



## Gilman Alumni Representative

### Clay Ngo

China, Academic Year 2008-2009  
San Francisco State University



Growing up Chinese American and unable to speak my native language, I felt disconnected from my heritage. I studied Chinese language in the US for three years, but my learning curve did not spike to a conversational level. In contrast to my Chinese studies in the US, I started speaking and living the themes in my books while living in China. When on the streets, I learned to become a hard bargainer with the merchants, and while indoors, I learned to be polite and charm the parents of my new Chinese friends.

I will forever be connected to China and now seek to continuously engage myself within the international realm. As a double major in Film and Chinese, I fittingly proposed to create videos chronicling my experiences studying abroad in Beijing, China, in order to inform others about the "ins and outs" of studying abroad. During my year in China, I took every opportunity to record footage of the society and the lives of the everyday people. I also recorded interviews with my classmates to access different perspectives. I created three ten minute films under the themes: "Peking University" which outlines the campus and shows the different amenities available on campus; "Initiation Week" is a clip that chronicles the various steps students must follow when starting the semester, through the placement exams to the way the class schedule and selection process works; and "Wu Dao Kou" which displays the major commercial market next to Peking University. All the films are available on my YouTube page and are also available at my school's Office of International Studies building. During my school's International Education Week, conferences were held for the various countries around the world and I led the China conference. I gave an introduction to studying in China and offered my videos as supplemental material. Afterward, there was a question and answer session where I answered inquiries from curious students. I have promoted the Gilman Scholarship by including a Gilman Scholarship sponsorship within the credits of each film. As my viewership grows, I hope my videos will become more prominent from search engine results so that more people can learn about studying abroad and the possibility of applying for a Gilman Scholarship.

At the end of my study abroad year, I was invited by a Peking University student organization to help teach English in the rural area of China. I initially volunteered in order to discover new regions of China; I later realized the deeper benefits of helping the under-served community. I saw a different, less developed China during my volunteer service. Infrastructure was poor and the standard of living was far lower than in the city in which I had studied. In our dorms, we slept on bunk beds made of a plank of wood and pillows made of wicker. Living and teaching in the community, I was able to share my experiences and form bonds with the local Chinese people. The community was as interested in my life as a Chinese American as much as I was interested in their lives in rural China.



*Clay's English class, when he volunteered as a teacher.*



*Clay with his class at Peking University*

As my graduation date approaches in this struggling U.S. economy, I am not afraid to look outside the United States for work. I await my return to China so that I can start a new chapter of immersion learning. I am eternally grateful to the Gilman Scholarship for providing me this opportunity.