

Evolution and the Human Experience in Chongqing, China

3-Credit Study Abroad Experience Offered at Chongqing University of Education in China

Faculty Director: [Dr. Glenn Geher](#) (Psychology, Honors, and Evolutionary Studies)—State University of New York at New Paltz

This class is able to count within the SUNY New Paltz curriculum as follows:

- PSY 293 (Special topics in Psychology – counts as an elective in the **Psychology** undergraduate curriculum)
- BIO 135 (Evolution for Everyone – counts as a **GE Natural Science** and as a required course for the **Evolutionary Studies (EvoS) minor**)
- PSY 295 or PSY 595 or EO 295 or EVO 595 (Independent Study at the undergraduate or graduate levels for Psychology or Evolutionary Studies)

Students at colleges and universities aside from SUNY New Paltz are encouraged to apply. Most American universities should allow these credits to transfer back toward the curriculum of the home institution.



The human story is, at its core, a story of the evolution of life. This course focuses on evolution with critical applications to the human experience including content on:

- The evolution of human behavior
- Education from an evolutionary perspective
- Evolutionary mismatches that surround the modern human experience
- Evolution and human culture
- Universals in the human psychological experience
- Evolution and human health

This class is designed to dovetail with a basic evolution class that Dr. Geher offers each summer to education majors at Chongqing University of Education. The students in this class are, generally, Chinese citizens who are connected with a Dual Diploma program that is run in conjunction with SUNY New Paltz. The Chinese students in this class work to master the content of the course as well as to develop their English skills, with a subset of the students planning to complete their final three semesters at SUNY New Paltz.



In Summer of 2019, Dr. Geher brought four brave SUNY New Paltz students, who came from multiple majors, to join the students from Chongqing in this class. The structure of the class included the following:

A few weeks before the trip to China, Dr. Geher, and the New Paltz students met with the students from Chongqing via teleconference to go over basic introductions and the course outline. Soon after the SUNY New Paltz Spring semester ends, Dr. Geher and the students (after obtaining visas and passports and addressing other logistical issues, with the help of the Study Abroad Office) board a flight set for Chongqing, the world's most populous city set deep in the center of China. Chongqing has a rich history, extraordinary infrastructure, and internationally renowned cuisine. It is a heck of a place.

The students will stay at a hotel near the campus and will use a convenient shuttle bus to travel from the hotel (which is right in Chongqing) to the campus (which is set about 6 miles up a mountain from the hotel).



For about a week, the students take the class (taught in English by Dr. Geher) alongside about 40 Chongqing students. Multiple cultural classes and activities (such as a course in Chinese calligraphy and a course in Chinese tea making, offered by world-class experts on the topics) are included.

The hosts at Chongqing University of Education are famously gracious and they will hold a welcoming ceremony for the New Paltz students along with various other events to ensure that the students are enthusiastically welcomed and cared for. Further, the university will provide Chinese student liaisons for each American student to ensure that the American students have the logistical and social support needed to succeed during the experience.

All students in the class, including the American students, will form groups that develop creative products (such as fun videos) connected with the content of the course on evolution. Presentations of these creative products will be worked on after the in-class meetings end and they will be presented via teleconference after the New Paltz students have returned to the US.

Before the students leave for the US, they also will visit the famous city of Chengdu, a beautiful, large, modern city that houses the world's largest panda preserve, among several other amazing cultural and geographical gems.

Past students in this program reported having an amazing experience and several plan to go back to visit. Further, friendships between Chinese students and American students have developed and reunions take place, often spontaneously, with regularity.

Consistent with a core theme of the content of the course, this class vividly demonstrates how the human experience is the same in all corners of the globe.

For more information, please contact the faculty program leader, Glenn Geher (geherg@newpaltz.edu) or the SUNY New Paltz Study Abroad Office (studyabroad@newpaltz.edu)

