

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	FASS/Sociology
Host University	University of Connecticut
NUS Semester and Year of Exchange (eg. AY14/15 Semester 1)	AY15/16 Semester 1

2. Study at Host University

Please provide information on the academics at your host university:

- **Studying or learning culture at your host university. How were classes conducted?**
- **What did you like most or dislike most about the academics at your host University?**
- **Advice on module registration and module mapping**

Classes in UConn are much smaller than those in NUS, with lectures for Sociology modules conducted in class sizes of about 40-50 students. Most classes are held lecture/seminar-style, twice a week in 1 hour 15 minute slots and no tutorials. Class participation is very much encouraged. However, one notable difference between UConn and NUS, especially for Sociology classes, is an emphasis on MCQ examinations and thus factual learning over critical thinking and essay writing. It was probably one of the biggest differences I had to get used to. There are also many readings assigned, but lecture notes proved to be the more important source of knowledge.

Module registration at UConn is done by filling in a module preference form to be submitted to the study abroad advisor at UConn before school starts. However, as class sizes are small, you are asked to fill in about ten choices in case you do not get your first choice. When school starts, there is a two-week 'shopping period' whereby you can freely add/drop classes after attending the first one or two classes. I found this very helpful as you can better choose which classes suit you best in the long term!

There is also a great diversity of Sociology and Anthropology modules offered in UConn that you can rather easily map over to NUS.

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Please list the courses that you took during SEP. (Please take note that the list of modules available to exchange students at the host university are subject to change. This table merely serves as reference.)

Host University			NUS Equivalent		
Module code	Course title	ECTS Credit	Module code	Course title	Modular credit
SOCI 3429	Sociological Perspectives of Poverty	3	SC3701	Sociology Dummy Code	4
ANTH 2501	Introduction to Archaeology	3	SC3702	Sociology Dummy Code	4
ANTH 3152	Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism	3	SC3203	Race and Ethnic Relations	4
SOCI 3901	Urban Sociology	3	SC3206	Urban Sociology	4
MUSI 1003	Popular Music and Diversity in American Society	3	MUA 3205	Materials of Jazz Music 1	4

2. Accommodation

What kind of accommodation did you stay in during your exchange (eg. on campus / off campus)?

Would you recommend this accommodation to future outgoing students?

Do you have any other suggestions?

I stayed in an on-campus, apartment-style accommodation (Mansfield Apartments). There were 4 of us assigned to one apartment, 2 to a room, and we shared a kitchen, bathroom and living room. It was rather spacious and a great way of immersing ourselves in the culture there, as we got to know the two local students living with us very well. It is also good if you wish to experience independent-style living, as we cooked our own meals and were responsible for cleaning our own apartment. It is also not too far from the buildings in which our classes were held, and is just opposite a town centre complete with a supermarket and restaurants. However, if you prefer convenience, the residence halls, which come with a compulsory meal plan, may be a better option.

3. Activities during SEP

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Were there any activities organized by school/student group/external organizations at your host university which you would like to recommend to other students?

UConn provided extensive resources for exchange students, including a great study abroad advisor (Sara Bradshaw), who regularly communicated with us prior to and during our stint there. There was also a Facebook group for exchange students there, led by two current UConn students, who regularly planned activities and get-togethers for the exchange students, including hikes and outings. There are also student interest groups specially catered to organizing outdoors activities and buddy programs for exchange students.

4. Cost of Living

**Please provide an estimation of how much money you spent during your SEP?
Please list travel expenses separately.**

Accommodations - \$5,700 SGD
Living expenses (food, groceries etc) - \$5,500 SGD
Plane tickets - \$1,900 SGD
Travel expenses - \$5,700 SGD

5. Challenges

Did you face any challenging issues during your SEP stint? How did you overcome it/them?

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One challenge we had to overcome was definitely getting used to the cold there – layering and getting a good winter coat helps! We also faced the challenge of living with local students, whose habits and culture were very different from what we were used to, and we overcame it by making compromises and trying to be as communicable with each other as possible. With the freedom of living independently abroad also comes responsibility – there were many more opportunities than we were used to, so it became important to use our own judgement and sense as to when we should grab the chance to try something new, and when to avoid them.

6. Overall SEP Experience

Please write one paragraph about your exchange experience and attach some photos that represent your exchange experience.

Going from our tiny island-city to America for a semester is definitely life-changing in more ways than I can count. From being able to hop on a bus from school for an impromptu trip downtown in just under half an hour, I found myself having to plan even a Wal-Mart run in advance, just because the nearest one is a thirty minute bus ride away. Living at the University of Connecticut is also an eye-opening experience, as it is a huge school of about 18, 000 students, and most of them live on-campus during the school term. To cater to such a huge student population, it has its own restaurants, theatre, supermarkets, and even bars, and it feels very different to be living together with so many other people for that extended period of time. Despite being a lesser-known university in the States, compared to others like Boston University or UCLA, I would choose to do my exchange at UConn all over again in a heartbeat. While its size and distance away from bigger cities sometimes makes us feel like we're stuck in the countryside, this provided us with opportunities to immerse ourselves more fully in the 'American college' experience. It is also not too far away from cities such as Boston (one and a half hours away by car) and New York City (three hours away by bus), such that we found the time to travel and explore during our school term as well, especially during long breaks like Thanksgiving.

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7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

UConn's student population is slightly less diverse than colleges like Yale, and there were probably only 5 of us Singaporeans there in one semester. It could feel daunting to be the only Asian student in class, especially when professors contextualize things in the American context all the time, but it can also be eye-opening for both yourself and the class if you take the chance to speak up and participate! Professors in UConn are actually very encouraging and would love to hear things from a new perspective.