and that Okayama is famous for fruits like peaches and grapes. But aside from those things, I learned a lot about myself and my ability to cope with being somewhere so foreign for so long, and to rely on that ability to succeed.

By surrounding myself in this new environment, I've learned and grown in ways that I could never have predicted. Almost by force, I have learned these new things simply by being here and meeting new people; my friends, both international and Japanese, have taught me so much through experiences. I sought different ways to learn without realizing that I was learning already. To my friends, teachers, and even strangers, I asked questions listened closely to what they said and how they said it, and paid attention to gestures and body language. In this way, I was able to better understand Japanese people and contemporary Japan. Through L-café and the Study of Japan course, I was given the opportunity to travel to new places and discover even more of Japan than I ever had before. From these experiences and adventures, I was able to compare Japanese to other Japanese people.

The opportunity to live and attend school in Japan has definitely changed the way that I viewed Japan, its people, and the language. The experience alone has made me realize much about myself as well. Before traveling here, I didn't know anything about Okayama, or even that there was such a place; but now I can't imagine living anywhere else. Using this experience I have been able to see and learn so many new things that I could not have been able to do otherwise. The most surprising thing is perhaps that I really want to return to Okayama, not just because I adore the area itself, but because of all of the friends that I've made here. In the future, I will urge my fellow students to travel to Okayama. It is my desire to improve my Japanese more and more, and the EPOK program allowed me to progress so far, strengthening my resolve to achieve this dream.

LYDON, Shelby Nicole

日本に来て以来

日本に来て、カルチャーショックの対処のために準備していました。カリフォルニア州立大学モンレーベイで色々な日本語の授業を取って、日本の歴史や文化を学んできました。しかし、今まで実際自分で経験しませんでした。岡山に住んでみて、様々な新しい重要なものを見出しました。例えば、日本人や日本語について学びました。私は日本語の習う方法が学校で日本語の教科書だけからでした。その方法だけでは、日本での現代の言語を学ぶことはできなかつたです。岡山に来て、若い人から新しく役に立つ単語と文法を教えてもらいました。また岡山弁と伝統的な文化について学んで、たくさんの歴史的な観光地に行き、とくに思い出に残っているのは岡山城と後樂園です。そして、桃太郎の歴史を学び、岡山の有名なものはぶどうと桃という事を知りました。それらのものに加えて、自分についてたくさん重要なものを学びました。その上、外国へ長い間住んだので、私の対処の能力が上がりました。

新しい環境で取り囲むのは、私を大人にし、新しいものを習う方法はここにいることと新しい人を会うだけからです。私の外国人の友達と日本人の友達が私に色々な経験をさせてくれました。私は岡山大学で学び、また授業の外で色々なものについても学びました。たくさん聞いてみたいものがあるので、私は友達と先生に質問を問いて、日本人の姿勢やジェスチャーや話し方に集中しました。このようにして、私は現代での日本人について分かりやすくなりました。L-cafeとStudy of Japanの授業を取ったので、日本中でたくさん場所に旅行することができました。

岡山に住んでいるので、日本について私の考え方を変化しつつあります。この経験で私について学んで、私は自分自身をしんじてになりました。日本に旅行する前に、岡山を知りませんでした。しかし、日本で1番好きな場所になりました。他の都道府県に住みたくありません。将来に岡山に戻りたいです。なぜなら、この地域が好きで、岡山で出会ったたくさんの友達に会ったからです。何回も戻りたいです。EPOKのプログラムは私の夢を達成する手伝うをしてくれました。もっと日本語を勉強して、上手になりたいです。

JACSON, Joshua Robert
California State University, Monterey Bay

It has always been my dream to come to Japan. Ever since watching Dotch cooking show I was enthralled with Japanese culture. My father and I stumbled across the show while flipping channels when I was about 12 years old. He became a habit for us to sit and watch Dotch Cooking show every week. The first time we watched it it was snapping turtle hot pot against anglerfish hot pot. Around the same time friend of mine introduced me to the Bleach manga, and I thought it was amazing. I read a few volumes in shortly after started to watch the anime. I knew I was watching or more anime, and when I entered high school I joined the anime club. After that, all my life I have wanted to live in Japan, and study abroad was the easiest way to meet my goal.

At my high school it was required to take two years of foreign language education, however my school only offered Spanish. To me Spanish was not really all that interesting so I found that Osaka Sangyo University Los Angeles offered high school Japanese lessons taught in English. Those classes were my birthday and Christmas presents for two years. I would spend four hours every Saturday studying Japanese. At first I loved it but the pressures of high school made it slowly was enjoyable to spend my Saturdays at school. It was a lot of fun and I met many interesting people, however it was not the most intensive course I could have taken. When it comes to studying a foreign language is much more effective to do a little every day than one big chunk a week. So while I study for two years I was not all that competent in the language.

During my time studying at OSULA I started to practice kendo. This is a lot of fun for me and I thought it was a good way to use the Japanese I had learned. However the classes were talking English and very little Japanese was used so it was not the best practice for Japanese. Still I kept practicing kendo because it was a very enjoyable sport for me. In America most sports you play are all about winning, whereas kendo is mainly just about you and your inner spirit. This mentality intrigue me and as such to kendo always been my favorite sport.

Eventually I became very busy with school and apply for colleges so after my two years of study I stopped. When I finally started at California State University Monterey Bay part of the curriculum is to take two years of foreign language. They offered Spanish, American sign language, and Japanese. Because I had already studied Japanese before, I figured it would be nice to continue. I decided to start from the very beginning again because I had forgotten most of what I learned in high school. In my second year when it came time to apply for study abroad I realize that going to Japan was not going to work out with my original idea of being a film major, so I switched to Japanese Language and Culture. Now I have just spent the last year living in Okayama, and I have loved every second of it.

Or I first arrived in Japan hadn't studied Japanese for about five months so I was very rusty. For example when taking the subway in Tokyo I said to a worker there "I want Asakusa" instead of saying "I want to go to Asakusa". He understood me well enough but I realized that my Japanese needed work. The first week I spent navigating around Tokyo and I did well enough. I was so happy to be in Japan that nothing could upset me, and I constantly wore a smile on my face.

After arriving in Okayama however I noticed that the lifestyle was different. There were no subways to take you around, instead everyone rode a bicycle. Because getting a bicycle is one of the top priorities to live in Okayama one of my favorite things to do is pick a direction and ride. Sometimes I find interesting shops other times I spend hours going through rice fields. This allowed me to experience what I consider a more real Japan.

One of my favorite moments here was going to my home stay. The family I had was amazing and enabled me to do much more than I thought I would ever have done here. When I first arrived it was the standard introductions and I was shown around town. That night they had a Christmas party there an American family came. The father taught English and the children were homeschooled. This is rather strange to me because I never thought I would meet Home schooled Christians in Japan. Even though the children were born in Japan they acted so American, that I was ashamed to be an American. After they left I went back to speaking Japanese and having fun with the family all the while remembering the country I had left behind. The next day we went to art galleries on Naoshima, I had an amazing time, and it reminded me of being with my parents. Ever since moving out college I never go to galleries anymore, my friends aren't that " Civilized". That night we went to dinner and I had to jump out of my comfort zone. At first it was easy, I like to eat sashimi so raw fish was no problem. Then came the horumon, which I had eaten before I did not enjoy. Yet in order to be a good guest ate it, and this time it wasn't as bad. Later came the shirko, which I had heard about before coming to Japan but told myself I would not eat it. Again to be a good guest I ate it, and surprisingly the case was not so bad, however the texture felt like a mouthful of mayonnaise. The last strange thing I ate was anko, at first my host family was trying to tell me what I was about to eat, but because I had watched Dotch cooking show so many years ago I already knew what this strange meat was. Surprisingly it tasted much better than the shirko. After we ate they took me home, and I felt like I was extremely lucky to have such an amazing family.

In March I joined the kendo club, this was perhaps the best and most foolish thing I have done here. Practice is intense, and we meet at six days a week. Some members of the club I have practiced over 10 years, but I had only two years of practice with four years break. After the first day of practice I knew my body was ready because as soon as I got home I fell asleep for three hours. Gradually again the muscles needed and after about a month I was back in armor and able to practice with everyone. During the time to get back in full armor every muscle in my body was hurting. However my right forearm started to hurt so much I couldn't practice. After going to the doctor and reading about a similar injury online had figured out that I had given myself a stress fracture, simply from swinging a bamboo sword too much. Pretty soon I was headed to the doctor a lot and while this was not a life-threatening problem it prevented me from doing things I took for granted such as carrying groceries with my right hand. The doctor I have been going to did not speak English so the first couple of visits were very difficult and required a lot of time using a dictionary. On the bright side my Japanese did improve because we obviously could not communicate in English. After a while my heart cannot shield so I convinced my doctor to let me get an MRI in order to fully understand why X-rays showed no problem. The fact that I could now go to the doctor and get an MRI in Japanese showed me that I had become much better than when I had first arrived. After a few weeks I healed back up and went back to practice.

Finally my last major accomplishment was climbing Mount Fuji. Before coming to Japan my teacher asked us to make a list of things we want to do. For me it just coming to Japan was my major goal, however that was not good enough. So in order to fill up space on the paper my friend and I wrote climb Mount Fuji. Little did we know that you would actually wind up going up the mountain. I took the night bus to Tokyo on Wednesday night and arrived Thursday morning. I spent the day Tokyo and took a small nap at my friend's apartment. At around 16:00 we took a bus to the fifth station on Mount Fuji and started to climb at around 18:30. Hike started fine however it kept raining. After a few hours our clothes were completely soaked and all we can do was keep hiking through the rain, the wind, and cold. We met some interesting people two from Germany and one from England while seeking refuge in a toilet. After a while the rain turned to snow and we were the most miserable we have ever been in our lives. The weather was so bad we could not see anything from the top. On our descent we were able to see the sunrise and it was amazing. This was probably the hardest thing I have done in Japan. If I had to make a list of the best and worst moments this is number one for both lists.

Even though I have written a lot this only scratches the surface of what I have accomplished here. I was privileged to be able to come to Japan for a full year and I have been able to live my dream with no regrets. I hope to come back as soon as I can and I would like to thank Okayama University for letting me spend an amazing year here.

JACSON, Joshua Robert

それとも私が最初に日本に到着したので、私は非常に錆びた約 5 ヶ月間日本語を勉強していなかった。東京で地下鉄を撮るときたとえば、私が労働者ではなく「私は浅草に行きたい」と言ってから「私は浅草をしたい」と言った。彼は私に十分よく理解したが、私は気づいた私の日本に必要な作業。私が過ごした最初の週東京を中心に移動し、私は何も私を混乱させることができなかったことを、日本であることがとても幸せだった。結構やった、と私は常に私の顔に笑顔を身に着けていた。

岡山に着いた後、しかし、私は生活様式が違っていただけに気づいた。あなたの周りには、代わりに誰もが自転車に乗って取る地下鉄はありませんでした。自転車を得ることが岡山に住んで最重要課題の一つであるため、実行する私の好きなものの一つは、方向と乗り心地を選ぶことです。ときどき私は、面白いお店に私は田んぼを通過する時間を過ごす他の時間を見つける。これは私がよりリアルに日本を考えるもの体験する私を可能にした。

ここで私のお気に入りの瞬間の一つは、私のホームステイに行っていた。私が持っていた家族は驚くべきものだったと私は私が今までここで行っただろうと思ったよりもはるかに多くを行うために私を可能にした。私が最初に到着したとき、それは、標準的な紹介だったと私は町の周りを示した。その夜、彼らはアメリカの家族が来てそこにクリスマスパーティーがありました。父は英語を教え、子供たちは自宅で学習された。私はホームが日本でクリスチャン教育を満たすだろうと思ったことはありませんので、これは私にはむしろ不思議だ。子供が日本で生まれたにもかかわらず、彼らは私がアメリカ人であることを恥じたことなので、アメリカの行動した。彼らが去った後、私は日本語を話すと、私は取り残されていた国を覚えて家族と一緒にすべての中に楽しみを持ってに戻った。私たちは直島でのアートギャラリーに行ってきました次の日、私は素晴らしい時間を過ごして、それは私の両親と一緒にいることを思い出しました。今まで私はもう、ギャラリーに行くことはない大学に転出するので、私の友人は、その「文明」ではありません。その夜、私たちは夕食に行き、私は私の快適ゾーンの外にジャンプしなければならなかった。まずそれが簡単だったので、私はとても生の魚は全く問題なかった刺身を食べるのが好き。その後、私は好きではなかった前に私が食べていた horumon が来た。しかし、であるためには、良好なゲストがそれを食べて、今回は、それは、悪くはなかった。その後、私は日本に来る前に約聞いていた shirko を、来たが、私はそれを食べないと自分自身を語った。ここでも良いゲストであることを、私はそれを食べ、そして驚くべきケースは、しかし、テクスチャがマヨネーズの一口のように感じたので、悪くはなかった。私が食べた最後の奇妙なことは最初に私のホストファミリーは、私が食べることを約あった何を教えしようとしていた時に、あんこでしたが、私は何年も前に Dutch の料理番組を見ていたので、私はすでにこの奇妙な肉は何であったかを知っていた。驚くべきことに、shirko よりもはるかに良い味が。私たちが食べた後、彼らは家に連れて行ってくれた、と私はこのような素晴らしい家族を持っていることは非常にラッキーだったように感じた

三月に私は、これはおそらく、私がここで行った最良かつ最も愚かなものだった、剣道クラブに参加しました。練習は激しいです、そして、私たちは週 6 日で会う。いくつかの私が 10 年間実践しているクラブの会員が、私は四年ブレイクとの練習の 2 年を持っていた。私は、すぐに私が帰宅として、私は 3 時間眠ってしまったので、私の体は、準備ができていた知っていた練習の最初の日の後。徐々に再び筋肉が必要であり、約一ヶ月後、私は戻って鎧とみんなと練

習することができました。フルアーマーには取得する時間の間に私の体のすべての筋肉が傷つけられた。しかし、私の右前腕はそんなに私は練習ができなかったを傷つけるようになった。医者に行くに似た傷害オンラインについて読んだ後、私は単純にあまりにも多くの竹刀を振ってから、自分自身に疲労骨折を与えていたことを考え出していた。もうすぐ私が医者に多くを率い、これは生命を脅かす問題ではなかったしながら、それは私がかかったことをやってから私を阻止されたような、私の右手で食料品を運ぶように認めた。訪問の最初のカップルは非常に困難であったと辞書を使用して多くの時間を必要とせ医者は私は英語を話すことはなかっただろうされています。私たちは、明らかに英語でコミュニケーションができなかったので、明るい側では、私の日本語が改善しなかった。私の心はそのように遮蔽することはできませんが、私は私の医者を説得した後に X 線が何の問題も示さなかった理由を私は完全に理解するために、MRI を得ることが出来ます。私は今、医者に行き、日本語での MRI を得ることができるという事実は、私が最初に到着した時よりもはるかに良いになっていたことを私に示した。数週間後、私は復旧し癒され練習に戻った。

最後に、私の最後の主要な成果は、富士山を登っていた。教師が日本に来る前に私たちがやりたいことのリストを作るために私達に尋ねた。私にとってはそれだけで日本に来ることがそれが十分ではなかった、私の主な目標でした。だからために紙の上に私の友人のスペースを埋めると私は富士山に登る書いた。リトル私たちは、あなたが実際に山に登る羽目になるだろうと知っていた。私は、水曜日の夜に東京に夜行バスを取り、木曜日の朝に到着した。私は一日、東京を過ごしたと私の友人のアパートで小さな昼寝をした。周り 16:00 私たちは富士山 5 番目の駅までバスを取り、周り 18:30 登り始めました。ハイキングは、しかし雨が降った罰金始めた。数時間したら服が完全に浸漬し、そして私たちにできることはすべて、雨、風、そして寒さを通じてハイキング維持した。トイレに避難を求めている間私たちはイギリスからいくつかの興味深い人々にドイツからの 2 つに会った。しばらくして雨が雪に変わり、私たちは私たちが今まで私たちの生活にあった最も悲惨だった。天気は私達が上から何も見えなかったので、悪かった。私たちの降下で私達は日の出を見ることができた、それは驚くべきものだった。これはおそらく、私が日本に行っている最も困難なものだった。私は最高と最悪の瞬間のリストを作成しなければならなかった場合は、この両方のリストのためのナンバーワンである。

私は多くのことを書かれているにもかかわらず、この唯一の私がここで達成したものの表面をなぞった。私は通年で日本に来ることができて、特権だったと私は後悔で自分の夢を生きることができました。私はできるだけ早く私ができると私は私がここで素晴らしい年を過ごすための岡山大学に感謝したいように戻ってくることを願っています。

WEINRICH, Krystle
San Jose State University

Before coming to Japan, I had lived my whole life in the same house with the same people. I decided to go to a nearby university because their program was close to my home and had a good reputation. One of the first choices I made for my own enjoyment of my future instead of some requirement was to study Japanese. After a year at San Jose State I decided I really wanted to go see the country whose culture I loved. Even on a tourist visa, 90 days is not enough time to spend in the country. I wouldn't get to see more than one season. Traveling costs and time off of work are also very difficult things to work with when traveling for a long time. In choosing EPOK, I can get school credit and enjoy a year of life in Japan. Out of Kwansei Gakuin University, Kyushu University, Okayama University, and Yokohama University I am very glad that I chose Okayama. With all my traveling desires, living near Tokyo would limit how much I could spend on travel because it would be spent on life essentials. Okayama offers the perfect mix of quiet small city and a bustling downtown.

My views of Japan came from mostly tv and books. Before I decided to come to Japan, I was not involved in interacting with Japanese exchange students because it was very intimidating (However, I intend to be active in helping out with study abroad students who have come to SJSU upon my return). I did much "research" by watching foreigners who live in Japan on youtube. Some of them go into their experiences of culture (good and bad) in Japan. While it brought up things like manners in Japan, shouganai culture, or the many konbini and vending machines- nothing compares to actually experiencing it in person.

Japan has left a good impression on me from the very start. When I got to customs off the plane I was greeted with "How will you be enjoying your stay in Japan" instead of something like "What is your business here in Japan?". When I took the limousine bus from Okayama Airport I was very nervous and frazzled and I didn't know I had to present my ticket when I got off the bus so it was hidden away somewhere in my wallet. I was searching for what seemed forever but the bus driver never got angry, and instead comforted me and said it would be okay as I stood amongst my 2 luggages, backpack, and purse until I eventually found my ticket. People go out of their way to help you if you ask. A friend and I were lost in Osaka while looking for an owl cafe and stopped a woman to ask for directions. She ended up walking with us together with her friend she was supposed to meet for the whole 15 minutes to the cafe so we didn't get lost.

My good experiences outweigh the bad. While I can leave around my belongings and don't have to worry too much (in America, if you leave something you can be assured that it is gone), umbrellas do not fall into that category. Umbrellas of all things! It seems to be an understanding that it isn't frowned upon to "borrow" an umbrella from the rack if you need one. There are many superficial issues that might be annoying but are easily brushed off. Deeper problems like actually understanding a Japanese person's thoughts or motivations is a very difficult thing to do. I think L-Cafe and classes at Okadai really help bridge that culture gap between the Japanese and other cultures. Communication is key to understanding and I think Okayama University does this very well.

I am proud to see how much I have grown and helped others grow as an EPOK student. I hope to come back to Japan, if I am lucky as a resident. Okayama will always be my home away from home.

WEINRICH, Krystle

日本で初めて一人暮らししたことがある。アメリカで家族と一緒に住んでいる。大学を決める時、近く大学が決まった。アメリカの中にだけ旅行した。日本は外国に初めて旅行だ。日本で旅行が好きになった。違う考えを習いたいし、新しい経験したいし。日本に来るは自分の欲しい物。学校の必要じゃない。いろいろな日本の大学の中に岡大が本当に好きです。東京の近く大学は高すぎだから、あまり旅行できない。岡山は小さい町だけどにぎやかな町中もある。

日本のついてのは主にアニメや漫画から来た。そのストーリーは日本の生活が大げさ。しかし、リアルな日本を見られた。授業にアンケートや話すので日本人の文化や考えを習えた。日本語も上手になった。ペラペラじゃないけど、日本語を話す時もう少し自信がある。日本語で自分で初めてパッケージを送ったのあと嬉しいさをずっと覚える。

日本でたくさんいい経験がある。いい友達を作るし、季節を見られるし。日本で懐かしむのは美味しい日本料理や便利な運輸や日本語の授業だ。日本人と関係でいいコミュニケーションが必要だ。

悪い経験もある。傘を取られたことがたくさんある。日本でだれでも傘を取るのは大丈夫みたい。友達は自転車も取った。しかし、アメリカより日本のほうが安全だよ。夜に一人で歩いているのは心配しない。リサイクルは大変だ（特にごぜんの8時から9時までだけごみを出せること）けどいい習慣だと思う。

岡山はいつも私の日本の出身だ。日本に帰るように。旅行か仕事で何でもいいと思う。岡山でEPOKするのは自身をくれた。

SCALISE, Robert Gregory
Arizona State University

I honestly don't ascribe very much of what I was able to gain from my experience to the EPOK program itself, save that it was my means of arriving here. Rather, it was my own choices upon arrival that led me to the conclusions and experiences that I've had the pleasure of enjoying. I can honestly say that simply through living in and experiencing Japan from a non-tourist perspective, though, that I have gained a deeper understanding not of just Japan or the Japanese, but frankly of humanity as a whole. And I believe that I have one of these choices in particular to thank for my growth more than other.

My goal in coming here was quite simple. I wished only to learn Japanese in the most fostering environment possible; Japan. Other than that I simply wished to live abroad, I suppose specifically in a country that I already knew I was fond of from previous travels. While the courses I took here were helpful, I honestly feel that the experiences I chose to take part in outside of the classes are what nurtured that growth the most. Unlike the vast majority of the students, I elected to join a club; the Japanese Archery club on campus, armed with a very rudimentary ability to speak Japanese. But I knew that if I forced myself in a situation where I could not even use English as a crutch and had only my knowledge of Japanese to work with, I would grow faster. Frankly, I don't think I was off the mark at all in this assumption, and joining this club is one of the greatest choices I have ever made in my life. I learned words I would never learn in class, I was able to use the grammar and vocabulary I learned in class in real contexts, I was able to engage in conversations with Japanese people. What's more, I feel that I was able to learn from them many things that I could not have learned much of anywhere else. Even in something as serious as a club steeped in Japanese tradition and formality, it was clear that everyone was there to have fun, even in the most stressful times. The notion that all Japanese are serious is clearly a misnomer of the highest order. Watching my friends make mistakes during ceremonies, struggle to keep a straight face and then get laughed at afterward rather than reprimanded shattered all preconceived notions I had of Japanese seriousness. This is something that would obviously hold true of all people; simply that we are indeed, all people – human. We all simply wish to live and enjoy this life to the fullest in one way or another. Our differences come only in how we see the world, but those differences aren't so great, I think.

There's also a commonly held belief that as a foreigner in Japan it's incredibly difficult to fit in to the culture; that a foreigner will never be truly accepted, but I felt none of that in the club. I was treated as an equal in all aspects; never talked down to, never given any sort of “foreigner” leeway from punishment, and never avoided simply for being a foreigner. What's more, I was never fawned over for being a foreigner either, which frankly I never wanted to experience, but feared I might from hearing it from others. Finally, I feel like I learned a real sense of responsibility from them. Specifically when the club was tasked with organizing and constructing the entire Western Japan Kyuudou Tournament at Momotarou Stadium. For a week I devoted the bulk of my time doing unpaid hard labour for a tournament that I wasn't even going to be participating in. I never complained, but I spoke with one of the girls about how in America, I imagined that the owners of the stadium, or someone else at least, would be doing all this work in the stead of the students. She told me that even though most of us weren't competing, we, as a club, we all in this together, and this was simply one of the things that we did together, struggle though it may be. There were so many times where I, though unvoiced, wished ever so strongly to leave the club at that very moment so I might

continue to do more enjoyable things. Yet I kept pushing forward, telling myself that giving up now would simply be unacceptable, that the bad times would soon end, and things would return to normalcy and fun. Naturally they did, and once it was over I essentially forgot about how horrible I thought the prior week was to begin with.

Naturally, classes, friends and all kinds of other experiences helped me grow as a person as well, and I suppose at the core of all these I would have to thank the EPOK program for allowing me to come here to experience the things I have. However, I won't for a second deny that the unique experience that I've had is a direct result of the choices I've made and the people I've chosen to interact with in this past year. I am thankful to Okayama University for providing this opportunity to me more than anything. So much so that I aim to return here in the long term and resume my studies here in Okayama. The last thing I truly have to be thankful for here is having the chance to find a city that suits my personality perfectly. I'm truly taken with Okayama and look forward to spending part of my future here.

実は、僕の日本の経験でもらったことがそんなに EPOK プログラムのお蔭じゃないと思うけど、確かに EPOK なしでここに来るのが無理になる。でも、僕の選択で楽しんだ経験が出た。僕は旅行者じゃないとして日本で生活して体験したのおかげで日本と日本人をもっと理解できて来ただけでなく、人類の全部もっと理解できて来たと思う。他よりも一つの選択のお陰で僕が成長したと思う。

ここに来るの目標は簡単だった。一番いい環境で日本語を習いたいと思った。当たり前のことだけど、それは日本だ。それ以外、ただの欲しいことは前の旅行からもう好きになった国で住みたかった。確かに、岡大で取った授業は役に立ったけど、僕の本当の当気持ちは授業以外の体験がもっと役に立ったと思う。日本語あまり分からずに岡大の弓道部に張って決めた。日本語しかないところに入ったら、僕の日本語の能力が必ず上手になるのが知った。確かに、その考え方は正しかった。そこで、日本人はそんなに真面目じゃなくて、世界みんなの人々と一緒に習った。そんなに伝統的な活動でも、みんなは楽しさのために参加するのが分かってきた。それはきっと日本人だけではなく、世界の人々みんな必ず同じことが欲しいと思った。それはただにどうしてもこの人生を楽しんで生きる。確かに、育った環境でみんなの世界を見方はちょっと違うけど、その違いはそんなに起きくれないと思わない。

それに、そこで僕は「僕は外人だ」と思ったことが全然なかった。外人なのに、僕はみんなと一緒に、練習でも、罰でも、仕事でも、何でも同じだ。僕は特別じゃない。実は、最初からそれは欲しかったんだ。そして仕事と責任を持つのを習ったと思った。日本の部活動は大変だけど、辞めるのは全然ダメだ。すごく辞めたい感じがあった時があったのに、僕はいつも頑張った。「確かに、このつまらなくて、大変なことを超えると、よくて楽しい時がきっと来る」といつも思った。まあ、やっぱり、終わったらその大変さと辞めたいの気持ちを全部忘れた。

当たり前のことだけど、友達と色々な経験で僕は成長したけど、それは一番大切と思う。でもその全部の経験は元々岡山の EPOK プログラムのおかげだと思うので、僕は本当にありがたい。僕はまだここに戻って、僕の専門を大学院生として勉強続けたいほどにありがたい。EPOK プログラムで岡山を体験したので、僕の本当の大好きな街を見つけた。岡山はきれいで住みやすくてみんな優しいのでここに僕将来を過ごしたいと思う。だから、これではさよならじゃなくて、また会おうね。

BROWN, Kathryn Leigh
Arizona State University

How has the EPOK experience changed my life? For me, the people I have met here in Okayama have changed my life the most because if it weren't for them, I wouldn't have been able to experience all of the different sides of Japan. A few of the different sides of Japan I was able to experience were: the traditional, the modern and the business side. Each one has boundaries, which are easily noticeable in the way the Japanese people speak and treat one another.

The first time I experienced the traditional side of Japan/Okayama were when I went to Okayama Castle and Korakuen. Next I went to Kinkakuji, Ginkakuji, and Kiyomizudera in Kyoto with a group of L-Café students. One more traditional thing I was able to experience was wearing a kimono in Kurashiki. Here in Japan, traditional has the elegant and important feeling to it. The people here pray at temples and are reminded of the old days when they visit temples and wear kimonos or yukatas. Through experiencing all of this, it has made me more appreciative of the past and my elders and I have a higher respect for them.

The modern side of Japan is probably one of my favorite parts of Japan. Every day I was able to experience the life of a Japanese college student and what they like to do for fun. Being in the rural side of Japan, there are only so many things we can do before we have to travel to another city and do things there. We did anything from going to the park and hanging out to going to karaoke till three in the morning. Students try to not spend a lot of money because they don't have a lot of it. From this I have learned to budget my money better and spend it more wisely.

When it comes to working, Japanese people are very serious. Store clerks are always polite and friendly to their customers. Even when students speak on the phone with people from companies or to their bosses, they always speak very formally. I too have had the opportunity to speak on the phone and talk with the store clerks at certain times and for me it was a challenge. I was never able to completely formally speak with people when I was supposed to, but I tried my hardest because I felt it was something I had to do. From this I have obtained a more formal way of speaking, which will hopefully come in handy when I am applying for jobs in the future.

The EPOK experience has changed my life in more ways than I can explain. It has changed me as a person and has opened me to a completely different culture full of people with similar and different values. From my experience, I have acquired the skills necessary to live in Japan, which is something I hope to do in the future. Also here I was able to gain some experience teaching English, which will give me a huge advantage when I go to apply for teaching jobs in the future.

BROWN, Kathryn Leigh

どのように EPOK の経験は私の人生を変えたのか？私にとって、岡山で会った人は私の人生を変えました。その人を会わなかったら、日本の様々の側面を経験することができなかったかもしれません。私が体験することができた日本の様々な側面は次のとおりだった：、伝統的と近代的とビジネス側です。それぞれは境界を持ちます。そして、それは日本人が話して、お互いを扱う方法で簡単に見えます。

私は始めて日本で伝統的なものを経験したことは岡山城に行ったこととこらくえんに行ったことです。次に、Lーカフェの人達と京都の金閣寺と銀閣寺と清水寺に行きました。次に、もう一つの伝統的なことを経験したことがあります。それは着物を着ることです。日本では、伝統的なことはすばらしくて、大事な雰囲気を持っています。たくさんの日本人は神社で神に祈って、そのときも着物を着ているとき昔を覚えると思います。それを経験したので、それは私を過去と私の年上により感謝しているようにして、私は日本に来た前のときより、もっと高い敬があります。

多分日本の近代的は私の一番好きなことです。毎日普通の日本人の大学生の人生と大学生が楽しいことをするのを経験しました。日本のいなかで楽しいことをするのは少ないから、時々他のところに行かなければなりません。でも、大学生はだいたいお金がないから、安くて、楽しいことをします。例えば、公園で遊ぶことや午前 3 時までカラオケでうたうことです。これから、私は、前よりよくお金を予算に組んで、賢明にそれを費やすことを学びました。

働くについて、日本人はまじめです。店の人は客さんにいつも優しく、礼儀正しいです。大学生は会社の人と社長と電話するときにも正式に話します。私もその経験があって、それは難しかったです。よくできなかったが、頑張りました。これから、もっと正式のマナーをもらいまして、将来にその経験を使うつもりです。

よく説明できないが、わたしの EPOK の経験は私の人生を変えました。人として変えて、私を人々でいっぱい異なる文化に開けました。私の経験から日本に住めることを学んで、将来に日本に住めます。だからよかったです。そして、私の経験から英語を教える経験をもらって、将来に就職を探るとき、巨大な有利さを与えます。

FIECHTNER, Elizabeth
Arizona State University

I will soon complete my participation in the Exchange Program Okayama. Through this experience, I have gained insight into both myself and Japan and its culture. Through my previous study of the Japanese language, I was introduced to various aspects of Japanese culture, mainly as presented in textbooks, but also through various media such as television and movies. As such, I was aware of certain different and unique practices, such as habits regarding shoes, or cell phone etiquette. But there are invariably parts of life that are not addressed in textbooks or film media. And there is also a difference between intellectually knowing something and personally experiencing it. It may be considered a difference between theory and practice.

Before EPOK, I was aware of the difference between American and Japanese food cultures. But the degree to which American and Japanese food cultures differ can only be truly understood through personal experience. First, every place in Japan has its own specialty food, based on its local agriculture and history. Okayama is known for its peaches and grapes. Second, the comparative price of various food products is very different. All foodstuffs in Japan are more expensive than similar products in America, but most shocking is the price of fruit when compared to other foodstuffs. But conversely, the comparative price of eating out is cheaper in Japan. After accounting for differences in food volumes and American tipping practices, and comparing to the cost of groceries, dining out is comparatively much more affordable in Japan. And third, in Japan it is considered bad manners to leave food on one's plate. By examining the basis for this, it is possible to understand other aspects of Japanese culture, particularly "mottainai," and traditional cultural values that seek to avoid wastefulness.

Through exposure to Japanese media before participating in EPOK, I had been introduced to some of the differences between typical modes of social conduct in America and Japan. There are obvious differences, such as the hierarchal order displayed in the usage of honorific and humble language forms, and the importance of saving face. These are readily exhibited in both text and film media. But it is easy to overlook the subtler nuance that is exhibited in many interpersonal interactions. Through my interaction with Japanese peers, I quickly noticed small but marked differences in interactions amongst peers. A Japanese peer is much more likely to ask for permission, be it for even a small matter, such as looking closely at a displayed photo or friending on Facebook. While the acceptance of such a small request is essential assured, the cultural philosophy behind such actions speak to deeper traditions of consideration of the standpoint of the other person.

These are just two examples that may initially seem minor, but when examined more thoroughly, can be attributed to deeper running cultural values that are often exhibited in other areas as well.

There is no substitute for direct personal experience. I had studied Japanese language and culture, but without the many small nuanced details that come from personal experience, the deep running cultural values that tie different practices together are hard to see. By understanding the roots and branches of Japanese culture, I am better able to function appropriately within the framework of Japanese society.

FIECHTNER, Elizabeth

私はすぐに EPOK の参加が完了します。この経験を通して、私は自分自身と、日本とその文化への洞察を得ている。以前の日本語の勉強を通して、教科書に提示されることだけでなく、テレビや映画など様々なメディアを通して日本文化のさまざまな側面を紹介くれた。このように、私はそのような靴に関する習慣、または携帯電話のマナーなど、特別な慣行に気づいていた。しかし、そのものから取り上げられていない生活の部分が必ずあります。その上、知的に分かることと、それを個人的に経験して分かることとが違う。それは、理論と実践との差と考えることができる。

EPOK 前に、アメリカと日本の食文化の違いを知っていた。しかし、アメリカと日本の食文化との差を理解できるように、個人的な経験しかない。第一に、日本の各地方では、その地方の農業や歴史に基づいて、独自の名物料理がある。岡山の有名な食べ物は桃やブドウである。第二に、様々な食品の価格比較はすごく違う。日本のすべての食品は、アメリカの同様の製品よりも高価であるが、日本の他の食品と比較すると、果実の価格が最も衝撃的である。しかし、逆に言えば、外食の価格比較、日本が安いです。食品の量とアメリカのティッピング慣行を含み、そして食料品の値段を比較した後、外食することは手が届けやすい。そして第三に、日本では自分の皿に盛り上げた食べ物を残して、悪いマナーと考えられている。そのような理由を調べたら、日本文化の他の側面を理解できるようになる。特に「もったいない」や無駄遣いを抑えようとする伝統的な文化的価値を理解できるようになる。

EPOK に参加する前に日本のメディアを通して、アメリカと日本の社会行動の違いのいくつかが見たことがある。明らかに敬語や謙虚の言語形式で階層の順序も、面目を保存することも重要である。これらは本や映像に容易に展示されています。

しかし、それは多くのとき微妙なニュアンスを見落としやすい。日本人の仲間同士と私の交流によって、私はすぐに、小さい相違を気づいた。日本人の仲間同士の中でも、表示されている写真を詳しく見るだけでなく Facebook の友達になるまで、小さなことのために、許可をお願いすることが普通である。このような小さな要求は簡単にもらえるが、そのような行動の背後にある文化的な哲学は、相手の立場を考えることである。

これに上げた二つの例は最初に重要でないように見えるかもしれませんが、ちょっと考えたら、文化的価値観の根本も分かり、他の分野でも展示されている。

直接個人的な経験に勝ることはありません。EPOK 前に私は日本語と日本文化を勉強していたことがあるが、個人的な経験の小さな微妙な詳細ぬきにしてさまざまなつながりが見られにくくなる。日本文化の根や枝を理解することによって、私は日本社会の枠組みの中で生活できるようになった。

Joshua Draper
Appalachian State University

From October 2013 to August 2014, I studied at Okayama University as a part of the EPOK program. During my stay here, I learned about many things regarding Japan through my classes or through personal travel. My findings about the culture, value, traditions, and contemporary society of Japan have given me a deeper understanding about Japan and the world that we live in.

In the ten months I spent in Japan, I learned much about Japanese culture, value, traditions, and contemporary society of Japan. I learned that Japanese culture still remains relatively ingrained within Japanese society, but many traditional aspects are starting to fade away (e.g. women only wear kimonos on special occasions). My understanding of Japanese religion has also improved as well. Unlike in my country, where people adhere to only one religion and go to church at least once a week, Japanese people only visit temples and shrines on special occasions. That being said, Japanese religion still plays an important role in daily life (e.g. people will pray to a shrine before doing business). Overall, my view of Japanese society is that while it is a stable society, it is changing with the times as well.

Through these findings, my understanding of Japan improved. The most important aspect that I learned is that Japan is not the “strange” or “weird” place that is often depicted in the Western media and the Internet. By all accounts, Japan is a nation just like my own country. The role of anime and manga has also changed my view of Japan. I always thought that manga and anime, while popular, were not things that people would be obsessed with. In many aspects of Japanese life, however, you can see strong anime and manga influences. The concept of “otaku” is also considered to be not that bad by Japanese people.

My experiences with EPOK and Okayama can be used to help pursue my dream. After I graduate from college, I would like to join the United States Department of State. With my newly found understanding of Japanese culture, I can help maintain US-Japan relations. My improved knowledge of Japanese would also be a major benefit to my job prospects. If I continue to improve my Japanese, I could potentially get a job in Japan (after I take the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, of course). If I work hard in learning more about the Japanese language and culture (and adding to my EPOK experience), I could easily get a good job working in Japan or get a job that involves me traveling to

Japan.

My experiences with living in Japan will be important to me. I have gained a deeper understanding of Japan from the experiences I had while living in Japan for ten months. I will return to my home country with a greater knowledge on one of the world's greatest economic and cultural powers. At the very least, I will have great stories to tell to my friends and family. However, the ten months I spent in Japan will forever be with me.

Joshua Draper

2013年10月から2014年8月まで私は岡山大学でEPOKプログラムを通して勉強した。岡山に住んでいる時、授業や個人旅行で日本の多くの風習を習った。私は日本の文化、価値観、伝統、現在の社会状況などを通して、日本と世界についてより深い理解を得た。十ヶ月日本に住んで、それらについてよりのことを多く勉強した。日本の文化は依然として比較的日本中に浸透しているが、多くの伝統的な側面はなくなり始めていることを学んだ。例えば、女の方は特別な時だけに着物を着る。

日本の宗教に対する理解も深まった。私の国では、人々は一つの宗教だけを信仰していて、教会に少なくとも一週間に一回は行く。日本人は、神社やお寺に特別な時だけ行く。しかし、日本の宗教は日常生活の中で重要な役割を担っている。例えば、人々はビジネスを始める前に神棚に祈る。全体的に、私の日本の社会の知見は、変化の少ない安定した社会に思える一方で、時を重ねる中で変化している社会でもある。

私の日本の理解は深まったが、日本で学んだ最も大切な側面は、よく西洋のメディアやインターネットで言われているように、日本が「おかしい」とか「奇妙」な国ではないことである。一般的に日本は私の国のごく普通の国だと思う。アニメと漫画が担う役割は私の知見を大きく変えた。私はいつも漫画とアニメは人気ではあるが、日本の社会の主流になるものではないと思った。しかし、日本人の日常生活の中で、その影響を垣間見ることができる。「オタク」の概念は必ずしも悪いものではないということも学んだ。

私は東アジア研究専攻の学生なので、私のEPOKを通して岡山での経験は私の夢につながる。大学を卒業した後、私は多国籍業で働くか、外交官として働きたい。私の深まった日本文化への理解も友好的な米日関係を維持することにつながるだろう。就職の時、私の日本語の知識も役に立つ。日本語を深め続けて日本語能力試験を合格できたら、日本で就職することもできるだろう。また、日本で働かない場合にも、自分の国から日本に旅行することもできるだろう。

この日本での滞在経験はとても私にとって重要なものになるだろう。十ヶ月の滞在期間を経て、日本について深い理解をすることができた。私は世界中の一つの大国の経済力と文化が及ぼす力の理解と共に、これから帰国することになる。少なくとも、友達と家族に面白いストーリーを話すことができる。この経験は私と共に生き続ける。

Sola Thorhallsson
Appalachian State University

Since coming to Japan, I have learned so much about Japanese culture, values, and traditions. Through being immersed in the society, I have experienced countless things that I could have never done without living here, in Okayama, experiencing daily life in Japan. It's thanks to EPOK that I've been able to truly experience life in Japan. And in turn, thanks to the time I've spent here, I've been able to grow as a person and start to realize my own dreams for the future.

Before coming to Japan, I really did not know very much about Japan itself. I had studied Japanese for 3 years, and along the way of course I had learned some about the culture and customs, but I had no way of knowing what life in Japan was actually like. I only knew generalisms about Japan as a whole, but nothing about the variations and particulars that make specific places and regions special. For this reason, I am grateful that, instead of a larger, more popular and internationalized city such as Tokyo or Kyoto, that I chose to come to Okayama. Through living in a smaller city, I feel like I've been better able to experience what average life is like in Japan. Riding my bicycle wherever I go, exploring regional dialects, having countless chance encounters with the people around me, visiting traditional places and eating various regional foods, I've been given a unique outlook into Japanese life. More than Japan as a whole, I truly love Okayama in particular. The daily life experiences, the people who have welcomed me warmly into their lives; they are all precious to me.

If I had not joined the EPOK program, I would not have been able to come to Okayama and experience these things. This past year has been one of the best years of my life, and I feel like I've found direction for the rest of my life by coming here. This past year, I've come to truly love Japan and Japanese, and I realized that I don't want this experience to end here. I want to continue my studies and come back to Japan to live. I want to become even more proficient in Japanese, and continue to experience life in Japan. This year here has given me the confidence to return to Japan after graduation and work. EPOK has allowed me many opportunities to have cultural exchanges in both Japanese and English, and to learn more about both Japanese, the language I am studying, and even my own language, English. By coming here, I've discovered how much I appreciate these interactions, and the process of both teaching and learning a language. By spending this year in a language learning environment, I've come to realize how much I enjoy languages, and want to try to be further involved in that

process by teaching others, as well. If it weren't for EPOK, I would not have been able to come to Okayama, and I would not be the person I am today. I am so grateful to EPOK for allowing me to experience this last year of studying abroad here at Okayama University.

Sola Thorhallsson

来日以来、いろいろなおもしろい経験や新しいことをやってみることができました。日本、特に岡山市で、生活をする間、日本の文化や習慣や社会についてたくさんことを理解するようになりました。EPOKのおかげで、日本に住んでいて、本当の日本の生活をわかるようになりました。日本に来ないとこんなことができないと思います。

日本に来た前、日本の生活についてあまりわかりませんでした。三年間ぐらい日本語を勉強していたから一般的の文化や習慣や社会などについて学んでいたけれど、その情報はぜんぜん足りなかったと思います。東京や京都のような大きい街より、岡山市で留学していて、本当によかったです。岡山市で普段の日本の生活をするのがよくできましたからです。この一年間の間、いろいろな素敵なところに旅行したけれど、岡山市が一番好きです。岡山市で自転車で通ったり、岡山弁を使ってみたり、偶然でたくさん優しい人に会ったり、大好きな友達と一緒にいろいろなおいしい食べ物を食べたりしていることはとても大切な経験だと思います。素晴らしい旅行より、このような日常生活の経験が一番大切です。

EPOKに参加しなかったなら、岡山に来られませんでした。そして、岡山に来なかったなら、今の私はたぶん違うと思います。EPOKの経験で、自分がだんだん変わってきました。自分がもっと信じられるようになりました。そして、ここで日本語でもっと自信を持つようになりました。そのうえ、将来に自分がやりたいことを見つけました。この一年間、言語を学ぶこと共に、言語を教えることが好きだとわかってきました。そして、この間、日本に住みたいこともわかってきました。その理由で、卒業の後、日本で英語の教師になりたいと思います。英語を教えたいと思うけれど、日本語の勉強を続けることも大切です。EPOKの日本語の授業で日本語を一生懸命勉強することはとても楽しかったです。ぜひ、日本語を忘れたくないから、日本語でもっともっと頑張りたいです。日本に戻ったら、このことがよくできると思います。EPOKのおかげで、そのように日本や日本語が好きになりました。

今年是一生で一番楽しかった年でした。岡山大学で一年間に留学していて、本当にとってもよかったです。岡山でたくさん大事な思い出を作れました。ここで、世界中から来た友達ことができました。日本の文化以外、いろいろな国の文化や習慣について学びました。そして、これからずっとその友達につながって、世界につながっているのような気持ちです。EPOKで、私の生活はとても国際的な感じになりました。EPOKと岡山大学に本当に感謝します。

SIMONDS III, John Day
Appalachian State University

When I stumbled onto the bullet train in Tokyo on my first day in Japan, EPOK was just a funny name I heard during my application to Okayama University, I hadn't realized exactly how much my experience in Japan would be shaped by this program.

I can confidently say that my time in Japan has been strongly shaped by the fact that I experienced it through Okayama University. Okayama, to me, is a very big city, so adapting to city life was quite a big transition. I know it is often said that Okayama is a small city compared to something like Tokyo or Osaka, but for me I can barely tell the difference. Getting used to life in the city was a far smoother transition I believe in Okayama because of the friendly environment of the university and pleasant weather.

The classes at Okayama University were quite challenging. I remember spending several sleepless nights trying to get an essay or an assignment ready for the next day. I greatly enjoyed the Japanese courses and I sincerely believe that my Japanese has improved vastly through my time at Okayama. I have no doubt that my classes, combined with frequent conversations with my friends here, have allowed me to make more progress in the year I spent studying here than in the previous two.

In addition to learning a great deal about the Japanese Language and culture, I believe I have also learned many valuable life lessons about independent living and money management. I was fully independent in Japan, I could not get my parents to help me if I had a problem or got sick, I had to manage on my own. I did receive support from my friends when I really needed it, especially when it involved extremely difficult Japanese, but for the most part I relied on myself. Money management was also important for my time in Japan: living on a very tight budget meant I had to be careful with every yen I spent, I began to value the travel and fun I could afford far more through truly knowing their value.

Japan surprised me with its culture, I had expected a difference but I hadn't realized how completely unlike America Japan would be. The very mindset and thought process for Japanese people is quite unlike Americans and I feel like I have made a great deal of progress in understanding the mysterious psyche of the Japanese people.

As I continue college upon my return, I look forward to my graduation in three semesters. I am not sure what exactly my future holds but I am quite certain I will be entering the field of technology. I think my experience in EPOK will greatly help me in the business side of this, especially in dealing with the cutting edge Japan. Of course, the improvements I have made in my mastery of the language will give me an advantage that is extremely rare in America. However I believe the most valuable thing I have gained through EPOK is an understanding and appreciation for Japan and the Japanese people. Simply speaking the

language is not enough, I believe that my knowledge of the way Japanese people think is incredibly valuable from a business perspective and there is no other way I could have attained this in quite the same way without participating in this program.

Angel Tsai
State University of Stony Brook

Many people can say that Americans are blunt and straightforward when it comes to expressing their opinions. However, throughout a year of studying abroad in Japan, I noticed there are certain characteristics in the “Japanese way of rejecting”. For example, when you invite a Japanese person to an event and they reply “I will think about it” or “I will tell you later”, that mostly likely means “no”. Also, when doing group projects with Japanese people, when asking their opinion, they usually agree with any ideas whether or not they think it is appropriate.

The society of Japan looks for a strong bond, or in other words, group consciousness. They are not supposed to express too much self-opinion, or stand out in a group. Especially in a job interview, all the students are supposed to wear the same suit with the same black hair style. Also, instead of being strong with individual characteristics, they will be asked to try to fit themselves into the group by being flexible, or otherwise, compromise with the decision made by the larger number. That also brings out another characteristic of this Isolated Society.

Japanese society has many “non-told rules” that one must know to really fit into Japanese society. Rules such as assigned trash days, or using polite form speech to elders or superiors are common sense that most foreigner can pick up by looking at how others’ act. I was surprise when a friend told me there are certain sitting orders when having dinner with different statues people. For example, when having dinner with co-workers, the person with the highest status sits in the inner corner of the table, whereas the person with lowest status, usually the youngest worker, sits at the seat towards the outer corner of the table, and his task is to order food, or help pass dishes to the others. This is just one example of “non-told rules”, however, there are more rules that surround Japanese daily life, dividing people from their statues, ages, and abilities.

Even though the living style of Japanese wasn’t as easy as I expected, the life of a member of this society is more stressful than I think it was. But it did not make me back down from my plan of working in Japan in the future. Before, I thought I could just come to Japan and easily find a job any time I want. However, now I know Japan has a certain time for job searching, and various rules in order to find a job here. Also through this whole year of study abroad, I can to understand what I will be encountering if I want to find a job in Japan, and it helps me to better prepare for the future. I get to create international networks with various people from all over the world, and I believe this year of foreign culture encounter will not goes to waste.

Angel Tsai

日本に来る留学先を決める前は、正直、岡山県のことは全然知りませんでした。私の大学は留学できる学校は幾つありますが、私は都会があまり好きではありませんので、先生から岡山を紹介されました。それが私はこの桃太郎の故郷での一年間の生活の始まりです。

最初は思い通りにはうまくいきませんでした。友達はすぐに作れると思っていましたが、どうやら留学生達は自分との同じ大学の留学生とすぐ友達になっているようでした。しかし、ニューヨークから来た人は私だけでした。その上、他の留学生と違って、私の見た目はアジア系の顔ですから、L-caféに行く時は、よく日本人と思われ、声を掛けられませんでしたが、体育祭や、学園祭などのイベントに参加し、その内友達もできました。

それにしても、日本に来ると、やはり色々なカルチャーショックと日本社会の矛盾を感じました。

まず、日本人の返事の仕方について述べます。

アメリカ人のは、言いたいことは正直に言います。しかし、大数の日本人はよく曖昧な話しかたをしています。例えば、イベントに誘われた時の「考えときます。」、「また連絡します。」などの回答は、ほぼ全部が「NO」の意味です。そして、意見を聞かれた時は「まあ、うん。」、「xxxと同じです。」など、自分の意見ではなく、他の人の意見について本当にそう思うだとか、取り合えず賛成する場合があります。こういう曖昧さは、授業でグループワークをする時に、アメリカとの違いとして深く感じます。

次は、日本人のルールについて述べます。

日本人の社会は多数のルールで縛られています。例えば、決まったゴミを出す日だとか、目上の人と年上の人に敬語を使うだとか、飲み会での席の座り順など、外国人にとって理解できないことであります。正直、先輩が“ここは幹事の席”と“ここは一番偉い人の席”と言ったときはカルチャーショックでした。ゴミを出す日と敬語を使う事は普通周りの人の真似ができ、なんとなく隠せますが、飲み会の席の座り順のような“言われぬルール”を自分で理解するのはとても難しいです。留学生達は外国人として許されるかもしれませんが、もし本当に日本社会に入りたいのなら、こういうルールを守らなければいけません。こういったルールが普段の生活の周りにあり、常に包ま

れることは、やはりプレッシャーが感じられます。

それにしても、私は岡山の環境と日本語そのものがこの一年間を通じて好きになりました。もし機会があるなら、向こうの大学を卒業後、岡山で就職したいです。なるべく編集通訳関係の仕事をさがしたいです。

LEPLEY, Arthur Yves Bernard
University of Edinburgh

Before coming to Japan, I did not have any specific view of the country. I have enjoyed since middle school Japanese manga, movies and literature, but I never took them as an accurate representation of the Japanese society. They only constituted various flexible characteristics that differed from my home country, France, and that I expected to find in Japan. For instance, respect towards the law is not something common in France, especially among young people. This does not mean that French young people are more prone to rebellion or violence, but simply that very few of them will actually respect the legal age to smoke and drink. Someone sparingly using soft drugs is not unusual either. But in Japan, in general, people are more respectful of the law. The use of soft drugs is viewed as more extreme. The treatment of violence and the law in Japanese manga, movies and literature had already suggested me this, even if on a very unconscious level.

During this year, I discovered other common patterns in Japanese society, and in this way I could deepen my understanding of the country. For example, I noticed that often people insisted on doing a jikoshokai when they met each other for the first time, instead of simply stating their name. This fact showed me what kind of social behavior was expected and what information on a person were considered as important. In France, students rarely ask each other the academic year that they are in. But in Japan, such matter inevitably came when meeting someone for the first time. However, apart from such subtle differences in the Japanese culture, that themselves vary to a great degree depending on the person, I find it very hard to pinpoint what is the contemporary society of Japan, or even Okayama. Japan has a number of unique traditions, but the majority of them are similar to the one found in other countries. When one goes to the temple for the new year or for an important event, similarly to other countries, one essentially hopes for good luck, health and prosperity. Like in France and other European countries I have visited, the majority of people in Japan value above all the same simple pleasures in life, such as eating tasty meals and drinking with friends.

After this enriching EPOK experience, I have decided to come back to Japan for my postgraduate studies. As stated above, for a long time I have been interested in Japanese manga, movies and literature, and more generally in Japanese culture. However, I had never actually been to Japan. Having spent one year in Japan studying the Japanese language and culture, I am confident that my interest in Japan is not a mere pass time. I have acquired sufficient skill in the Japanese language and sufficient familiarity with contemporary Japanese society to feel confident in studying there for the next four years. I am planning on applying for postgraduate studies in anthropology and in this way further deepen my findings about contemporary Japanese society.

Mila Petrova
University of Sheffield

I. My expectations of Japan prior to coming here

When I first came to Japan, I was very anxious. I had been told all sorts of stories about Japan and Japanese universities. For example, I had heard that Japanese people are really polite, so I was afraid that I might unintentionally do something rude and offend someone. I had also been told that there are quite a few Japanese people who would refuse to speak to me in Japanese, and would instead only use English. To further deepen my worries, I had been told that universities in Japan do not look after their students, and that if I had a health problem of some kind, no one would take that into account.

To avoid offending someone by accident, I did a lot of research on acceptable and unacceptable behavior in Japan. Of course, I did not know everything, but I still learned a lot and hopefully, I have successfully avoided getting in trouble with people.

I was pleasantly surprised to find out that people were willing to speak Japanese to me. (A lot of the people I encountered said they could not speak English that well, which is an important factor). I found people who were really good at English as well, and they were very kind to me, alternating between languages when necessary.

The surprises did not end there. Okayama University turned out to be more supportive than any university I had ever heard of. I had some health problems during the academic year and it was the university staff who helped me book an appointment with the doctor and took my condition into account regarding my academic performance.

II. What I will never forget

In fact, something happened during my stay here that I will never forget. During first semester, I had trouble sleeping for a few weeks, which affected the way I performed in class. Initially, I kept coming to class, hoping the problem would go away on its own. One of my teachers, Moriya-sensei, became concerned about me and advised me to see a doctor. I had no idea how to go about this so I did nothing for a while. But she insisted I see a doctor and spoke to my academic advisor Yoshida-sensei, who then helped me

through the rest of the ordeal. If it wasn't for Moriya-sensei, I probably would not have done anything about this and would have suffered for a much longer period of time.

III. My personal achievement during my stay in Okayama

Once I was healthy again, I could focus on the important things in life, which brings me to the question of what I managed to achieve during my year abroad. I believe that I learned a lot more about Japanese culture and got a better understanding of what it's like to live on the other end of the world. I made friends with people from various countries and my Japanese language skills also improved significantly.

IV. Making use of experiences gained through being a part of the EPOK program

As a result I have decided that I would like to visit Japan again and, if possible, live out here for another year or two. This way I hope to improve my language skills even further. Living in Japan has been one of the best experiences of my life! I would like to thank everyone who made this happen!

V. Conclusion

Living in Japan has dispelled myths about the country, allowed me to build friendships, given me a chance to meet some incredible people. It has also given me a wide range of experiences that I can use in future.

When I look back at my time here in Japan, I am certain I will think of it fondly.

MIZERIJA, Gabriela
University of Sheffield

Ever since I developed an interest in Japanese language, I have always wanted to go to Japan. This was mostly because of the copious amounts of anime I watched. Of course, I also read some internet articles about Japan and its culture but that only made me more interested. So imagine how excited I was when, by the end of 2nd year I finally got my chance to visit the country I dreamt of.

The first things I noticed about Japan are these: politeness, cleanliness, safety and cuteness. I don't think I will be the first one to ever express these sentiments, a lot of other foreigners say the same thing. I think out of these 4 things what surprised me the most is cleanliness. There aren't that many trashcans on the streets and yet they are impeccably clean, you won't find a single piece of trash on the streets. This is very different from both Lithuania and England. Sheffield has trashcans almost everywhere, especially around university area and yet every day I would see a lot of trash when on my way to university, from cigarettes to discarded clothes.

Another thing I really enjoyed about Japan is the overall practicality and the desire to make everything convenient for common people. Outside vending machines, umbrella stands outside of the shops with free plastic bags in case it's raining, convenience shops that have everything in them and much more. I will really miss all these things and wish we would have something like that in my own country.

The kawaii culture is something I feel torn about. On one hand, I absolutely love cute and funny Japanese commercials, cute yuru-kyara etc. On the other hand, I get really annoyed when there's too much cuteness, like cute anime girls everywhere and the majority of Japanese clothes are all about being cute and this isn't really my style. It feels like Japan is smothering me with cuteness sometimes, like it's required for women to be cute and I'm not sure I like it.

And also there were, of course, some cultural differences I found interesting. One of them was during my homestay with a Japanese family. When we went shopping, the mother was carrying all the groceries – her daughter wasn't helping her, nor was she asked to help. So I felt a little bit guilty and when I suggested to help her, the mother was surprised and said that Japanese don't do that. I think the family values should change a little. I thought that Japanese kids help their parents a lot but it was actually not true: the wife does everything in the house. I think it would be nice if the rest of the family would contribute to helping around the house, otherwise it just seems unfair to the mother, especially if she's also working.

Another thing I enjoy is the mash of modern and traditional in Japan. It's amazing how many temples I visited in Japan and how many people still go to them. I can even sometimes see women wearing kimono just walking the streets during the day. Probably one of the most interesting cultural differences is religion. A lot of Japanese say that they're not religious but they still go to temples to pray for luck, or pray for their dead. This is something I like a lot because you often

hear stories about religious zealots in Western countries, so Japan's relaxed view on religion is something I really appreciate.

Of course there are things I don't get, one of them being Japan's obsession with high school. I only recently discovered about the high school baseball tournament, and this tournament is a lot more popular than professional baseball! Then there's school settings which make 80% of anime. This is another thing that irritates me, to be honest – why is everything about high school? High school drama is not interesting, it's not exciting, it's teenagers who learn basic lessons about life and that is incredibly boring to me. I don't know, maybe I'm too cynical.

I will say that my view of Japan has not changed that much because I did some research about the culture, our Japanese teachers gave us some tips, so I knew what to expect. In the future I would be interested in working here for a couple of years via JET program, but I will not live here. Japanese mentality is just something I can't adapt to, even if I can appreciate the culture and the Japanese values.

MIZERIJA, Gabriela

日本へ来る前に、日本の習慣についてもたくさん知っていた。理由は、アニメが好きで、言語が好きで、文化についても知りたかった。ですから、2年生の後で、皆は日本へ行った時、大変喜びました。

最初の気づいたことは日本人の潔癖や無難や可愛い文化などです。たぶん、一番驚いたことはやっぱり潔癖です。町でゴミ箱があまりなくても、道はいつもきれいです。イギリスのシェッフィールドと比べると、シェッフィールドでゴミ箱がたくさんあるけど、いつも色々なごみがあります。例は、食べ物の袋や服です。

他の好きなことは 実際性です。日本でたくさんことは人のため作りしました。例えば、店の入り口の前に傘の袋や自動販売機や便利なコンビニなどです。私の国でそんなことがなくて、ちょっと寂しいです。

しかし、可愛い文化が好きかどうか、知りません。一方で可愛い コマーシャルとゆるキャラが大好きです。でも、たいてい多くのアニメの可愛い女の子をどこでも見ると、イライラする。そして、日本の 流行はいつも可愛いだけでも、それは私のスタイルじゃなくて、あまり服を買いませんでした。女の人に可愛くイメージは必要らしい。

もちろん、日本の文化も違います。ホームステイをした時、お母さんと娘はショッピングをしました。家に帰ったと、お母さんは全部の袋を 携えました。家族でお母さんは全部を知っています。皆は手伝ったほうがいいと思います。

他の好きなことは、日本は現代で伝統的な国です。町で着物を着ている女の人を見て、人は寺や神社に行って、それはすごいと思います。宗教は私にはとても興味深いです。日本人は神様にあまり信じられないのに、皆は寺と神社に行きます。

今は、日本に帰るかどうか、知りません。JET と一緒に働きたいでも、日本で住みたくない。理由は、やっぱり日本人の考え方は私の考え方から違います。ここで2年ぐらい働いてもいいけど、住みたい所は日本ではありません。

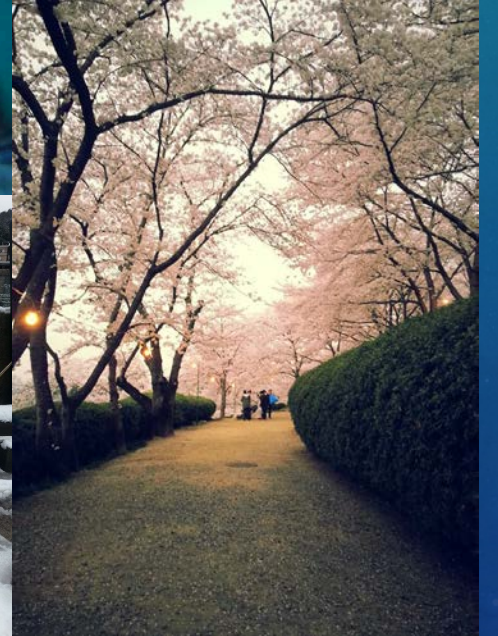


NUALTARNEE, Supatra
Kasetsart University

I heard about Epok program year ago. I know it from my Japanese teacher. And I think this program will give me memorable memories for sure. Being exchange student is one of my dreams anyway so I have no hesitate to submit this program. I have many first time experiences in Japan. First, it would be study abroad. I have to say that it is not easy to study abroad at all, but because of its hard I can improve myself a lot. Next, this is my first to travel foreign land alone. At first, I was super worry that I might lost and if that I don't know what to do. But luckily a guy who sits next to me, he helps me a lot. His help makes me arrived to Okayama University safely. Next, I have many friends from many countries. Here in Okayama University has many exchange students from many countries so I met many people and made friends with them. Everyone is a good person so it doesn't hard to be friend with them especially, my Japanese classmates. I have Japanese, Germany, French, Spanish, Korean, Australian, Bulgarian, Filipino, and American classmate friends. I really glad that I have met them. And the last one is the fun activity, such as, bowling, cooking, karaoke, nomikai, ohanami, tanabata, omatsuri, and ski. Everything that I have said I did it at the first time in Japan. It was really fun and I want to do it again. I have many good memories because of Epok so I really want to thank you, Epok program. You gave me a precious opportunity; I am so grateful and happy very much to get to know Epok program.

NUALTARNEE, Supatra

Epok のことは一年前聞いたんです。Epok のことは日本語の先生から知っています。そして、この Epok はいい関係になるはずだと思いました。日本で留学生をすることは自分の夢です。だから、Epok を受け取ったことは迷ってないです。日本の中で始める関係はいっぱいあります。まず、留学することです。留学することなんかぜんぜん簡単じゃないです。しかし、難しさのおかげで、自分の能力を改良しました。つぎ、一人で外国へ行きました。最初から、すごく心配しました。なぜなら、迷うことがこわいです。迷ったら、どうすればいいの？でも、私はうんがよいです。飛行機で隣の席に優しいおじさんがいました。あのおじさんから助けてくれました。あのおじさんのおかげで、無事に岡山大学に着きました。つぎはいっぱい友達を作りました。それにいろいろな国の友達が仲良くします。特にわたしの日本語のクラスメートです。皆はいろいろな所が着ました。たとえば、ドイツ、フランス、スペイン、韓国、オーストラリア、バルガリア、フィリピン、アメリカなどです。皆に会ったことはよかったです。最後は、日本に楽しいの事をする事です。たとえば、ボウリング、クッキング、カラオケ、飲み会、お花見、七夕、お祭り、スキーなどです。全部のことはにほんでやりました。すごく楽しかった、そして、もう一度やりたいです。Epok のおかげで、いい思い出になりました。私はとてもうれしいです。Epok を知っているは本当によかったです。









2013 Fall Course Opening Ceremony



2014 Spring Course Opening Ceremony

2014 Spring

EPOK 学生フォーラム EPOK 修了式

2014年8月6日（水）10:00～12:00

場所：L-café（一般教育棟A棟別館）



2013 Fall Course Opening Ceremony



2014 Spring Course Opening Ceremony

10:00～ EPOK学生フォーラム
EPOK修了生によるプレゼンテーション

11:30～ EPOK 修了式
修了書授与・記念撮影

12:00～ 懇談会
軽食あり

主催 グローバル・パートナーズ 086-251-7037 ryugaku@adm.okayama-u.ac.jp

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<http://ouic.okayama-u.ac.jp/epok/index.html>



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